



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Sarah Courtney MP

Wednesday 8 September 2021

MEMBERS

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Jo Palmer MLC

Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Chair)

Hon Jo Siejka MLC

Hon Rob Valentine MLC

Hon Josh Willie MLC

IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Sarah Courtney MP, Minister for Education; Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth; Minister for Children and Youth; Minister for Hospitality and Events; Minister for Disability Services

Ministerial Staff

Kyle Lowe	Chief of Staff
Chris Edwards	Senior Adviser
Courtney Hurworth	Senior Adviser
Carole Rodger	Principal Adviser
Vanessa Cahoon	Adviser
Timothy Vaatstra	Adviser

Department of Education

Tim Bullard	Secretary
Jenny Burgess	Deputy Secretary – Strategy and Performance
Trudy Pearce	Deputy Secretary – Learning
Jodee Wilson	Deputy Secretary – Support and Development
Kane Salter	Acting Deputy Secretary – Corporate and Business Services
Ann Moxham	Registrar – Teachers Registration Board
Wendy Spencer	Executive Officer – Office of Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification
Katharine O'Donnell	Registrar - Education
Liz Jack	Libraries Tasmania

Department of State Growth

Kim Evans	Secretary
Amanda Russell	Deputy Secretary - Business Services
Mark Bowles	Deputy Secretary – Business and Jobs
Angela Conway	General Manager, Workforce Development and Training
Grant Dreher	Chief Executive Officer, TasTAFE
Scott Adams	Chief Operating Officer, TasTAFE
Kerryn Meredith-Sotiris	Executive Director, Students and Education, TasTAFE
Stuart Hollingsworth	Director Jobs Tasmania
Jacqui Allen	Deputy Secretary - Cultural and Tourism Development
Adam Sproule	Director Events Tasmania
Travis Boutcher	Manager Budgets

Department of Communities Tasmania

Michael Pervan	Secretary
Mandy Clark	Deputy Secretary - Children and Youth Services
Ingrid Ganley	Director - Disability and Community Services
Claire Lovell	Director - Children & Families
Pam Honan	Director - Youth and Family Violence Services
Rod Fazackerley	Principal Finance Officer

The Committee met at 8.58 a.m.

CHAIR - Minister, I'd like to welcome you. This is our third day of the Estimates process and we would like to congratulate you on this new portfolio area you have responsibility for. But given that this committee has had Education for quite some time and we know your team around you, we think you will be well supported. I will take the opportunity to introduce our team at the table. We have Josh Willie, Jo Siejka, myself, Tania Rattray, Rosemary Armitage, Jo Palmer and Rob Valentine. In our support team we have Julie Thompson as Secretary and Shae is our Hansard girl. Nat Exel will come in from time to time as well.

Minister, we will invite you to introduce your team at the table but also you possibly have an overview to share with the committee. We will do our best to get through education by 1 p.m. and we will have a morning tea break somewhere between 11.15 and 11.30. Thank you. We'll invite you to do the overview.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Chair, for your warm welcome, and I am really excited to have custody of this portfolio. Joining me at the table, on my right I have Tim Bullard, who I think you all know. Jenny Burgess is to his right, and Kane Salter is to my left. Kane is acting Deputy Secretary at the moment for Corporate and Business Services.

CHAIR - Congratulations.

Ms COURTNEY - In case you've not had the opportunity to meet Kane before.

CHAIR - We've met Kane before.

Ms COURTNEY - Our Government has delivered a 2021-22 State Budget built on strong foundations. We're securing Tasmania's future with \$8 billion for education, skills and training across the forward Estimates; a record amount of funding, because every child and young person in Tasmania deserves to succeed.

To continue to improve our learning outcomes, we must continue to support student wellbeing. Through the annual Student Wellbeing and Engagement Survey, we're listening to what students are telling us about their wellbeing. We're strengthening support from the earliest years of a child's life, investing \$3.8 million to replicate the support and wellbeing team model currently in government schools in our Child and Family Learning Centres. This will provide free access to speech and language pathologists, psychologists and social workers.

We also know that trauma can have a significant impact on a student's ability to learn. We have, therefore, allocated a further \$8 million for trauma support over the 2021-22 Budget and forward Estimates, supporting an extra 100 students every year across our schools.

The School Health Nurse Program has proved a huge success in supporting our students. We're providing \$5.4 million over the 2021-2022 Budget and forward Estimates to employ an additional 11.4 full-time nurses and three full-time clinical nurse educators, adding to the 42 school nurses we already have in our schools.

We know that quality teaching and inclusive practices are critical to student engagement. Over the past seven years, we have undertaken significant work to establish the foundations for improvement in teaching and learning in Tasmania. We acknowledge that there is still

more work to do to build literacy knowledge and skills of our learners to reach our target that by 2029 all students who are eligible to sit NAPLAN will be able to read above the national minimum standard before they enter year 7. This is why we're investing an additional \$5.3 million to increase the number of in-school quality literacy coaches by 40, commencing in 2022.

Our literacy coaching program provides at-the-shoulder support to teachers in our schools to increase their expertise in teaching the English curriculum. In 2021, targeted professional learning in the areas of oral language, writing and reading, with an emphasis on phonics and foundational literacy, was introduced. From this year, we've also introduced our numeracy strategy and plan for action which will see a similar focus applied to the teaching of mathematics.

A contemporary senior secondary education needs to provide each student with the opportunity to develop real-world skills and knowledge, and set them up to achieve their goals. We know that many students leave our education system in year 10, 11, and 12 and cite disengagement with learning as a key reason. For the Years 9 to 12 Project, we are reshaping senior secondary learning into an engaging, contemporary and personalised model that empowers students to embrace their unique aspirations.

Innovative curriculum renewal is currently underway, with the first new courses intended to be available in 2022. In addition, with all government high schools extended to year 11 and 12 by next year, students around the state will have even more choice in where and how they learn.

The Government continues to make record investment to ensure our schools have the infrastructure and facilities that meet the needs of students now and into the future. Through this Budget, we'll invest a further \$116.2 million in education infrastructure. This additional investment takes the total capital investment program over four years to \$271.8 million.

I would like, Chair, to take this opportunity to acknowledge, pay tribute and thank my predecessor as minister for education, Jeremy Rockliff. His positive legacy will continue for generations in our education system and I know many Tasmanians are grateful for the role he played.

In 2020, we achieved our highest TCE attainment since 2016 with 59.6 per cent of students gaining their TCE. We've also seen direct retention from years 10 to 12 continue to improve, increasing by almost five percentage points between 2019 and 2020, to 76.1 per cent. Again, the highest on record. We've also progressed nation-leading initiatives, including the Disability Adjustments Funding Model, which is providing support to an additional 2000 students, with \$56 million over the next four years committed to continue to deliver this model. And since 2014, we have employed an additional 896 staff across our education system.

It is critical that our principals, school leaders and teachers are treated with respect. It is my great pleasure today to launch a community information campaign on respectful behaviour in schools. Any violent or abusive behaviour towards school leaders, teachers and staff is totally unacceptable and not something we can turn away from. As a community, we need to be clear on what is acceptable behaviour in our schools, and how we treat our principals, our school leaders, our teachers, and our staff. Also, what is not acceptable. From this weekend, television advertising will remind us all not to cross the line. I congratulate the Australian

Education Union, Tasmanian Principals Association and school leaders who were involved in the development of this very important campaign.

In closing, I'd like to take the opportunity to thank all our staff across our government schools, our Child and Family Learning Centres and our libraries for their professionalism, their hard work, their dedication. In particular, over the COVID-19 pandemic period, each of them has worked incredibly hard to support student learning. I know that as minister and on behalf of the Government we are very grateful.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister, and on behalf of the committee we'd also extend our thanks to the school community on the work they do, not only through COVID-19 but as they continue to care for our future leaders. Also, I extend the committee's acknowledgement of the former minister for education, Jeremy Rockliff. You're absolutely right, he certainly appeared to really enjoy that portfolio, and we will possibly get to read the *Hansard* and see how he's enjoying Health in his new role as Minister for Health and some others. Thank you.

Minister, we don't spend a lot of time on overview. We get into the output groups. That's how we run, so I will invite Mr Willie to commence the questioning on 1.1, which is in-school education. After Mr Willie has had approximately seven questions - and I've put him on notice - it will be opened up to other members, because we all have an interest in education. Thank you, Mr Willie.

**DIVISION 3
(Department of Education)**

**Output group 1
Education**

In school education

Mr WILLIE - Thank you, Chair. Minister, today is International Literacy Day. In March 2021, when the Government announced the literacy target for Tasmania, that all grade 7 students would start the year above the expected standard for reading by 2029, and the establishment of the Literacy Advisory Panel, did you envisage that it would be stacked with Department of Education staff, the very agency which has presided over long-term decline in Tasmania's underlying literacy skills of reading, spelling, and writing?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, Mr Willie. First of all, I'd like to state my confidence in the Secretary, the senior leadership and the teachers we have across Tasmania delivering education. They work incredibly hard. I can say quite confidently, from the senior leadership perspective within DoE, we are always looking at how we can improve. I acknowledge that we have more to do with literacy and numeracy and this is why we have taken such strong action with regards to ensuring that we are getting better outcomes.

I mentioned in my overview the fact that we have a focus on phonics, and the year 1 phonics check. I also outlined the fact that this Budget contains a 50 per cent increase in the number of in-school quality literacy coaches, who will be working in schools to assist teachers. We know that making sure we are continuing to invest in our teachers, and teacher development and professional development, is incredibly important.

You mentioned the Literacy Advisory Panel and I'm confident that the Premier, as a whole-of-government agency, would be more than happy to answer questions about the make-up of that panel. But I have confidence in that panel. I'm really excited with the fact that as a Government we recognise that literacy is much broader than what just happens in a school. Quite clearly, as my responsibility as Minister for Education, and the secretary's responsibility, we are very focused on that, both in our schools and our Child and Family Learning Centres.

But we know particularly for our youngest Tasmanians, especially those that are engaging with our CFLCs, the importance of making sure that whole of community has a focus on literacy, that is a key focus of a lot of the programs we have associated with our CFLCs, such as working with three-year-olds to ensure that it's not just about making sure we are teaching the child or teaching the young person, but that we are providing support and wraparound to families and carers, so that they are able to support their children's learning.

I might pass to the secretary to outline some of the other initiatives we're doing with regards to literacy because it is a very key focus of the department in terms of continual improvement.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, my question is around independence and the panel. Why is the department led by the former Department of Education secretary and now head of the State Service effectively advising itself on how to improve literacy practices? It's not just me saying this, minister. I'm not sure whether you saw the 100% Literacy Alliance press release yesterday? In it, among other things, they said: 'There is a new Minister for Education, yet little visible progress towards implementing a plan to achieve the target.'

They went on to say:

While the alliance commends the Government on the purpose of the panel

- something I also commend -

to develop a community-wide framework to achieve a literate Tasmania, it is concerned that the panel is not independent from government. Of the eight members of the recently announced Literacy Advisory Panel, five are employees of the Department of Education and one is a contracted consultant to the Department of Education. The reality is, the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet and the co-chair of the literacy panel could convene a meeting of five of the panel members at any time without needing a formal Literacy Advisory Panel.'

Ms COURTNEY- Thank you, Mr Willie. As I said in the answer to your previous question, I have full confidence in the secretary of the department. It seems that you don't have confidence in him -

Mr WILLIE - That's not what I'm saying.

Ms COURTNEY - nor the head of the State Service.

Mr WILLIE - It's a question about independence.

Ms COURTNEY - What I am saying is, as you're aware, the secretary of DPAC is a co-chair of that panel. As I look at the panel members and the lists of names, we have a broad list of people with a well-rounded set of experience that comes to that. As I said in my previous question, seeing as this was stood up as a whole-of-government initiative, if you have concerns about the make-up of the panel, I suggest you address those to the Premier, rather than me. However, as the Education minister, I have confidence in the work being undertaken at a whole-of-government level and I have confidence in the work that the secretary is overseeing within education to improve outcomes.

I absolutely accept, Mr Willie, that the outcomes we're seeing in Tasmania are not as good as they should be. This is why we are continuing to invest. This is why we have a focus on evidence-based initiatives that we are implementing across the full spectrum of our schools, and indeed into our CFLCs. This is why, through the agency, we provide such extensive professional development to our teachers because we know, ultimately, our teachers are on the front line providing that interaction with young people. For us to be able to improve our outcomes, we need to be supporting our teachers, which is what we are doing.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, my concern is that there were highly credentialled people who applied for the literacy panel who were knocked back. I'm not sure if you know Professor Pamela Snow. Pamela is a registered psychologist, having qualified originally in speech pathology. In 2020, Pamela established, with her colleague, Associate Professor Tanya Serry, the Science of Language and Reading SOLAR Lab in the School of Education at La Trobe University. The SOLAR lab is a platform for research teaching, advocacy and postgraduate supervision on a wide range of topics pertaining to developmental language and the transition to reading, writing and spelling in school years. Why was her application unsuccessful?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, Mr Willie. I think it's exciting that we have people of such calibre applying and being interested in the literacy outcomes of Tasmania. The fact that as a community this is such a high focus and of interest, and the fact that it's being led through the Premier, demonstrates the Government's commitment and it demonstrates how important this is that it has to be done as a whole-of-government initiative.

As I said in my first answer, Mr Willie, this panel was not stood up through the Department of Education, nor through my office. If you have questions about the process, or the way the appointments were made, I once again suggest that you direct those through the Premier to Jenny Gale.

Mr WILLIE - I'm asking if you're concerned, minister. I'm not sure if you know Dr Jennifer Buckingham? Jennifer is the founder of the Five from Five project, which provides evidence-based information on effective reading instruction. Her PhD research was on effective instruction for struggling readers. She's provided advice on reading instruction and policy to the New South Wales, Victorian, South Australian and federal governments and was the chair of the expert advisory group to the federal government on a Year 1 literacy and numeracy assessment. Jennifer is a board member of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Does it concern you that her application was unsuccessful?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Mr Willie. I'm going to restate what I said in my last answer. I think it is a great credit that we have people of such high calibre wanting to be able to partner -

Mr WILLIE - They're not on the panel.

Ms COURTNEY - and work, to be able to increase literacy in Tasmania. It is a clear goal of the Government. It is a challenge across the community, and this is why we have stood up the Literacy Advisory Panel with regards to the selections that were made. As I have said previously, I would suggest that you direct those through the Premier, as it is being led through DPAC as a whole-of-government initiative. I would like to go back to my opening statement that, with regards to the work of the department and of the Secretary of Education, the Secretary of DPAC, they have my confidence, in terms of how they are dealing with this and how they are progressing it.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, I'm asking for your perspective. You'd be aware of Rosie Martin, a speech pathologist and criminologist. In 2017, Rosie was awarded the Tasmanian Australian of the Year for her work, teaching literacy and communication to prisoners. She's also the founder of Connect42. Why was her application unsuccessful?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, once again, Mr Willie.

CHAIR - I hope there's not dozens and dozens of applications, or this is going to take some time.

Mr WILLIE - I'll finish in a minute on this line.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms COURTNEY - As I've said, Mr Willie, the process for selection of the independent panel was run through the Department of Premier and Cabinet. With regards to the process, I'd suggest that you ask them around the process if you have concerns. I acknowledge you are naming a long list of very good people with great expertise.

Mr WILLIE - Who are not on the panel.

Ms COURTNEY - This is a clear demonstration of the fact that we have so much interest. I'm really pleased that we had so much - as you have outlined, people of such experience putting their hand up. It also demonstrates the quality of people that we have on the panel and, importantly, the mix of people that we have on the panel. But in terms of the process around the expressions of interest, the process around the selection, the criteria with which the panel used, that is a question for DPAC.

Mr WILLIE - I'm just seeing a pattern of this sort of thing occur. We had a conversation in the corridor - it's on a different topic, but the school lunch trial - and Pasi Sahlberg is someone I talk to, and I offered to connect you with him - he's very interested in that trial and being involved in the evaluation - and I heard nothing back. So we've got all these experts around the country and internationally that want to get involved in our education system, and it seems like they're being blocked.

CHAIR - And the question is?

Mr WILLIE - It's just a comment. I'll go on to some other questions, Chair. Minister, if you look at this year's year 7 cohort, 91 per cent were at or above the national minimum

standard for reading. If you go back to the same cohort, in 2017, when they were in grade 3, 94.4 per cent were at or above the national minimum standard. The current trend across schooling years is a decline. If you go further, this year, three out of 10 - or 29.7 per cent of Tasmanian year 9 students can't read at a level expected to read to learn, as the national minimum standard is a very low bar. This cohort was in year 3 in 2015, and 16.5 per cent weren't able to read at a high enough level to fully engage with the rest of the curriculum. What modelling has been done to achieve the literacy target? What benchmarks need to be achieved each year? I would have thought holding the outcomes at the year 3 benchmarks would be a good start.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Mr Willie. I appreciate your interest, particularly within literacy. With regards to having a target of 100 per cent, that is based on the fact that, as a government, we want to make sure that all the students have a reading standard that is above the national minimum. I wouldn't want to have a target that is below that.

So as the minister, I think we should be making sure that we're very aspirational with our targets and ensuring, most importantly - this is about working with those kids that are perhaps at risk of disengagement and ensuring that we are providing them with the support, which is why, Mr Willie - I know that you've got a keen interest in the year 1 phonics check - making sure that we have these steps throughout the system to identify those young people that perhaps don't have the skills that they need, or haven't got to a level of learning that they need to have, so that we can intervene.

Indeed, through the professional support, special development is making sure that teachers are given the tools they need to be able to make decisions and be able to then implement that into the learning. I might let the secretary, more broadly, talk about the mechanisms and the initiatives that we are going to.

Mr WILLIE - So my question's specifically about what modelling has been done to achieve the literacy target and what benchmarks need to be achieved each year to reach that target.

Ms COURTNEY - I've talked about the development of the target of all year 7 students, and I'm more than happy to pass to the secretary again, to talk about the pathway towards that.

Mr BULLARD - Thank you, minister. Thank you, Mr Willie, for the question. In terms of the literacy target itself - that is, getting every child in year 7 above the national minimum standard, that's the target. You will have noted from the media release that went out that the way that we're going to measure that isn't in year 7, because, obviously, that's too late; it's using the progressive achievement test in year 6.

So what we did was did some regression analysis to understand where you would need to be in year 6 to be on a trajectory of success on the PAT test. We actually tested that with South Australia and Western Australia, to make sure that we were hearing from other experts in other jurisdictions, to make sure that we landed in the right place. Now, how are we going to benchmark and measure that is a really good question.

From next year, progressive achievement testing, which is an ACER national, well-respected test, will be used in every year from prep to year 10. So rather than waiting for, as we do now, three, five, seven and nine NAPLAN testing, which, as you know, comes very

late in the year, in terms of schools getting it back, they will have on hand the progressive achievement test, which provides a much finer grain of detail around what students do and don't understand.

So that will provide teachers in classrooms with granular data around which students are on track to achieve that standard 118, which is the PAT standard in year 6, across the years of schooling from prep. So that's a really big change, because it provides a state-wide data set, which we are now using every single year, not waiting on that plan.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, how many of the 84 literacy coaches have a literacy teaching qualification?

Ms COURTNEY - My advice is all of them.

Mr WILLIE - They all have a literacy teaching background?

Ms COURTNEY - Can you restate the question, please, so that we make sure that we get the -

Mr WILLIE - How many of the 84 literacy coaches have a literacy teaching qualification?

Mr BULLARD - All of the literacy coaches have a teaching degree that involves literacy instruction. What's more important than that, though, is the professional learning that they undertake and the support they receive in making sure that they have contemporary, evidence-based practice in literacy. So, again, as you'd be aware, the teaching of literacy has divergent approaches and styles over time, and that's just the history of literacy teaching.

What we're actually doing in the department is ensuring that our focus is contemporary and evidence-based and also consistent across the system, so that it doesn't matter where you are - in which school, in which classroom - the coach that you have is going to have a consistent approach based on contemporary professional learning.

CHAIR - I've got a supplementary on that, if I might.

Mr WILLIE - Sure, Chair.

CHAIR - Just in regard to the coaches, how are they allocated across the high schools and colleges, and are the coaches full-time? If not, what is their full-time equivalent, the EFT? Thanks for opening the door on that, honourable member.

Mr WILLIE - That's okay.

Mr BULLARD - Just getting some advice on that. I'd just note that in 2022 we'll go up to 125.4 FTE, which, across - effectively, if you take out early childhood intervention, 192 schools is a high FTE allocation. So we have allocated them differentially across the system, depending on school size and SES status and need. We've increased that allocation over time, as more money's come into the budget, to employ more coaches. So would you be interested in the allocation in 2022, when we have 125.4 on the ground?

PUBLIC

CHAIR - I'm also interested in what there is now, in 2021.

Mr BULLARD - What there is now is around 80.

CHAIR - Eighty-four.

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

CHAIR - Eighty-five.

Mr BULLARD - 85.4 now, with a 40 FTE increase next year.

CHAIR - Are the coaches full-time?

Mr BULLARD - That's an FTE number.

CHAIR - Right.

Mr BULLARD - So because of part-time arrangements, there would be more actual head count than that.

CHAIR - One-eight-nine?

Mr BULLARD - One-eighty-nine is the actuals.

CHAIR - Right.

Mr VALENTINE - Chair, can I have a supplementary?

CHAIR - Thank you. A supplementary to the supplementary.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, I suppose. It's just on the new assessment system that you were talking about. I might have missed it, but what does this mean for NAPLAN, long-term?

Mr BULLARD - Mr Valentine, they basically play two different roles. NAPLAN is a really important national test; it's really important that we know where we sit nationally, and it also, too, is a state test, to understand where different schools sit at a point in time. The progressive achievement test is, really, a tool for teachers to use at the time, to make decisions about what needs to happen next for each individual student.

So they provide different functions within the system. I think that, you'll be aware, NAPLAN Online - and Tasmania has moved to 100 per cent online. As we move nationally online - of course they'll be trying to get the results back into classrooms faster, but, as it stands at the moment, you do the test in May, you get the information back in August. That's a very long lag time. Progressive achievement test is run at a school level; do the test, you can get the data back.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Mr Willie, for allowing that.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - Thank you, Chair. Minister, what impact do you think an additional 40 literacy coaches will have across our system, given your Government has already employed 84 and there have been further declines in literacy?

Ms COURTNEY - I'm pleased that part of our election commitment was an increase of 50 per cent. Clearly, as you've acknowledged and as I've acknowledged, we have more work to do in literacy. So this is making sure that we're continuing to work with teachers on the ground in schools, at their shoulder, so that they can have the most up-to-date and informed techniques and way in which they are teaching young people. Making sure that our staff are supported is incredibly important.

It's also very important to be able to build the professional knowledge, the confidence of teachers; making sure, particularly, teachers that may be in remote or regional areas have access to further learning. It's also very important, particularly, that - the secretary mentioned around allocation and looking at needs-based as well, ensuring for those communities where, perhaps, there is more need - that the need is perhaps either greater or more complex, that we have the support that's there to be able to provide them.

So, I mean, I would hope that the committee would welcome the fact that we've made a commitment to increase that by 50 per cent. I know, as the department continues to look at, as the secretary has outlined earlier, targeted ways that we can implement evidence-based, new initiatives in our schools, this is a really strong way to be able to achieve that. Obviously, an education system, as you'll be aware, is a very decentralised system, and so we've got to work hard at ways that we can actually be on the ground, out in schools, supporting teachers, so that they can continue to have their professional development that they need.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, why won't you mandate the Phonics Check for all schools? Isn't it inequitable that some students aren't being given the opportunity to be identified and helped with their learning?

Ms COURTNEY - So the Phonics Check is available in all schools, all Tasmanian primary and district schools, for more data to teachers to tailor their learning.

Mr WILLIE - It's available, but they don't have to use it -

Ms COURTNEY - I would be more than happy for the secretary to provide more detail on this and the importance of not just the Phonics Check, but importantly, the use of Phonics as part of the foundation in literacy for young Tasmanians, and the way that, importantly, the Phonics Check is actually used in the school.

Mr BULLARD - Thank you, minister, and thank you for raising Phonics. It's obviously a matter that's discussed a lot in the public domain, and we really welcome the opportunity to provide more information on Phonics. So, around the Check itself, it's really important to note that last year was a pilot year only. It's run in term 3, and we haven't run it this year yet. The second thing about the Check is, it's run in term 3 of year 1, so it really is a diagnostic check for those students who aren't on track, in terms of phonics.

You would expect to see building oral language and vocab in kinder, teaching of phonics in prep, then you've had three terms of teaching in year 1. It's a safety net check for students,

to identify those students that aren't on track, and where there might be additional support needed. To that end, absolutely this year, every single student in our system who is in year 1 is uploaded into the hub, which is the Commonwealth-run hub for the Phonics Check. Teachers are being asked where they think there are issues around students being competent in phonics, as would be expected at year 1, that they're running the check.

But do we need to have a universal check for every student? No, because there are students who absolutely are on board with phonics by term 3, year 1. There is a lot more that we need to do around phonics, absent of the Check, and we are being really, really strong on our expectation that phonics is going to be explicitly taught from prep to year 2 every single day in our classrooms. What that means is not just coming across it as part of teaching and learning; intentionally planned and taught, and then monitored for mastery, so that we're quickly picking up on those students that may have issues.

It's really great, too, to see the uptake of professional learning in phonics. The Phonics Check will only provide you with data as to which letter sounds are understood or not understood. It doesn't provide a diagnostic tool as to why. It doesn't provide guidance as to how you are going to use that check. So, building teacher capability is front and centre of our approach around phonics. I'm just so encouraged to see, this year we've run three professional learning sessions, one teaching phonics in kinder, uptake of 246 teachers attending that; use of scope and sequence, which is our document around kinder to year 2, what we expect to see, how we expect to see it taught, what supports are then available around phonics; 365 teachers attending.

Then this term we're running phonics for writing in the early years, and so far, 300 enrolments. So, very, very strong uptake, and what it shows is that, yes, people know that phonics is important, but they really want to know more about how to support students around the teaching and learning of phonics, and I find that really encouraging.

Mr WILLIE - My understanding with the test is, it's easy to administer. Why wouldn't you screen all students, so that no student falls through the gaps?

Ms COURTNEY - So, as has been outlined by the secretary, it's not a test, it's a check. What that means is, it's a mechanism to be able to pick up those students that have not met the required threshold. Teachers are very well placed to understand where their students are placed. This is a mechanism to make sure, and importantly, as the secretary outlined, to inform what steps can be taken, because having a check in isolation, unless you have got a clear pathway of what needs to be done, how you'll use that information, is critical.

As the secretary says, there is a clear focus on making sure that, through those early years, we do have the explicit teaching. The Phonics Check is about making sure that we don't have a young person moving on without having been identified as having a deficiency in what is a building block for their literacy. As the secretary has said, it is used in every school that has that age cohort in it. We've got the professional development and learning around it for those teachers. What this is doing is making sure that those young people can be checked.

Mr WILLIE - I have two more questions on literacy, and then I'll hand over. Minister, education stakeholders are calling for an evidence-based three-tiered instructional model, to make sure our students who are falling behind are given every opportunity to catch up with their peers. Why won't you implement it?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Mr Willie. As the secretary has outlined, with regards to the things that we implement to ensure that students aren't left behind, we've talked about the year 1 Phonics Check, and we've talked about some of the other initiatives being implemented to ensure that teachers have the right professional development and learning, so not only can they identify when there is a challenge, but, importantly, understand and be able to implement the steps that they need to remedy that. That is absolutely critical, that we are able to do that. We have got a range of different professional learning, to ensure that these steps are taken, in terms of the way that we are teaching within our classrooms. I'll get the secretary to talk further about what is currently happening.

Mr BULLARD - So are you talking about an evidence-based instructional model?

Mr WILLIE - Three tiers, yes. So, where kids are identified, they would fall into tier 2, and get more intensive support. If they're still falling behind, they would fall into tier 3.

Mr BULLARD - Certainly, I think there's two parts to that answer. One is that, for the first time in a long time, we now have a pedagogical framework, which sets out our expectations for every teacher, and the key teaching practices that we expect to see in every classroom. In terms, then, of the coaching, and the way that the coaches are being used, absolutely looking at how we're supporting teachers to gain those skills and capabilities to do that. The second thing, then, to note, in terms of work that we undertook actually with schools, early years teachers in schools is around the phonics scope and sequence, from kinder to year 2, absolutely takes that approach.

I've been very, very deliberate around what we expect to see by year, from kinder to year 2, and then sets out how that relates to the national literacy progressions around phonological awareness, so you can actually start to assess each and every child against those. Are they at standard expected for this time of year? Provides what the key understanding should be, and then actually has what the intentional teaching opportunities are for those students where you are not seeing that level of development. So, a very, very consistent approach that sets a clear expectation.

As you know, across the system people would be making different judgements, and they are informed by their own experience and training, but different judgements about what they would expect to see. Sometimes they'll be absolutely on track, but sometimes, where those judgements are a little bit low, or sometimes, where they're making the right judgement, but they don't know what to, we've had a missed teaching opportunity. So, by being very, very deliberate in the early years around what we expect to see, and then actually what to do when that capability or competence hasn't been achieved, we are providing the differentiated teaching and learning that you're referring to.

Mr WILLIE - It's very difficult for a single teacher to manage all of that in a classroom. If you're going to achieve the literacy target, you need a major intervention to do it.

Mr BULLARD - Could I just respond to that, because you would be aware, around more support in prep. So, through negotiation with the union, that election commitment has been reframed, so that we have education support specialists now assigned across our system. These are teaching assistants with a qualification that focuses on literacy. That's absolutely focused

on providing more support in every single prep classroom, to work with cohorts of students around literacy and numeracy, and I think that that's really positive.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, NAPLAN was introduced in 2008, and since that time, Tasmania's performance in NAPLAN has gone backwards in 14 of the 20 indicators across years 3, 5, 7 and 9. As a relatively new Minister for Education, are you alarmed by recent results?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Mr Willie. As I stated earlier, the NAPLAN results are, as we know, a snapshot in time. What I will say is, they clearly indicate that there is more work to do here in Tasmania, at a range of age levels and in a range of areas of competency. This is why we've got a significant focus on it. This is why we're implementing these initiatives, because we know that we need to look at what we can do not just differently, but also where things are working out well.

This is why the department has such a strong focus on ensuring that the initiatives that we roll out are evidence-based, so that we can make sure that we are looking towards how we can improve outcomes. Ultimately, Mr Willie, my focus as a minister is - yes, I want to see NAPLAN results improving, but ultimately, I want to make sure, as a minister, that we are making sure that kids are engaged in learning all the way through to year 12. Absolutely, NAPLAN is a very important check and - a point in time, which absolutely indicates that there is more work to do.

What I will say is, I think as an education system, we acknowledge that these keeping kids engaged in learning in a classroom is broader than just the teaching practices. This is why we've got the additional funding for 100 more students for trauma support. This is why we've got more school nurses that we're putting into our schools. This is why in our child and family learning centres we are now recruiting social workers, speech pathologists, and psychologists, because we know that, for a young person to be engaged - and we can implement great learning strategies within classrooms, have teachers that have got extensive professional development.

But for a child that, for a range of reasons, is not in a place where they are ready to learn, then that won't achieve it. We need to look at it - it is broader than just the teaching practices. Absolutely, we need to make sure that we are implementing evidence-based strategies, that we are making sure that those are being assessed, and making sure that we have the resources in place to be able to support the implementation of those. But alongside that, we need to look more broadly at how we support students, and there are a range of things that we do.

It was only recently that I was at Summerdale School, where we were announcing the activity packs that we're giving to primary school, so that they can get more activity, physical activity in their day. Because we know that that's great for stress relief for kids, we know that it makes -

CHAIR - And the teachers.

Ms COURTNEY - And the teachers. It brings them back to a classroom in a state that's readier to learn.

Mr WILLIE - It's not systemic reform, though, is it?

Ms COURTNEY - Mr Willie, as I have been outlining, there are a range of things that continue to be implemented. The secretary has talked about the initiatives in terms of the actual teaching within classrooms, and I'm happy for the secretary to expand his answer. What I am saying is, if we're going to achieve year-on-year improvements in NAPLAN, it is not just that. We need to be looking at the whole child, why they're disengaged, making sure that they are in the classroom, in a place ready for learning.

This goes much broader than this portfolio. This goes to the fact that the Premier has announced a \$100 million child and youth wellbeing strategy. This is about how we are supporting young people, and particularly our most young, outside the classroom and outside the school, because we need to be having more of a whole-of-government and whole-of-community approach about how we engage young people in learning. Yes, we've got a significant role. Yes, the secretary is absolutely accountable for the delivery of that learning in the schools, and I'm confident in the work that is being done. But I recognise that, to achieve improvements, it is much broader than that.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair. I'm going on probably in the same area from phonics and early learning. Apart from phonics, what else do we do? Do we do the regular checks that used to happen for children with hearing and eyesight checks, and if we do how often do we do it?

CHAIR - I will have the secretary talk to this. This is one of the initiatives particularly with increased school nurses that are in place in our schools. We've got more that are committed through this election and indeed it was actually Jeremy that reinstated our school nurses back into our schools but perhaps the secretary can talk through the specific things -

Ms ARMITAGE - How many, how often, what grades, because I think the phonics checks and others are great but if they can't hear or see, sometimes those things need to be picked up early.

Mr BULLARD - Thank you. There are hearing and screening checks now reintroduced and I can indicate in 2020 there were 2400 checks undertaken by school nurses around hearing and vision.

Ms ARMITAGE - How often, what grades? Does every school actually get school nurse checks, every state school, primary grades Prep, grades 1, grades 3, do they do it more than once, how often?

Mr BULLARD - The school nursing initiative currently has 40 school nurses with another 11.4 announced, so that will take us to 50.1 FTE, and that will be available across every school absent Early Childhood Intervention, Ashley and Big Picture, but those schools have access on-call to nurses. Every child that needs a screening in any kindergarten will have access to that by a registered nurse.

Ms ARMITAGE - So that's certain needs but do we do a generally check regardless of whether someone identifies, because you know children are very good at hiding things. Do we just generally come in - I remember when I was at school, which is a long time ago, but we used to have the hearing checks. Every child had a hearing check, every child had an eyesight

check whether you wanted it or you didn't want it and you weren't identified as having a need. You just had it and obviously problems were picked up.

Mr BULLARD - I'm advised, Ms Armitage, all kindergarten children are checked and then there's targeted checks in other grades.

Ms ARMITAGE - Right. It's only kindergarten but you don't have them maybe at grade 3 again as something that -

Mr BULLARD - The targeted other. Where there's an identification of need in another year level that would be undertaken.

Ms ARMITAGE - Do you consider, minister, that perhaps we should be looking at a second check at a higher grade, because something that might not be identified in kindergarten perhaps by grade 3 something else has arisen that a teacher might not pick up when they've got a number of students in the class, that perhaps - you know, whether we do a check at kinder, a check at grade 3 and a check at grade 6. Do you think it's possible that the Government could look at doing more checks in the state system to try to pick up some of these children? When we look at the literacy and the problems that we are having that some could be identified? I understand that there's a cost.

Ms COURTNEY - The other checks that we have around the actual child's development - if there are concerns raised about a child, if they're not achieving what they should be then the professional development that we have for our teachers means that they have then the skills to identify what checks need to be done, so that we can then divert people into what they need. This is the point of things like the phonics check, is making sure that we can pick up if there are any issues and make sure that we are intervening early and being able to implement any further steps that need to be taken.

The school nurses obviously they play a role in doing those school checks of those earlier cohort but they also have a much broader role as well in the school community around wellbeing, in particular, teaching around healthy attitudes, around behaviours, also around particularly for our older students being - helping them to be empowered to take decisions and care of their own health. I'm not sure whether the secretary has further comments on -

Ms ARMITAGE - That's all right. I have a further question on this item so maybe the secretary might want to comment after I ask another question. If they're identified as has having a problem, perhaps they need a speech pathologist or a psychologist, how long is the waiting list in each of the areas for them then. For example, a problem's identified, so how long do they need to wait before they actually get to see that speech pathologist or that psychologist?

Ms COURTNEY - I'll see if we've got the specific data on that.

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm happy to take it on notice if you don't. It would be good to have the three areas; the north, the north-west and the south. Secretary, I am happy to take it on notice rather than hold up the timing.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I'll take that also on notice, Rosemary.

CHAIR - Thank you, Julie, got that.

Ms ARMITAGE - I've got others but I'm happy for other people to ask questions. We'll share.

CHAIR - The next one I have is Ms Siejka and then I'll come back up to Ms Palmer and then Mr Valentine.

Ms SIEJKA - Minister, the Prime Minister's talking a lot about living with COVID-19 going forward. What preparation is being done to make sure our schools can operate in that environment? Are ventilation systems being audited and upgraded? I know that's something that's being looked at in our jurisdictions. I'm just keen to -

Ms COURTNEY - What I'll do is make some opening comments and then I'll ask the secretary to talk about in detail the plannings.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, it's incredibly important. One of the things I'm very conscious of is - as we see in our jurisdictions where they have had outbreaks of COVID-19 - is making sure that a school may not have people present learning but the school's still open and obviously there will be some families that kids still need to go to school. It's very much building on that foundation that even if there were an outbreak, in particular, that we would need to have - ensure that we've got the policies in place.

Before we go through to some of the initiatives that we've done now and embedded since last year, I would like to put on the record my praise for the speed and responsiveness last year, that was just incredibly impressive, to be able to shift an education system as they did. It was just extraordinary and a great tribute to the teachers and to many parents as well. There are a number of things that - protocols that happen within the schools currently in terms of just policies and procedures presently but also there are a range of escalation mechanisms and these relate to both whole of system so perhaps if there is a lockdown across Tasmania, but there's also mechanisms, because there might be isolated school incidents, as we've seen in our jurisdictions, we seem them associated with schools. I might ask the secretary to go into some more detail for you.

Mr BULLARD - Thank you. We have planning in relation to a number of scenarios as the minister said, whether that be a state or regional lockdown or it's actually needing to close a school because of an outbreak, but both scenarios involve ensuring that learners remain at the centre and that we are still providing, not only education but support. What we found really important during COVID-19 last year when there was learning at home was yes, the provision of materials, support, out-teaching through Teams and other mechanisms was important but equally important was maintaining a connection with each of those young people and families to see how they were tracking.

That planning has been ongoing. We've always been led by public health advice and we consider that we've got a very dynamic system. We speak to principals at least every fortnight, specifically on this topic to ensure that they're up to date with the latest information and that they have a focus. In terms of ventilation in schools, know that that's been a national discussion and it's a discussion that we're aware of. We are currently collating information on our school sites so that we can understand what the ventilation is on particular sites.

Ms SIEJKA - Is that in the form of an audit or is it a more informal process?

Mr BULLARD - No, we're getting amenity information on all buildings that we run, so effectively an audit and once we have that we'll be able to understand on an individual room basis how that room's heated or cooled, what the extent of natural ventilation is in place and that analysis is going to allow us to develop strategies, in line with national advice and state advice to ensure that we're putting in place the correct mitigations.

Ms SIEJKA - Particularly important given that the under 12s aren't eligible for vaccination. I imagine some really anxious parents out there. The work that you're doing in that space, is that being actively communicated to staff and parents and students as well?

Mr BULLARD - We are working with principals to communicate to school communities absolutely. One of the things we saw during COVID-19 was psychological security was a major issue. Making sure that parents have confidence in the mitigations that we have in place is front and centre of our planning.

Ms SIEJKA - As part of that plan, there's actual steps in place to protect those people that can't - the young people that can't be vaccinated if we follow the national plan?

Ms COURTNEY - Ultimately, as we see COVID-19 continue to play out in the community, and I think evolve and I don't think we could have predicted we're quite in the space we are now a year ago indeed. Ultimately, the decisions that are made and when they're triggered is based on public health advice. A good example was recently when we had some rules - some measures around mask wearing in Tasmania. We worked with the Department of Public Health and from a policy perspective from DoE as well, to ensure that we can enact something that follows public health advice. We're also very conscious that school sites are quite unique and the department have very good insights into perhaps things that work and things perhaps don't work, we're dealing with cohorts of young people. What we need to do is - and we've got ranges of scenarios planned, but effectively we look to public health on what's going to happen. Ultimately, we've seen that - a range of different scenarios played out, but importantly -

Ms SIEJKA - Aren't always predicted, so you do need to plan as much as you can.

Ms COURTNEY - No, they're not always - I agree, they're not always predicted and they're sometimes nuanced in a way that we weren't expecting. But we have the agility and the communication lines with our schools well practiced now, so we have a range of scenarios that we're prepared for. It's like in any, I guess, emergency planning situation, you plan for a range of scenarios and perhaps things aren't quite like those. That's where the agility of the system works and when we work directly with schools as well to be able to implement things quickly. Often solutions will be dynamics based on the actual school, based on the location of the school. It might be based on things such as if we've seen a lot of perhaps teachers having to be furloughed, then that has an impact as opposed to having children.

They're the things we need to look at on a case by case basis, but absolutely we want to make sure that we're protecting those kids that are young. We want to make sure that there is confidence, but considering what we're seeing with the Delta variant and -

Ms SIEJKA - The children.

Ms COURTNEY - The low risk tolerance threshold in other jurisdictions, I mean without speaking for Dr Veitch, I'd anticipate, if we got in the state where we actually had cases here, we would have a very thorough response from Public Health and I am confident the department would be able to enact the mechanisms it needed to very swiftly.

Ms SIEJKA - Chair, I have another question on another topic but I'm happy to handover and come back.

CHAIR - No, we can have yours now. Then I'm going back down the other end of the table.

Ms SIEJKA - Okay, thank you. That's very kind of you.

CHAIR - It's only day 3. Just wait till tomorrow.

Ms SIEJKA - True. Or later in the day.

Mr BULLARD - We got you on a good day.

Ms SIEJKA - We are seat buddies so we do get along very well. Minister, there isn't a lot of transparency regarding 1.1 in school education output line. There's obviously a lot of money in that line, close to \$1.2 billion in spending all bundled up.

Ms COURTNEY - Sorry, which page are you looking at?

CHAIR - Page 99 and 100.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you. Yes, so there's a lot bundled into that single line item which is a significant portion of the budget and I'm sure that you've got a spreadsheet or something somewhere that itemises the allocation. I wondered if or whether you can speak to that so that we have a clearer idea of how that funding is broken down.

Ms COURTNEY - Sorry, which table did you say? Ninety-nine is performance indicators. Which table was it? Table 3.2, sorry.

Ms SIEJKA - I had the *Hansard* open and not the -

Ms COURTNEY - No, no. I'm happy for either secretary through Kane or otherwise to talk through what's included in each line item because they are consolidated somewhat.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes, it's a large amount of money and yes, all bundled in there together.

CHAIR - Kane, it's your time to shine.

Mr SALTER - There is a range of ways that we can break that down for you. Certainly, the majority of the funding goes directly to schools importantly. Then there's the types of expenditure. We can certainly give a breakdown of what's going directly to schools and then what's other areas.

Ms SIEJKA - I'd appreciate that.

CHAIR - Is the member happy to take that on notice?

Ms SIEJKA - Yes, I am.

CHAIR - A breakdown of the line item.

Ms SIEJKA - We could be here a long time I'm sure but yes, I would appreciate that. Thank you.

CHAIR - Just 1.1 or 1.2 as well?

Ms SIEJKA - If I can extend it to 1.2, why not. Yes.

CHAIR - So that's in-school education and early learning.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes, thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you, Kane.

Ms SIEJKA - That's helpful.

CHAIR - Homework for somebody listening or somebody here, thank you. Mr Valentine.

Mr VALENTINE - I've actually had my question answered.

CHAIR - That can happen.

Mr VALENTINE - So that's okay.

CHAIR - So, think of another one.

Mr VALENTINE - Well, I have a wife who is a teacher, I've got to be a bit careful.

CHAIR - Should have all the inside knowledge.

Mr VALENTINE - Maybe, but anyway.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Armitage, and then I'll come back to Mr Willie. Give him some thinking time.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. I'm going to go to a different area, minister. If I could go to year 11 and 12, and the extension schools. How many extension schools do we have currently?

Ms COURTNEY - With regard to extension schools I'm really excited that next year we're going to see Taroona High School extended to year 12. This is going to ensure that we

have all our high schools through to year 11 and 12, so that's make it 57 I believe. The fact that we've been able to roll this out, I pay tribute to Jeremy Rockliff and what he's done in this space. I mentioned yesterday within estimates that this is one of those policy areas that were critical in me deciding to put my hand up and run for politics. I think that we had been - it had been a disservice to young people, particularly in regional areas, that there was an impediment for them to be able to access year 11 and 12. I think we all know communities in our areas where young people will make - the impediment of travelling into a college was too difficult, and making sure that we have every opportunity for a young person to be able to access through to year 12 I'm just thrilled about.

We still are working with schools to make sure that we keep kids engaged through to year 12. I said that in my opening statement that that's a big focus of ours, we are seeing disengagement as kids go through that year 7 to 12, and ultimately, we don't want to lose these kids from learning because that's going to have a significant detrimental impact on their lives and their wellbeing. It's been a really successful project, and it's something we continue to focus on and invest in particularly with the regional partnerships that the schools have together so that they can work with each other on learning outcomes.

Ms ARMITAGE - I agree with you with regard to the regional schools, however I've always had an issue usually raise this each year with minister Rockliff, and I have in the past to do with -

CHAIR - He hasn't taken any notice of you, so here's the time for the new minister to get on board.

Ms ARMITAGE - I don't know if the new minister will take any notice either, but the concern that I have is with city schools, and I look at the north. Particularly we have a lot of schools all with an easy reach, and the problem that we have are specialist teachers. We know, and this has been going on for many, many years, that - I think Mr Willie would probably agree here that many teachers were here that might not be trained in science but they're teaching science, or they might not be trained in mathematics but they're teaching mathematics, because we don't have enough specialised teachers.

The concern that I have with our colleges, now we have Newstead College and Launceston College, I often have asked Mr Rockliff in the past whether it'd be wise to combine them and have two campuses, a Newstead and a city campus, considering the difficulties that some of the colleges have with students when school's probably no more than 1 or 2 kilometres away, and at most maybe 5 kilometres away, are actually then offering years 11 and 12.

Minister, can you tell me, do we have sufficient specialised trained teachers for all these schools to actually have years 11 and 12. I have no problem at all, I agree I think it's absolutely wonderful for the regional schools and the rural schools for the students to have access, but I do question how you can justify schools in a city area with two colleges within 5 kilometres, or 2 kilometres, or 1 kilometre in some cases actually trying to stretch the teachers. So, how do you manage it? How is that working? Do you consider that it's detrimental? Well, you're not going to consider it detrimental, but can you accept that it can be detrimental to the colleges, to the actual existing colleges, in the circumstances - city areas.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, Ms Armitage. I'm going to add to this in actually a few parts. First of all, with regards to the models of learning, the extension schools work in partnership with each other as well as colleges to be able to deliver that learning,

particularly when we recognise the fact that we have - there are some schools that have only a small handful, a very small handful, of kids in year 11 and 12, and obviously we're not going to be able to have the full suite of specialised staff on that site. So, in a moment I'll get the secretary to talk about the models of shared learning that we have across those systems, so that's the first thing. The second thing with regards to teacher recruitment, we are currently in the market on the mainland quite extensively with our teacher recruitment.

One of the things that was implemented through the workforce round table with a range of different stake holders is making sure that we have got pathways of provisional development and also excellence around teacher training, and ensuring that we are looking to acknowledge those areas of excellence and provide pathways for those teachers. So, we want to make sure that we're continuing to develop teachers as well as a broader recruitment. The policy more broadly, ultimately, I want to see every Tasmanian child having the opportunity to learn through to year 12, and I want to remove as many impediments as possible. I absolutely accept that some extension schools - this may mean that they don't have many kids enrolled into year 11 and 12, but hypothetically, or even if we had a school where you had three kids that were enrolled there, if they are enrolled there and they stay through to year 12 they are probably three kids that would not have necessarily gone through to year 12 at the college.

This is why I think this policy is so important, it is about providing the opportunity for those kids, whatever their views are, and I mentioned in my opening statement around the year 11 to 12 project that we're doing and looking at the ways that we can do learning so that we keep kids engaged, I want to have more options on the table for them, not fewer. So, I might ask the secretary to expand, particularly on the models of learning.

Ms ARMITAGE - Through you minister, also classroom space. If the secretary could expand on how some of the schools, particularly the high schools, are managing the classroom space having to take into 11 and 12.

CHAIR - There's three students in the class, they've got plenty of space.

Ms ARMITAGE - They might not all have three.

Ms COURTNEY - We have provided capital funding for schools as well, but perhaps for the secretary on that education model as well as the other aspects.

Mr BULLARD - So on enrolments and proximity to school, geography is only one barrier to these young people attending, and a lot of the time it is around social and psychological barriers to attending. I've been really fortunate to be in these extensions school settings and speaking to these students, and they are absolutely students that would not have gone to college, even if it's just down the street, because they can't overcome those barriers. What we actually need to do as a system is to provide pathways and opportunities that meet the aspiration and abilities of the students in our system, not expect that there's a one size fits all.

What you're going to be able to access, is really great that now, for example, this is the Hearts Collective information guide, we don't have Hobart College, and Taroona, and Huonville, and Dover. This is, if you're in our collective, these are all the courses that you can access. What we're seeing is dual enrolments increasing. Some of these students might take up a course at college but they'll do a majority back in their extension high school, which is

really, really positive as well. So, the pathways that fit you to meet the aspiration that you want to achieve.

Ms ARMITAGE - So that's a southern -

Mr BULLARD - This one? Yes. But there are collectives now for every college.

Ms ARMITAGE - So we do have in the north and north-west as well.

Mr BULLARD - Yes, absolutely. There are clusters of extension schools that sit around a college and colleges are funded to partner with them, and it's absolutely around this. So, really important that there are multiple opportunities and pathways. You're not limited to being at your extension school, which I think is really important. In terms then of course, provision, I think one of the really exciting things through COVID-19 was how well we can actually do virtual learning and online learning. Virtual Learning Tas now has 26 online senior secondary courses which it is providing, and they're accessible right across the whole system for schools that want to take that up. So that overcomes some of that barrier in terms of staffing.

Your final question was around the infrastructure, there is a fund to upgrade and refurbish existing facilities. I was out at Montrose Bay recently, they're moving into pharmacies, Certificate 2 in Pharmacy next year. They've got a really great area which I remember was the dead end of the school, and now it's this really fantastic senior secondary facility that we funded to upgrade. Sometimes that's new builds. So, at Queechy, you might be aware, there's going to be a new 11 and 12.

Ms ARMITAGE - Have they fixed them? Sorry, I'm just interrupting here. Mr Dean always mentioned Queechy toilet blocks.

Mr BULLARD - The toilets are fixed, yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - I was wondering if that had been addressed?

Mr BULLARD - Yes, they are.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. It's not in my electorate, it's across the road, but I thought I should mention it.

Mr VALENTINE - I hope he's listening.

Mr BULLARD - So there's a mix of new builds, minor refurbishments where there's existing space that needs to be upgraded to a contemporary area, and then more substantial redevelopments that have been funded.

CHAIR - I have a supplementary. Or is yours - still on this? Thank you.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes. I wouldn't dare go to a new area. So, still on year 11 and 12, would you be able to give me, and I'm happy to take it on notice as well, for the last three years the actual numbers at Newstead and Launceston Colleges?

Ms COURTNEY - We might be able to provide that now.

Ms ARMITAGE - Okay. I don't mind if you need to take it on notice.

Mr BULLARD - Just got to key into -

CHAIR - Do you need to borrow my phone?

Mr VALENTINE - You can have mine if you like, but I don't think that'd be much help.

CHAIR - Jenny, have mine.

Mr BULLARD - Needs to move to a bifocal, it won't.

Ms ARMITAGE - Might need to borrow the secretary's. Probably you'd have to go 2019-20 to get full numbers.

Ms COURTNEY - So was it Launceston, Newstead?

Ms ARMITAGE - If we just stick with those two that's fine. I think it gives us a snapshot rather than trying to do too many more, yes.

Ms COURTNEY - Head count?

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes.

Ms COURTNEY - Okay, so which year would you like, sorry?

Ms ARMITAGE - If we do the last three years because that would give a comparison.

Ms COURTNEY - So 2019, 2020 and 2021, okay. So, for headcount in 2019 for Launceston College it was 1516, and Newstead it's 512. That's head count. In 2020, in Launceston College, it was 1374, and 573 for Newstead. Then in 2021, in terms of head count at Launceston, 1259 and Newstead 571.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. The other question that I did mention as we were talking with regard to specialist teachers, so how are we tracking with specialist teachers? Particularly science and maths. Do we have sufficient for years 11 and 12 regardless of whether they're an extension school or whether they're at a college? Are the teachers that are teaching maths and science, are they specialist teachers or are they teachers perhaps trained in PE and others as has happened in the past? So, are they trained in science and maths, the people that - do we have specialist teachers?

Mr BULLARD - In terms of senior secondary there're a number of things to note. One is you might be trained in it but you also may have taught in it for an extended period, and so we would treat both of those cohorts as being competent and capable of teaching. The other thing as I referred to Virtual Learning Tasmania and shared enrolments allows us - so rather than replicating a science teacher on two sites allows us to place the student where the teacher with the expertise sits. So, that's really important. Finally, in terms of workforce audit, probably important to note that we currently have commissioned a system that is exactly doing

that work for us. So actually, being able to provide a skills experience and qualifications of our workforce.

In terms of loading data into that system, that's a work in progress. We found that for example the TRB is not collecting certain qualification information on registration, and so we need to work with them to sharpen that up. But what that provides us with is a really unique opportunity to do something we haven't be able to do, and that is to be a really good customer for university. We've been forecasting and predicting on our workforce statistics what we need.

Ms ARMITAGE - I wasn't looking at the competence. I was looking at the stress for those teachers actually. I'm thinking more of the stress on the teachers having to cope with teaching something that perhaps you're not trained more so than the competence. I'm sure most of them are competent, but it was just the stress on them.

CHAIR – Have you finished?

Ms ARMITAGE - No, that's right.

CHAIR – Thank you. I have a supplementary from Mr Valentine and then a supplementary from Mr Willie on the same area.

Mr VALENTINE - There you go. My question is in regard to the year 11 and 12 and the overlapping the college system. I'm interested to know, there are kids that shine in practical applications and skill development but they're not great with the theoretical principles. I know that VET courses, I believe, attempt to address this. Now, with the move to year 11 and 12 in every school, is that impacting on the level of apprenticeships that we're seeing, or the lack of apprenticeships that we're seeing, that are crucial to the building industry and the like.

Some kids are just not performers when it comes to the academics, but they're great performers when they've got something in front of them that they can actually demonstrate their skill on, or learn skills on, and later on they get that other learning as they go through. I'm wondering how you assess that and whether we're trying to push square pegs into round holes too early.

CHAIR - Good question.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you. I agree. It's a very good question, and I agree about the fact that we need to have pathways for different students and I absolutely, as the Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth, very much believe in the importance of the VET system and the pathways it provides obviously to support industry, but also for those young people, those pathways into further training and into jobs.

I am a strong believer in the partnership with the VET system and this is part of the act, the new act that the previous minister brought in was making sure that we are keeping kids engaged in learning around VET as well. In terms of the data, I'll get that data for you in just a moment in terms of the statistics, but -

Mr VALENTINE - I'm interested to know whether there are kids that actually drop out because they are not being picked up as a result of this - their propensity not to be the theoretical sort of appliers, if you like.

Ms COURTNEY - We want to make sure that, as part of the year 7 to 12 project, that we are looking at the pathways that are right for each student. I talked before about the way that you learn and the site that you learn on, and indeed where you're actually doing that, but a big part of that is also working to ensure that we've got the right learning plans for each child. I just want to see kids engaged, so that's my highest priority.

Mr VALENTINE - I think everyone wants to see that happen.

Ms COURTNEY - I'll be able to provide more information this afternoon in Skills, Training and Workforce Growth on some of the initiatives that we're doing around that.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, it's a bit of an overlap.

Ms COURTNEY - Because there is a bit of overlap. My advice is that in 2012, there were 52 different full VET qualifications across 23 different training packages delivered to schools and colleges at 29 sites across Tasmania. With regards to any other -

Mr VALENTINE - I guess I'm thinking a -

Ms COURTNEY - If it's written on that brief, minister, it's fine to share.

Mr VALENTINE - While you're looking at that, I guess it's a bit like pathway planning, you know, for individual kids, and I know that that was done away with some time ago and I wonder whether -

CHAIR - They're back. Pathway planners are back.

Mr VALENTINE - They are, but I'm not sure how well applied - how applicable -

Ms COURTNEY - My understanding is that they're not back.

Mr VALENTINE - to the kids. But anyway.

Ms COURTNEY - In terms of data, we've got 3006 enrolments currently. That's enrolments, not necessarily students, so the number of actual students will be lower. In terms of what we're doing to support pathways, in the 2019-20 budget we allocated \$1.48 million over four years to grow and strengthen the Australian School-based Apprenticeships for years 10 to 12 in government schools, including \$310,000 in 2021-22. In terms of the Australian School-based Apprenticeships, these allow the learners to combine education, employment, and training to gain their TCE and a nationally recognised VET qualification, usually Cert II or Cert III, across most industries and training packages.

The department is focused on repositioning and elevating these to support increased access and participation and engagement in years 11 and 12. In 2020, the Government commissioned an independent external review by KPMG of the current Australian School-based Apprenticeship program that we've got. Many of the recommendations from the review have been implemented by the department in 2021. These include the development of a personalised case management system to assist the provision of high quality case management and support for schools and students.

The implementation of a comprehensive 2021 apprenticeship and traineeship professional learning program for schools, as well as the establishment of two cross-agency committees; one at an operational level and one at a strategic level with Skills Tasmania to promote close alignment and collaboration between the two agencies with responsibility for apprenticeships and traineeships, because obviously there is a bit of crossover in terms of those portfolios.

Mr VALENTINE - There is crossover. There's no question about that, and I'll be asking some questions about that a bit later.

CHAIR - That will be later today.

Ms COURTNEY - The thing we'll be able to talk about later today is particularly the complementary things I have in that portfolio about how we're supporting young people in pathways into jobs and that's a really critical part of, particularly the jobs hubs, but the programs that we have underneath that.

Mr VALENTINE - That's encouraging to hear, because I know when we dealt with pathway planners, there were a lot of us that actually thought that that was a really bad thing to drop at the time.

CHAIR - We still do if it's not the case.

Mr VALENTINE - I don't know. It seems to me that there's a bit of pathway planning in there, and I'm sure Mr Willie down the end of the table will probably explore that a bit further. I don't know. I have other questions but not on this.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - I just want to go back to the workforce scan. I'm pleased to hear that that's been finalised. I did see the tender finalised late last year. Is the department in a position now to say how many language teachers it has, for example, or maths teachers, or science, English, drama, music, arts, history, geography? Does it have that capability? You obviously said that - or the secretary said that the Teachers Registration Board needs to improve their data collection, but when will we get to that point? So when you're recruiting new teachers, you could even see at a regional level what the shortage may be.

Ms COURTNEY - I might get my secretary to reply with some comments on that, Mr Willie.

Mr BULLARD - I'm sorry, Mr Willie, it's a work in progress and the system is up and running, but there is obviously data deficits that we've now identified. Absolutely the endpoint is to be able to not only understand by region but by school what the capability of the workforce is. Then if you put a lens over demographics and predicted retirement dates, et cetera, be able to forecast what the system and the school is going to need into the future. So actively working with the TRB and the University of Tasmania around how we're going to use this and also how we can sharpen the data up.

As I said before, your qualification on leaving university is one input, and part of the system is then tracking through TimeTabler, so going back into the TimeTabler and seeing what did you actually teach over one, three, five plus years. We know that teachers that have taught three plus years in a subject area are competent in that area. So certainly the data collection is in progress and discussions with the university, they're very, very positive and they had indicated they will take, if you like, a consumer signal from us as the purchaser of what specialities we need, and they'll look at ways at reformulating their intake and the courses that they put students into to ensure that we're getting a workforce that's not only ready for our system, but is what we need.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, is there a time frame when it will be finalised? You know I've had a keen interest in this for many years and think it's very important to strategically develop the workforce and make sure that we have the right skills in the right schools.

Ms COURTNEY - I'll just wait for the secretary.

Mr BULLARD - I'm advised there are two aspects, so I'll advise you of both, one easier than the other. The first is actually going to staff and asking them to verify qualification data and that work is about to commence. The second is I'm advised that we need to work with the TRB obviously as the statutory authority to get their permission to seek the data on registration and then to be able to upload that into our system, and those discussions are underway.

Mr WILLIE - Chair, if I could to the other topic that was being discussed which is the extension schools. Minister, you provided an answer to me in the Legislative Council on retention and attainment for year 11 and 12 extension schools and colleges. It didn't include the retention from year 10 to year 11. I'm just wondering whether you could take that on notice. That was for each school. It had the retention from year 11 to year 12. I think that's important, given the changes to the Education Act.

My secondary question there is we've seen some of the attendance rates in extension schools, and if you look at the retention rates - I won't name the schools, but there are schools here with retention rates of 14.3 per cent, 50 per cent, 50 per cent. We're seeing attendance rates as low as 36 per cent in some of these schools for year 11 and 12. I'm just wondering what the department's approach is; whether they're intervening in those schools and providing more resources and support to try and engage these kids that clearly are struggling to get to the end of their schooling.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, that's a very good question. I'm going back to the theme that I've talked about a few times in terms of keeping children engaged is incredibly important. I acknowledge that some of the kids at some schools that we have in the extension schools were the ones that were perhaps at most risk of never actually even going into year 11. While I would love to see all those attendance rates and retention higher, and we're working on that, the -

Mr WILLIE - You can't improve outcomes if they're not in the classroom, can you?

Ms COURTNEY - I absolutely agree. You can't get good outcomes, and I agree with that. This is why we've got a range of initiatives which I'll get the secretary to expand on. We have got the Anything Can Happen campaign in the market at the moment. This is to reinforce, not just for students but also for their families and the whole community, the importance of

why attending every single day is important. We also know that once students have several - the longer that a student disengages for, the less chance we have of having them re-engage. So making sure that we've got those things being worked on early.

We've got a number of attendance strategies particularly that we focus on for those kids that are at risk of disengagement. We've got a youth participation database which enables the department to have greater visibility on youth under 18 who do not have active enrolments, so helping - that they are participating and engaged in learning. As you're aware, the Education Act also goes to the provision of the conciliation conferences for students and their family to understand what the causes of the long-term patterns on non-attendance are, looking at what those strategies are to re-engage those students. That's a really critical one because we do know that there are a range of reasons that people do disengage and those conferences are convened by the education registrar.

Perhaps I'll ask the secretary to talk more broadly about some of the other ways that we're working to keep those kids engaged because we need to make sure that we are implementing a range of different strategies to keep them engaged in learning.

Mr BULLARD - Thank you, minister, and Mr Willie, certainly it is an absolute focus area for us around attendance in years 11 and 12. We shouldn't lose sight of things to celebrate though, and it's really heartening when I've met with some of these students. They didn't attend at all in year 10, and so attending for 50 per cent or 60 per cent in year 11, yes, we would like that to be higher, but they are there and that allows us to be providing them with additional support.

We're taking a very targeted approach. The minister said earlier that around retention and engagement, there's two sides of the ledger. There's obviously the teaching and learning, the provision; is it vocational learning, VET, or more traditional senior secondary subjects. But on the other side, what we know around the cohort, especially in extension schools, is that we're also dealing with a lot of wellbeing issues and the supports need to be targeted.

Mr WILLIE - And literacy issues.

Mr BULLARD - Literacy issues, absolutely. Absolutely, and so to that end, the department has a back on track approach, which runs in the south and the northwest, soon to be extended to the north. That program is actually tracking students who are either not turning up at all, in years 11 and 12, or whose attendance is falling.

It's a teacher, it's social work and psych support, and it's actually tailored support that's asking you the question, what do you need to be coming to school and engaging in learning more often? As well as that, we have engagement project officers, and they're working with the wellbeing teams, in every school now we have a support and wellbeing team, and the student engagement officers are working with them around different ways to map what's your current engagement provision, is it working for your cohort or not if it's not what can you be doing differently.

There's investment in hands on learning, knowing that that is something that does really float some young people's boat. Also, there is a therapeutic outreach model called Climb. That's focused on intensive re-engagement for students who probably haven't turned up for an extended period to get them back in. It is an absolute focus area of the department to ensure

that as many learned as possible are turning up and engaging in learning in year 11 and 12 every day.

CHAIR - Is that supplementary to the wellbeing?

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, if I could just go to the wellbeing. I know that the minister is aware of some of these instances. With the wellbeing team, where are they available, and does the DoE have a plan in place for young people, obviously that might not have come across the wellbeing team, but who are homeless. I think the minister's aware that we have seen a case this year of a student who was homeless. Do the schools have something in place to help these young people? Obviously people are aware that these young people have nowhere to live, or can't live at home, or are couch surfing. So what's the situation in this case?

Ms COURTNEY - In recent times we've had a key strengthening of the relationships between Department of Education and the Department of Communities Tasmania, clearly with the responsibility in Department of Communities for children and youth as well as housing, they play a key role. From a senior leadership level, there is direct engagement from senior leaders in DoE with the Department of Communities so that we can look at, particularly when we have an escalating individual case, that that can be dealt with in an appropriate, timely way, because we need to do that.

More broadly minister Ferguson has initiatives under his portfolio and I've got some that I can discuss later on today under Children and Youth, and some of the pilots that we have around youth housing, and the mechanisms around access for that. Ultimately this is where the strengthening relationship we have between DoE and Department of Communities is so important. There is a benefit in having a minister across those two portfolios in particular, because there is a lot of interconnection with these, particularly around things like the advice and referral line. In particular in the way that -

Ms ARMITAGE - It's followed up as well?

Ms COURTNEY - The advice and referral line ensures that things are followed up and escalated. With regards to the way that the wellbeing teams work within schools, I'll ask the secretary to provide further information around that. As you've seen in the example that you talked about, there was immediate escalation to a deputy secretary level.

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm not sure of the outcome now, but it wasn't in my electorate.

Ms COURTNEY - I'm talking to another portfolio, so I'll just make some brief comments and we can just do it more this afternoon. Some of the complaints around the legislation that we deal with around young people means that even if we have people with extraordinarily good intentions, we're just not in a position, legally, to be able to provide feedback to people. I know that that can have a sense of frustration, particularly for local members who raise issues. The fact that we can't -

Ms ARMITAGE - And the teachers who see the problems.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, there are barriers for the information that we can disclose about a young person, which I can understand does sometimes escalate the anxiety of people that have made reports. I will go to Tim for the substance of the question around the wellbeing.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, I am assuming there's north, north-west, and south, and how they actually work, or where they're located.

Mr BULLARD - Every school has a wellbeing team. Their remit is to basically monitor the wellbeing of the student cohort, and of particular students, and provide intervention and support within the responsibility of that school. So we need to understand that schools are places of learning and there is a remit for that school. Where you've gone in terms of homelessness, absolutely that's a cohort of what we'd call vulnerable students. That's escalated to senior executive level, as the minister said, within the Department of Communities and the Department of Education, and we work collaboratively.

Ms ARMITAGE - So the wellbeing team though would obviously identify these students.

Mr BULLARD - That's right. We've got on the ground information coming through, as well as a number of data sets that both agencies hold that identify children at risk for various reasons. Then the vulnerable student approach is really to look at how we collaborate across agencies to provide wholistic support. So, recognising we can't find a young person a house in the Department of Education, we can certainly work with Housing Tasmania to engage them and get them back to learning. As I said that's run at deputy secretary level, so it's very senior, and there's a high level of responsiveness to the needs as they come up through that. I think in the future there's going to be a case management platform that's being developed that will hold a lot of that data, and that will be shared across both agencies so that we're getting a single view of how that child's tracking.

CHAIR - Wasn't that called EDDIE about a decade ago?

Mr BULLARD - Before us, yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - EDDIE was something different.

Mr BULLARD - That's education data, we want to be getting a whole child view so that we can understand the particular opportunities and barriers for those children and young people who are vulnerable.

Ms ARMITAGE - So how many people would be at each school in the wellbeing team, are they teachers? Is it a bit like a first-aid person, so is it a teacher who is trained in first-aid, or are they extra people who have come in to be part of the wellbeing team, or are they teachers who are already there who take on extra responsibility?

Mr BULLARD - They're support staff and teachers who take on that responsibility.

Ms ARMITAGE - They're existing staff who have done extra training.

Mr BULLARD - They have a responsibility and accountability, they did anyway, but they weren't linked in before with the system.

Ms ARMITAGE - But have they done extra training?

Mr BULLARD - Yes, they undertake different professional learning, and there is a range of professional learning out there around mental health, working with students with trauma. I don't know minister, whether you mentioned the additional trauma funding that is going into those schools with high need. It's providing resources, it's providing professional learning and approaches, all to provide better supports for students and young people but recognising when it moves outside the remit of the school, we need to be providing agency support.

Ms ARMITAGE - And this is primary, high, and senior second. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - Thank you, Chair. That particular case that you were talking about, minister, you know I spoke to representatives in your office and your other department, Communities, and I wrote to you about it too. I understand under the act information can't be shared, but I can say the intentions were good. Even just an assurance that that young person was no longer on the streets would have been enough, but it did cause a lot of anxiety for the people around that child who were extremely worried. I just thought I'd pass that on.

Ms COURTNEY - I appreciate that. In terms of the information that comes back to you in those types of circumstances, I take advice from the department about the extent of advice that we can provide back, because I do know the key interests and well-intentioned interest.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, you'd be aware that the last PESA results showed that Tasmanian students are up to four-and-a-half years behind in mathematics education compared to some of their peers in other countries. If you look at the numeracy data, NAPLAN data for this year, 90.3 per cent of Tasmanian year 7 students were at or above the national minimum standard. That's the worst of any jurisdiction, barring the Northern Territory. If you follow the same cohort back to 2017, when they were in year three, 94.9 per cent of the cohort were at or above the national benchmark for numeracy. So there's been a decline in standards for that cohort. Minister, what commitments has the Government made to improving numeracy standards, given that our education in mathematics is lagging behind national and international standards?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, Mr Willie. We've spoken a lot this morning about literacy, and particularly reflected on the results of NAPLAN. We also need to make sure that we're focusing on numeracy as well, because there are improvements that we do need to make.

The 2021 to 2025 numeracy framework and plan for action focuses on the quality teaching of mathematics and the importance of numeracy skills for learning, life, and work. The development of the numeracy plan for action 2021 to 2025 aligns system wide priorities and guides strategic actions for numeracy improvement. These priorities include attention to the importance of numeracy skills and understanding across all ages, quality teaching of mathematics to improve numeracy, valid and reliable measures of impact and learned growth in mathematics and strengthening and expanding the numeracy teaching workforce.

Quality and targeted professional learning is provided for teachers through action two of the numeracy framework, the numeracy coaching initiative pilot. Which focus on building the capacity of teachers for the effective teaching of mathematics. The pilot, which commenced in February this year involves 19 primary schools and secondary schools across the state. To

support the pilot that we're conducting we've employed six lead quality teaching coaches to support teachers and school leaders in these schools. The lead coaches are providing professional learning and the implementation of strategies across curriculum content, teaching practices, and the assessment of mathematics and numeracy learning.

As with the in-school literacy coaches, these coaches are working at the shoulder with teachers to codesign and coteach, improving teacher knowledge and practice. In addition to that, we're developing quality resources to support the effective teaching of mathematics in collaboration with key stakeholders and the mathematics principal education officers. The lead coaches are working with data analysts to monitor and evaluate the impact of the pilot that's happening now and consider the ways that it can be scaled up across the schools. Student learning gains will be measured through the progressive achievement test, mathematics, and as we look to the outcomes of the pilot, we'll be able to determine what the future actions and directions are.

Mr WILLIE - That's all very well, minister, but we're seeing a decline in standards. We need a new approach to improve our education outcomes. What's happening at the moment is clearly not working. Are you having conversations with the university around teacher education and trying to recruit more mathematics specialist teachers? How many mathematics teachers are teaching out of area?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, Mr Willie, I think I've just answered quite comprehensively the fact that we have a plan of action that started this year. We've got a pilot underway at the moment that is resourced in the pilot schools, and we have a mechanism around that to assess it to be able to take further steps. Any assertion that we're not doing anything is untrue based on the answer that I just provided.

We're very actively engaged with the university. In fact they're a member of the workforce roundtable that we have - and I'll ask the secretary in a moment to talk about the engagement particularly with the university - which focuses on a number of different areas. It looks at recruitment, which is a key part of that, but also retention, and how we are providing pathways for further learning and indeed teacher excellence. I'll ask the secretary to expand further with regard to particularly mathematics and numeracy.

Mr BULLARD - The education numeracy framework, as the minister set out, now sets out a roadmap for improving maths outcomes, and again an area of focus like literacy. As with literacy the focus is evidence-based teaching strategies that are understood and being implemented by teachers in classrooms every day. The coaches are really important for doing that. I already outlined the progressive achievement test in literacy in every year. With maths, that is going to be implemented for every year level next year, from prep to year 10. So on the ground formative assessment information provided to teachers, and then the professional learning around maths and the coaching support will provide evidence-based strategies in classrooms, and that's really important.

The other thing that we are doing through the plan for action is that workforce capacity is front and centre. So, we're upskilling and incentivising current maths teachers teaching in the workforce. We're providing them with additional opportunities to ensure that they're contemporary in their approaches. We're working with UTAS around micro-credentialing. There are people out there who are teaching maths, may have done so for many years, not qualified in it. They have an opportunity to work with university, undertake courses that they're

credentialed for which are explicitly in the teaching of maths. I don't know if you're aware of our -

Mr WILLIE - Just on that, do they get time off for professional learning? Is that funded to do those micro-credentialing courses? Is it done in their own time?

Mr BULLARD - I'm told that work is under way around the micro-credentialing and, yes, they will get time off for that. The other thing is around the teacher in term placement program which you might be aware of. That's where in your fourth year of study you commence working in a school with a scholarship. There is a focus there on ensuring that we're attracting the specialist teachers that are required. It's really exciting that there's been 77 applications that have been accepted as suitable for that internship. Both university and the department as an employer see really high-quality graduates coming out of that as a result of their on-the-ground experience in their final year. Finally, around the centralised recruitment campaign that was introduced in 2018, we're becoming a lot more targeted about who we're recruiting and where, and as you've identified, the capability system is central to that.

Mr WILLIE - On teacher shortages, obviously that's a national challenge. We're seeing shortages of teachers in a number of jurisdictions. I'm happy if you need to take this on notice, but how many unfilled vacancies does the Department of Education currently have for classroom teachers, specialist teachers, advanced skill teachers, principals and assistant principals, permanent relief teachers, school psychologists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, social workers, youth workers, teacher assistants, education support specialists and other education support personnel and support staff? To follow up on that, how many of these vacancies have existed for two months or more? How many new FTE teacher positions are provided for in the 2021 budget above those provided in the 2020 budget?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, Mr Willie. There's probably good reason to take that on notice. I'm pleased with the national recruitment campaign that we have underway so far. In the latest data I have on this, there may be newer data, 295 applications have already been received. I expect that that number of perhaps will be higher now. The secretary also outlined the education workforce roundtable which has a number of strategies underway.

In your question you talked about relief teachers. We're actually implementing at the moment, because we know there are some challenges around relief teachers, a number of strategies to attract additional relief teachers to be available for fixed term and relief employment. These strategies include promoting relief employment opportunities through various advertising campaigns. We're engaging with recently retired teachers and we're working with UTAS and the TRB to enable fourth-year education students to work as relief teachers through granting limited onboarding to teach.

Another initiative that we're trialling is a pool of relief teachers comprised of approximately 30 permanent teaching staff that we've piloted in 2022. We have a range of strategies to ensure that not only are we recruiting, but that we have the mechanisms in place to be able to manage when we do have illness, and we know with COVID-19 we do see more absenteeism.

The opportunities that we have, we've talked about at the education workforce roundtable. That's a key part of how we're looking at the supply coming through from the

university. We need to make sure that we're getting the quantity, but also the quality of teachers through that. Indeed, the department has in recent times and over a period of time put a lot more focus on the way that we do the recruitment, the way that we ensure that we support new teachers because we do have a risk of not having the retention we'd like to, particularly with new staff coming on-board. I'm not sure whether you've got some -

Mr WILLIE - My next question is how many teacher positions or how many early career teachers leave the Tasmanian public system and the profession in their first five years of teaching?

Ms COURTNEY - In terms of early career teachers, as I alluded to, that's some of the work that we're doing through the education workforce roundtable to understand the needs, but also importantly provide the support because we want to retain these not always young but young people within education. That's really important. I don't have the data on me at the moment, but perhaps I'll get the secretary to talk about what we're doing on those early teacher retentions.

Mr WILLIE - I mean, part of the issue, too, on early teacher retention is a lot of them are recruited to hard-to-staff schools and there's not as many senior teachers with a lot of experience in those schools, and so it's a tough environment.

Mr BULLARD - Early career teachers absolutely needs to be an area of focus. I will note that over the past two years we've had zero separations from our internship program which I think shows the success of actually on-boarding people in their final year of university. I think I said there were 77 interns. It's actually 71, so I'll just correct the record on that.

What we know is the support which we provide in the early years of your career is as important as what happens in initial teacher education. That's why through the education workforce roundtable we've basically started to conceptualise your training as from day 1 at uni to five years into starting your employment. That's a different concept than would've happened before. What that means is when you start working for us, you come to our welcome to the profession day; you're set up in your year group, so the 2021 or the 2020-year group, to support one another; and then over the course of that year you're coming back together, sharing your experiences and supporting each other. We've also provided mentoring in your first two years so that there's a senior staff member who is mentoring you and providing support, and through the last industrial agreement you have time off class to assist with preparation and other PL that might be required. So, really looking at how you are continuing to learn.

We know that that's the best outcome, that you don't just hit us cold and then you're left in a classroom to teach. Putting in place those strategies, and I think that the strong link back to unis being really useful for us, and they want to continue that. They like the idea of having a cohort that they continue to support along with us once they've started in the profession. So, it's all targeting you feeling more equipped and able to work within our system across your years until when you'd expect to see full registration.

Mr WILLIE - So, the answer to my question: what percentage of early career teachers in the Tasmania public system leave the profession in the first five years?

Ms COURTNEY - I'll take that on notice along with the data from the other one.

CHAIR - Thank you. Minister, I'm interested in knowing about the trial to introduce the highly accomplished and lead teacher certification for Tasmanian teachers. Will that result in a higher pay rate? What sort of enhanced career prospects will that deliver? That's under the workforce roundtable initiative, I believe.

Ms COURTNEY - I'm glad that you asked that. I will pass to the department to talk about this one. The reason that I'm smiling is whenever this topic comes up in my office, the education advisers that I have in my office get very excited by this, and -

CHAIR - What? About paying out more money to teachers?

Ms COURTNEY - About recognition of the amazing teachers and the work that's being done.

CHAIR - So they do get higher remuneration?

Ms COURTNEY - Look, no -

CHAIR - No?

Ms COURTNEY - It's not about remuneration. It's about acknowledgement and also further opportunities. I'll ask the secretary to talk through the program. I went to Hobart College maybe eight weeks ago to meet some of the people who have been involved in the highly accomplished lead teacher certification. It is actually an Australia-wide coordinated approach that we're doing, and there is a steering committee that includes membership from a range of different organisations, not just DoE. Perhaps the secretary can talk to it a bit further.

Mr BULLARD - It's an Australia-wide, as the minister said, coordinated approach. The idea is to support teachers to progress in their career and be recognised for their considerable experience whilst remaining in the classroom. As you know, the only way to be recognised in a traditional hierarchy is that you get a promotion to an advanced skill teacher or then you become assistant principal and you're out of the classroom, so you're lost. There is a cohort of teachers that want to remain with children in classrooms, and they're very very high quality.

We've established a steering committee. It's cross sector with the Catholic education and independent schools so that we can have a coordinated Tasmanian approach. Out of that there is currently a HALT pilot that's been delivered by the three sectors and the Teachers Registration Board and UTAS coordinating that. I'm advised that as of July this year there are 29 applicants who are undertaking the pilot, so the idea is to see whether it works. One of the most exciting things is the university's involvement. You're actually going to come out of this with a university qualification; that's not the case in other jurisdictions. Also, too, we've got 27 assessors working toward national certification. They are the people who would assess the competency or otherwise. That's really positive because having the assessors doing the national certification shows that we'll be ready to scale up once we've got the feedback from the pilot.

CHAIR - It sounds like a very good initiative. My second question is the funding model for students with disability. I note that the increased funding - the funding has been increased by \$3 million to \$14 million. I'm interested in how the model of funding has led to increased professional and support staff: how many and what time frame is that funding going to deliver the outcomes?

Ms COURTNEY - I'll talk more broadly through the policy which will hopefully provide the answers that you need. We're obviously committed to ensuring that we have environments where students can thrive. We are supporting an additional 2000 students through the nation-leading educational adjustments needs-based funding model for students with disability which is making a significant difference to the lives of those students. This approach was introduced in 2020 and aligns to support the educational adjustments teachers make in the classroom to assist students with disability to access, participate and engage in quality learning. Overall, it is estimated there is more than \$90 million of funding to support students with a disability in 2021, and the Tasmanian Government is providing \$56 million over four years in the budget to support the needs-based model which has delivered an additional 51 FTE support teachers.

CHAIR - Does that work with the NDIS at all?

Ms COURTNEY - What this means is, at the moment we have nearly 5000 students receiving support. Importantly, this is around a threshold of need that students have, and that is the threshold with which decisions are made about needs-based funding. There's no cap on the number of students able to be supported by the needs-based funding. If a student meets the threshold required to receive support, it's our commitment that they will have the funding that they need.

CHAIR - That's good to hear.

Mr WILLIE - Do they need a diagnosis?

Ms COURTNEY - No.

Mr BULLARD - No, this isn't a deficit-based model whereby you're labelled with an ailment; this is an adjustments model whereby professional judgments are made around what educational adjustments you require in your classroom to be able to engage meaningfully in learning. So, there isn't a diagnosis attached.

Mr WILLIE - I've come across kids and families where they're waiting for a diagnosis to get access to support.

Mr BULLARD - That's not the way that the model is framed. If there are instances of that it would be useful if they went through the minister's office so that we can check in and make sure that there's understanding. We absolutely accept that this is a big change in model and that we are building the workforce's capability to be able to make the professional judgments. We have four people who are out there, moderating the plans and the assessments that are made to ensure we're building that capacity. Ms Rattray, did you want a precis around the NDIS versus this model and how they interact?

CHAIR - I was interested in how the NDIS works with this. Students living with a disability often have an NDIS package as well. Does that come into the work that's undertaken in the classroom with them as well?

Mr BULLARD - I think they're complementary but not the same.

CHAIR - Right. Not the same.

Mr BULLARD - A simple example would be the NDIS would assess if you needed a mobility aid, what was most appropriate for you, and how it would operate. It may take into consideration where you need to get, in terms of your school and your education, but then they provide that. But once you're in the school, what adjustments do you need - that might be around having a reading pen that scans documents. Certainly, that would be seen as a learning aid, which would come into your package through this funding.

CHAIR - Right.

Mr WILLIE - Are there kids receiving NDIS packages who aren't receiving funding in schools for support?

Mr BULLARD - We would have to check that. I don't know how we would check that, actually.

Ms COURTNEY - What I'll do with that one is I'll take on notice. We will endeavour to see whether we can do that or not. The decision around whether you access this funding is not about, as the secretary mentioned, on a diagnosis, nor on whether you are eligible for NDIS. It's made on the need of an individual child. We might not actually have the data on the NDIS status of the various students, but I'm happy to check and take on notice, if we do have that data, and provide it.

Mr WILLIE - I know you were asked this yesterday, minister, so maybe with 24 hours you can answer it: how many students are in the Tasmanian education system that have a disability?

Ms COURTNEY - As we said yesterday - I looked to the secretary with regards to the data, whether we have it on NDIS. The numbers of students that we provide support through this need-based funding model, to see if we have the -

Mr WILLIE - That's not my question. It's not the number of students who are under the needs-based model. It's how many students are in our schools with a disability.

Ms COURTNEY - Can I just clarify, in terms of a disability. In different forums the definition of disability is different especially with ABS data, and other things have different thresholds on whether having to use, perhaps, a reading aid, like glasses - or whether we're talking about somebody who is accessing NDIS. Can you clarify, so we can get the correct data for you?

Mr WILLIE - Sure. What I'm asking is whether families and students identify as having a disability, and whether the department collects that on enrolment. I enrolled my child late last year, I can't remember if it was on the form or not. Can you provide the number of students that are under the model? I'm looking for that gap.

Mr BULLARD - Where students are assessed as needing learning adjustments which attract funding, then they're funded. So we don't have an envelope to our model.

Mr WILLIE - But if you look at the percentage of people in the community with a disability, the number of students under the model doesn't match.

Mr BULLARD - If I understand correctly, you might be going to the AEU's recent assertions around underfunding or missing students. Is that right? I can tell you that, as per our key data set, the total number of FTE in 2021 who are identified as requiring adjustments is 6476.52 FTE. Of those, 4856.46 FTE are provided with specific funding and support and 1620 do not require individual funding and support as their needs are met through quality, differentiated teaching practice, which is a nationally accepted definition through the nationally consistent collection of data.

The AEU's statement that we were missing students, we don't accept that assertion. There is also a number of students which might be counted as having a disability, which, when assessed, are actually assessed as suffering from trauma. What we know from the evidence is that labelling students who are suffering from trauma as having a disability can be detrimental to their ongoing learning outcomes. That's why, in our model, which we consider to be nation-leading, we split out students who require support for trauma from those with disability. As the minister's outlined in this Budget, we'll be supporting 300 additional students with specific targeted supports, to support them with trauma. So on that count, we actually don't have a gap with the AEU's overarching assertion.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, does the department collect information on enrolment whether families or students identify as having a disability? Does the department collect that information through some process?

Ms COURTNEY - I'll seek some advice on whether that's done through enrolment or not.

CHAIR - Somebody's looking up an enrolment form as we speak, I expect. It's been a while since I've enrolled a child at school, minister.

Mr VALENTINE - I'm starting on grandkids now.

CHAIR - Well, I haven't enrolled them. That's up to their parents.

Mr VALENTINE - Of course it is.

CHAIR - I've been going to Launching into Learning on Monday mornings with my grandchildren.

Ms COURTNEY - Have you?

CHAIR - The LiL.

Ms COURTNEY - Where are you doing that?

CHAIR - At Bridport.

Ms COURTNEY - Nice.

CHAIR - My two young grandchildren live at Bridport, so we go to Launching into Learning. We had Mini Olympics last week, and I wasn't participating and neither was my granddaughter in the gumboot throwing.

Mr VALENTINE - Arguably, this is Launching into Learning today, isn't it?

CHAIR - Could well be.

Ms COURTNEY - You would have been a good gumboot-thrower.

CHAIR - If the member doesn't mind, and this might take a little while, It would be a good idea to suspend for a morning tea break and resume at 11.25. That'll give somebody time to find the answer to that question. So thank you. We shall suspend, thank you, Shae.

The Committee suspended from 11.07 a.m.

The Committee recommenced at 11.25 a.m.

CHAIR - The time being 11.25am, we shall recommence the broadcast and I hope Michael's listening in another place. Welcome back, minister, and we've got quite a few areas to get through before 1 o'clock. We need to do Capital Investments. Let's see if we can't wrap the disability issue around students living with a disability in school then I'm going to go to the member for Hobart. Do you have a response to the question prior to the break?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, the secretary can provide some more information based on the question before the break.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr BULLARD - Thank you. The current enrolment form doesn't specifically ask if you have a disability. It does, however, ask for allergies, vaccination, mobility. For example, 'Do you have mobility issues and if so, what are they? Do you use a wheelchair or other device?' It also asks for medical information. That could be specific information on medical conditions but also there's a general health and wellbeing section where a parent can fill out any other information that they see as necessary. For example, a parent might choose in that box to identify that the student has ADHD or another disability.

Mr WILLIE - Is that information, through the minister, collated at all?

Mr BULLARD - In terms of?

Mr WILLIE - By the department in terms of the numbers.

Mr BULLARD - No, that's school level.

Ms COURTNEY - More qualitative.

Mr WILLIE - Before the break, I was asked about the definition, and it's an ABS definition, of disability, does not include kids that can be taught through differentiation, nor does it count trauma, the 11.5 per cent of people with a disability does not include those that

the DoE isn't funding. This is ABS data that was collated so it's not the AEU's data. I'll just clarify that.

CHAIR - You'll clarify that, thank you.

Ms SIEJKA - Just a supplementary, given that that data is not collected, it's obviously very important and it would probably help practice as well, is it something that you would consider to undertake to include in enrolments? It would help in a lot of the work that you do.

Ms COURTNEY - We have processes and the secretary can talk to it because in terms of making sure that there is a broad awareness and mechanisms for parents and students to be able to access the needs-based funding that we do have, clearly we need to be able to identify the young people that do have a needs-based identified. I'm not sure whether the secretary wants to comment on that.

Mr BULLARD - Where we sit on this is that parents can identify conditions which their child has for the information of the school. Where that child has been through the Early Childhood Intervention Service as well, which as you know has intake for birth to 4-year-old in students with a disability, they have transition plans which are provided to the school on entry to kinder. We need to be careful that we move away from labelling students as having a disability, which is a deficit-based modelling move towards the adjustments that are required. A much more productive discussion with parents, it's much better to be asking what does your student require to learn, rather than what is wrong with your child.

Ms SIEJKA - I'm sure there's a happy medium where you could collect the data without, I suppose, pushing -

Mr BULLARD - Frame the questions in that way that you've just described.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes. If the question is framed in a positive way as opposed to a deficit way, I'm sure there would be a way to collect that data, even just for your internal purposes.

Mr BULLARD - I will just note there are disability standards for education enrolment so anything we did we would need to be careful that we were within those guidelines.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. I'll take that as a comment.

Mr WILLIE - One more question on disability.

CHAIR - One more, then I've got to go up the other end of the table.

Mr WILLIE - Sure. Minister, the Government committed to an independent review of the adjustments model in the election campaign. Can't you see there's an urgent need to conduct that review as soon as possible, given some of the concerns which have been raised around the implementation of the model?

Ms COURTNEY - As the secretary has outlined, we're still in the early stages of embedding this model. It's really important we have the opportunity to embed the model and

then review - and then the review will look at what are the further steps or what more needs to be done. Also, we would be able to ascertain if there's different things which need to be done to ensure that there is access available to students. I'm not sure if the secretary has anything further but we want to make sure that the model is embedded before we actually review it.

Mr BULLARD - So, front and centre of the model is the funding, obviously, but actually the adjustments, and how they are being identified, and then how they are being implemented is the real work. That's workforce capacity. Our strong view is that we need, through the end of this year and next year, to continue to embed that. We are really proactive, in that we are moderating every plan.

We're going back and having conversations with teachers and support staff where we believe that there are adjustments that haven't been identified, or maybe there are adjustments which could be better implemented. We've been really proactive. It is being reviewed constantly. The review date at the end of next year, well, obviously, we'll go back and say, 'How is it working as a system?' But on an individual level, there are checks and balances that are in place now.

CHAIR - Thank you. Thank you, Mr Valentine.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you, Chair. Minister, we've had some communication on this issue. I've provided you with a question just prior to the break to give you a heads-up. It concerns the placement of parents in priority order on the school's parent contact list in the event of an emergency. I appreciate the need to not identify individuals or schools, so I suppose I'm interested in having a response in relation to what the department's position is, in any event, that might come forth in this regard.

So, for the record, when a Tasmanian parent has a legally binding Federal Circuit Court of Australia family order, in which it is ordered that parents have equal shared parental responsibility for the child or children, each party ensures he or she provides any doctor, therapist, school, after school care centre, sporting body, or any other entity which requires next-of-kin and/or contact details with the other party's details, as the next of kin or relevant contact person. When that Tasmanian parent has not state or police order restricting and/or prohibiting them from living with or spending time with their child or children, why, then, when that parent formally requests that they be placed as an equal or number 2 relevant emergency contact for their child or children does the state Education Department and relevant school refuse the parent their right to be so placed?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, Mr Valentine. In terms of correspondence that I've provided to you - I understand the intent of the question, and making sure that we do have equity between parents, particularly when there's an order -

Mr VALENTINE - There would be a lot of parents out there in this very circumstance.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, there are. What I might do, for the benefit of the committee, is to read in a part of the letter that I wrote to you, if that's all right, because there's the two different elements. There's around the enrolment, but there's also the emergency contacts. The emergency contacts are slightly separate.

So, for the benefit of others, for enrolment and validation forms for government schools, school students provide space for two enrolling parents and guardians, and up to four emergency contacts. Two of the emergency contacts can also be the parent or guardian. Unless there is a legal order in place to state otherwise, both parents or guardians are treated equally on these forms. It is a matter, though, for the family of the student to determine the emergency contacts, including the order in which they are listed on the forms. If the parents are no longer together, they can each provide the school with their respective lists of emergency contacts. While the child is in their care, they are, for the practical purposes, the main contact, and their emergency contacts will also be used, as these contacts may be used for different purposes.

We also ask parents that we try to get emergency contacts that are available during the day. Emergency contacts might not necessarily be the next of kin. The emergency contact might end up being a brother or an aunt, or a grandparent that is at home and lives nearby during the day, who might be able to come around.

I want to make sure which bit we're trying to understand, because I'm very happy to work with you on providing the right answer. It's a very confusing area. Are we talking about the emergency contacts?

Mr VALENTINE - We are talking about emergency contacts. So, obviously, parents who have shared responsibility, and they might not be talking - and let's face it, that's often the case - that they have the right to be placed, one as number 1, and the other as number 2. That's basically it.

Ms COURTNEY - The way I understand it is, if two parents are separated, they both have the opportunity to provide their own emergency list. For all intents and purposes, if the child is in Tim's care on Tim's week, then, if there was a reason to contact the emergency list, it would be Tim's list that we looked at. If it was my week, if I had custody, then it would be my emergency list. In terms, then, of provisions of information between parents - and I'm happy to be corrected if I'm incorrect here - I know that many parenting orders contain the provision that one parent does need to notify another parent - that's sort of separate from the school thing -

Mr VALENTINE - That doesn't always happen.

Ms COURTNEY - Doesn't always happen, or is not in the orders, because, often in the orders, the orders already contain - because of the fact that an incident can happen in school or outside of school, many parental orders, particularly ones where there is not a working relationship between the parents, or there's some acrimony, there already is embedded within the actual order, because we've got quite a lot of specificity in the order.

Mr VALENTINE - It's as specified in the question, really. They've got a legally binding Federal Circuit Court of Australia family order. I'm talking about that circumstance. I'm not talking about an individual, but that circumstance, where they've got a legally binding Federal Circuit Court of Australia family order, which I believe overrides any state order. Apart from that, it's a legal order, and they simply want their right to be placed second on the list. There may well be four others that go after the first parent, because that parent wants certain people to be kept informed. When it's an emergency, and one parent is not able to be contacted, surely the second parent should be the one that's contacted first, before all the others.

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Ms COURTNEY - I'll seek some advice. I'll ask Trudy to come to the table, that might be easiest. Is that okay?

CHAIR - Yes, that's okay. I don't want to spend a lot of time on this.

Mr VALENTINE - No, I appreciate that. That's why I handed it to them beforehand. I thought we could clear it up.

Ms COURTNEY - Sorry, it's a very complicated - Trudy Pearce.

CHAIR - Trudy Pearce, welcome.

Ms PEARCE - Thank you. Through you, minister. The recognition of an emergency contact is the availability for them to have agency to either respond or come to the school. We're very clear around what an emergency contact is able to do. It's not necessarily prioritising in the emergency contacts. It's around the school being able to deliver on their duty of care in the event of an emergency. It wouldn't make sense to have them both listed at the same emergency contact. One contact has the agency to act in the best interests of the children. And emergency contacts, we then normally follow up to make other people aware, in the event there's been an emergency.

Mr VALENTINE - So, in the event of a non-emergency contact, what's the circumstance then?

Ms COURTNEY - You can have the two parents as enrolling parents. The department, I understand, with the advice from Trudy, works to ensure that they have, I guess, an equal footing with regard to their engagement with the school. It's just these emergency situations require prioritisation. And so -

Mr VALENTINE - You can see what one parent might feel, that they're being pushed way down the list. It might be four people before them, when they are the other parent, and it's an emergency. The child has been sent to hospital, say, and they're not being informed; it's the other people that are on this emergency contact list. Do you understand where I'm -

Ms COURTNEY - I get that, but the converse is also true, because if that child is in the custody at that period of time of the parent that you're referring to, then it'll be that parent's emergency contact list. It has to do with, in terms of the parenting order, who the child is with on the day when the emergency happens.

Mr VALENTINE - If I can leave this with you, the question that's been asked; if you just review what's been sent to us and provide another response, if that's necessary. Because, clearly, the letter says, 'It is a matter for the family of the student to determine the emergency contacts, including the order in which the contacts are listed on the forms.' Well, they can't do that, because - and it says, 'Unless there is a legal order in place.' Well, there is, and it's a Family Court order, and that should -

Ms COURTNEY - They can both provide their own list. We have the provision for that.

Mr VALENTINE - Anyway, I'll leave it with you, and you might wish to communicate with me, in the interests of time.

Ms COURTNEY - Chair, the secretary has a little more information to add to a previous question.

Mr BULLARD - Thank you, minister. On the students with disability. The number that I gave of 6476.52 FTE, which I think I said was departmental data, is actually data that's provided through the nationally consistent collection of data. That's a national data set. So, that's the number of students - trying to get to how many students are in our system with a disability, that's a national count.

Mr VALENTINE - My last question on this line item in school education is the Hobart City School. Can you give us a really good understanding as to where that's all at?

CHAIR - It's got a name.

Mr VALENTINE - That's right, it is, and I do believe that a name called the Ogilvie campus, as well as the Newtown campus. Maybe you can just fill us in on what the latest is, please. I believe a lot of people would be interested in that.

CHAIR - As brief as you can, minister.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the question. I actually attended the combined school's association meeting last night, where the input to that meeting was then name for endorsement. The proposed name that we put forward, the Hobart City High School. I haven't yet had the opportunity to see the outcomes of that meeting. I'm happy to provide further information after today, or on notice. A big part of that meeting included the combined partnership of representatives from each of the school associations, and they're coming together, as well as DoE and the principals to be able to move forward.

The other thing that went to the meeting last night was the pathway for uniforms and the emblem for the school, and the school colours. I don't have the advice yet, because the meeting was last night, and I've been here this morning. I'm happy to see if I can provide some more information before 1 pm. I'm not sure whether they formally endorsed the school name, so that's an exciting announcement.

Mr VALENTINE - So you heard it here first.

Ms COURTNEY - You heard it here first.

CHAIR - We finally got a scoop on Committee B. I've been here 17 years, and this is the first time we've had a scoop.

Ms COURTNEY - Well done, Mr Valentine.

CHAIR - Congratulations.

Ms COURTNEY - I want to place on the record my sincere thanks to all the people that have been involved. It has been an incredible journey that school communities have each been on, and the people that have volunteered their time to be part of this. It has been an extraordinary display of the commitment they have for the individual schools, but also the

shared vision, coming together. I know there's a lot of positivity in the room about it. I'm very grateful for the engagement. The particulars around the emblem and the uniform, we're engaging through this combined association, to provide advice. I'm conscious of time frames as well, so the department is working to support them.

Mr VALENTINE - What about the facilities at each of the schools, the grounds themselves? Are they still going to remain as they are? There's going to be no attempt to sell off any part of them, or -

Ms COURTNEY - No, quite the contrary. We're actually investing in the facilities. We've committed over \$20 million for these facilities around capital upgrades. There's some immediate funding that will be going in, to ensure the provision for next year. Then we also will be undertaking a broader consultation around the master plan for the three sites. Clearly, at the moment, because we've got effectively three separate schools, they've got duplicated facilities at each, so we need to look at that -

Mr VALENTINE - Are you talking about Elizabeth College as well?

Ms COURTNEY - Potentially, in the future. That decision point is a little way off, but they've been a big part of these discussions.

Mr VALENTINE - They're the three you're talking about?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, but they're a big part of this discussion. We need to look - and the ideas that have been put to me are around a performing arts centre on one of the sites, perhaps sports facilities, because we don't need to have three performing arts centres or three vet centres. It's how we use those sites but ultimately we'll be guided by the school community. We've got ideas but ultimately that's still got a body of work to happen and we've got funding towards that.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you, minister.

CHAIR - I have two questions to put on notice from the member for Elwick.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, thank you. It's a follow up from a question I asked in the Legislative Council about antisocial behaviour in our schools. The questions were quite clear but they were generalised across the department so I'll ask them again, and hopefully you can put them on notice.

CHAIR - Can you send those through once they're asked?

Mr WILLIE - Yes. The figures held by the Department of Education are related to the level of bullying in each Tasmanian school for 2020; the number of student on student assaults or other incidents of physical violence that occurred in each Tasmanian school in 2020; the number of student on teacher assaults or other incidents of physical violence that occurred in each Tasmanian school in 2020; the number of Workers Compensation claims resulting from stress or other psychological injury to Department of Education employees and the schools that they worked in when the claims were made, five; the number of suspensions for bullying, harassment, stalking of another student in each Tasmanian school in 2020; the number of suspensions for bullying, harassment, stalking of a teacher or other staff member in each

Tasmanian school in 2020 and; the total number of student suspensions in each Tasmanian school in 2020, including a breakdown by grade. I know the data's confronting but it's feedback that I hear a lot and that's why I continue to pursue that.

The second question is: can students be suspended for bringing the school into disrepute outside of school hours?

CHAIR - You'll get a copy of all those questions so you don't have to write those down, but if somebody did congratulations.

Ms COURTNEY - I do want to comment on those questions and it's around the purpose of using the data on a school-by-school basis. I am very comfortable looking at it in a regional way. What I'm also going to do is ask the secretary to talk specifically to the data around it. My very serious concern around this data is naming individual schools that perhaps have, and we know that some do, have escalated levels of reported assaults and bullying can exacerbate some of the prevailing perceptions around schools.

I'm conscious having visited a number of schools the very good work principals are doing to build values in the school and building school pride. I would not want to see a data set or a league table on incidents at a specific school because I think that that ultimately undermines the work that we are doing at some schools to try and build confidence in the school, confidence of students and confidence of the broader school community.

I'm going to ask the secretary to talk to this in more detail because ultimately, and I am very happy, Mr Willie, to scrutinise how we look at these, what we do, how we're supporting teachers. Indeed, my opening statement this morning talked about the crossing the line initiative that we're rolling out as of this weekend. I worry about the impact on some individual students and their school communities. Secretary, I could ask you to talk to that.

CHAIR - Can it be a brief response.

Mr BULLARD - I will make it very brief.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr BULLARD - Thank you, minister. There is a risk of that information absolutely demonising particular school communities and we've just got to treat it with caution. No school tolerates bullying. We as an agency take bullying very, very seriously but we do have to accept that there are still instances of bullying. Where those occur there is a perpetrator and there is the person who's the subject of the bullying and both need to be supported. We know, for example, that there are often very significant issues going on in the lives of bullies. Victimising the bully rather than providing additional support to those children, and they are children, to make better choices next time and see the impact of their ways, needs to be front and centre of what we do.

Just very briefly we have a number of strategies to be working with those school communities where there are significant instances of bullying. We fund community organisations Working It Out and A Fairer World, the Alannah and Madeline Foundation, around valuing diversity, the Let's Get Together human library and online resources for eSmart.

We have Stood Up, and inclusive practice coaches absolutely to go in and to support schools to ensure that they have environments which promote learning and that they have behaviour management strategies in place. Then really targeted support, for example, through the trauma funding to ensure that students who are affected by trauma, and that often plays out. Family violence and trauma will often play out in aggressive behaviours at school, ensuring that we're providing support for those students to meaningfully re-engage in the school community.

Do we have suspensions? Yes, we need to have suspensions to keep our learners and staff safe but they really are a mechanism for removing the child from the site so that we can put in place a plan for re-entry where we've got mitigation, supports and safety in place so that everyone's benefitting.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr WILLIE - I understand the data's confronting, that doesn't mean it necessarily should be hidden. I am interested in the Government's response on this, as I have been for a number of years asking these sorts of questions. Clearly, in some of our schools it's not a conducive environment to support learning and there are kids and teachers struggling.

Ms COURTNEY - Perhaps I can suggest if there is another way that we can provide the data where it doesn't identify individual schools. I'm very conscious of the impact that this could have and ultimately -

CHAIR - I'm going to suggest that the member and the minister work this out after this process.

Mr WILLIE - Okay, and the second -

CHAIR - I mean you've asked the questions. The minister will provide an answer. There will be an opportunity in the parliament with questions not answered to again raise the matter on the Floor of the House but I believe that this should be worked out between the member and the minister.

Mr WILLIE - The second question I asked was whether students can be suspended for bringing a school into disrepute by outside of hours behaviour.

Ms COURTNEY - I'll have the secretary answer that.

Mr BULLARD - Yes, certainly. For example, if something happened at a soccer match on a Saturday or a student was engaging in smoking outside school in uniform, yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Armitage, and we have an hour and six minutes to finish education.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. Just following up on suspension, one of my questions was how many students were suspended last year? I notice in 2017 it was 3053, 2018 it was 3164, 2019 it was 3222 and I wondered what it was in 2020?

Ms COURTNEY - Can you just tell me what data you've had from the previous years, Ms Armitage, so I make sure I'm reading the right data.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes. From 2019 I had 3222.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. For 2020 it is 3051.

Ms ARMITAGE - 3051, thank you. My other question is regarding truancy and I wondered what's the level of truancy that we have now. I appreciate with COVID-19 it's probably a little bit difficult when children are home-schooling to have an accurate idea of truancy. If you could give me an update on truancy and how the Education Department is currently addressing it. Could I have figures by region and if you don't have those because of time, I'm happy to take that on notice.

Ms COURTNEY - I might go to the secretary with regard to the data on non-attendance but I mentioned earlier we've got a number of initiatives that we use to make sure we are encouraging attendance. There's the youth participation data based that I mentioned earlier. There's also the conciliation conferences that we do have as part of the legislation. The overall attendance, I can get that data from the secretary.

Mr BULLARD - I'm just trying to find that.

Ms ARMITAGE - As I said, I'm happy to take it on notice. I know the Chair's a little anxious as we're getting close to 1 o'clock -

CHAIR - Well, it'll be a short break at lunch time.

Ms COURTNEY - I'm more than happy we'll be able to find that, I feel quite confident, in the next few minutes. We'll just come back and update you in a minute or two once we've got that.

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm somewhat surprised it's not readily available. It gets asked every year. Anyway, that's fine, thank you.

CHAIR - Yes, thank you. We'll move now to 1.2 which is Early Learning. Ms Siejka.

1.2 Early Learning

Ms SIEJKA - Goodness, I hadn't looked at the time.

CHAIR - I'm sorry, did I take you by surprise?

Ms SIEJKA - No, not really. We just never quite got there so I didn't expect it. Minister, I know that you touched on the professional support staff earlier on but I wondered, in terms of the CFLC, I'm keen to know the ratio between family members and children in the CFLCs for each of the following support staff. Their access, how many are they expected to cover? I was keen to know the number of speech pathologists, psychologists, social workers and also how many employed full-time in 2022?

Ms COURTNEY - I will get the data for that.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you. I know it's such a big issue and we've heard recently that access is -

Ms COURTNEY - I'll say more broadly while the department's getting the data I will give you information about the recruitment campaign that we've had out in the market which has been really positive -

Ms SIEJKA - Where is that going? I hear so often that it's difficult to recruit speech pathologists, et cetera, so to try to get them. Where are you attracting them from?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, and I have to say we've been pleasantly surprised by the interest that we have had. Indeed, we'll make sure that we look at this process and particularly because we've got broader demand across the education system. There might be an opportunity there with some of the applicants. With regards to that, it's been a really positive outcome. It's really positive, as I mentioned, for young people to have that wrap-around support early so that they can be engaged with learning. With regard to the detail on that, I'll ask the secretary to expand.

Mr BULLARD - What I can indicate is there's going to be nine additional professional support staff recruited into those positions. I can also indicate that the recruitment campaign, as the minister said, we've been pleasantly surprised with the number of applications.

In relation to ratios in child and family centres, I think that's going to be difficult to equate because there's a high throughput so some people are regular visitors, some might come once or twice, some will come once a week, some come every day. In terms of the model that's been run around other services that are within those centres, it's on a booking basis. If you look at child health and parenting nurses, absolutely there's some universal support provided to everyone there but also on a booking basis, and that's how we'd foresee running these services.

Ms SIEJKA - Is there a set - I mean ratios - it's a difficult one because a ratio sort of gives an indication that there's so many children and families that they'll cover per person. I guess the other way to look at it is there is a caseload number that would be expected for each of those?

Mr BULLARD - That's a very good question that we'll be better placed to answer next year when we understand what the demand is for those services, once we've got them in the centres operating to determine the demand.

Ms SIEJKA - Okay.

Mr BULLARD - Can I come back to the truant question, Chair, very quickly? Ms Armitage, in terms of truancy rates, they're zero. Now what we need to be cognisant of is a truant is actually where a parent has said I'm trying to get the child to school and they won't go. There are other categories though which are unauthorised and that's where there's an absence that's unexplainable by a parent or carer, that's 3.1 per cent, or not an excusable circumstance, i.e. the parent or carer rings up and provides an excuse but it's not accepted.

Ms ARMITAGE - I think last year it was 17 per cent for truancy.

Mr BULLARD - No, last - 2019 for truant we had -

Ms ARMITAGE - Just going from the answers to Mr Dean, if I can find it again, it actually said 17 per cent.

CHAIR - Even though he's not here, he remains with us.

Ms ARMITAGE - I don't need to ask his questions but if I could find it again, so I was simply finding out the latest figure but -

Mr BULLARD - So for prep to year 10, and I am absolutely happy to take that data that you've got and check it.

Ms ARMITAGE - I can find it again, but it was in here. It was Mr Dean's question on truancy, and it was 17 per cent.

Mr BULLARD - We'd need to check where that came from.

CHAIR - We will take the truancy question on notice.

Ms COURTNEY - Ms Armitage, if we can't do it now, we'll review *Hansard* from last year. I understand the data set that was provided and make sure that we're providing the comparable data set from what was provided last year.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, that would be great.

Ms SIEJKA - My other question is on page 99 in the papers. I'm looking at visits to approved or licensed education and childcare services. It's just at the bottom of that page there. It looks to me like a worrying drop in the percentages of government school students meeting the kindergarten development check. Are there any reasons for that?

Mr BULLARD - Just to be clear, you're looking under early learning percentage of government school students meeting the kindergarten development check.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes.

Mr BULLARD - So just to key you into that data set, that's an assessment that would usually be made at two points during the kindergarten year. There's about 21 indicators that the kindergarten teacher assesses things like oral language, ability to draw a cross and a circle, gross motor skills, et cetera.

Ms COURTNEY - I've got some more detail on that one as well.

Mr BULLARD - Would you like to answer that, minister?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. So it's usually complete, we do it in May and October of each year, and the information from the check informs the teaching and learning programs in kindergartens. In 2020 the first check planned for term two was cancelled during COVID-19. Yes, there is a drop off in that data, but with only one assessment it's difficult to compare the two years because we had only one data point as opposed to two data points.

Ms SIEJKA - Understanding that that data is for kindergarten students, and you can't compare apples and oranges, but just wondering from the child's perspective whether there was an additional assessment done. I imagine that one assessment would cover some things, and another assessment would cover another lot of things, or progress.

Mr BULLARD - It is the same check that's done at two points. So how you're going coming into kinder and how are you going out or effectively towards the end of year.

Ms SIEJKA - So they're not disadvantaged in any way by only having the one assessment?

Mr BULLARD - No. Just need to be cognisant of the fact that you only need to get one marker as not met, and you come up in that data. What we could see in the data because we're obviously very interested in that drop as well, was that it was related to gross motor skills, and so on return from COVID-19 we put significant effort to support kinders to be doing more gross motor activities to make that up.

Ms SIEJKA - Okay, that's helpful, thank you. Then the other parts in that section there, is the visits to approved or licensed education and childcare services, and that looks to have gone down as well. I understand looking over at the footnotes it talks about virtual - well some of this work's been done virtually, but I wondered if it's virtual and not in person has that impacted being able to assess the situation adequately.

Ms COURTNEY - Well the drop off was due to COVID-19.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes.

Ms COURTNEY - The fact that it's returned back up to 579, which is significantly above the target, I think is a positive thing that I we are guess making up the lost ground of what we weren't able to do in the last financial year.

Ms SIEJKA - Did the department find that going through a virtual mechanism, I understand that there was not really any other option, but whether or not that did provide adequate information?

Mr BULLARD - We had to pivot our whole relationship with the education and care sector. They didn't want to be monitored and regulated, obviously we needed to ensure safety, but actually we just became supporters. We recognised that they were under significant stress, and that they were really looking for support and help about how they could remain open. As a regulator that hasn't traditionally been our role, it was a really great development in our relationship which we've now maintained. So we absolutely regulate it, but also how we support you to be a quality service.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. If there are no further questions in 1.2, we will move to 2.1, Libraries Tasmania, thank you Ms Armitage. We have people coming to the table.

2.1 Libraries Tasmania

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Ms COURTNEY - We're just going to get Liz Jack, from Libraries Tas. We can start the questions and that's all right. Tim and I can field them until Ms Jack gets here.

Ms ARMITAGE - There's not a lot of difficult questions in libraries.

CHAIR - You can stay if you need. There's a seat down the other end. Thank you, Liz, there's a seat on the end there for you.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, minister. Let's start with volunteers. I know last year, obviously with COVID-19 it was difficult, and Libraries Tas lost quite a few volunteers. Some had remained away once the libraries facilities reopened. So how are we now tracking with re-engaging volunteers, or previous volunteers, or seeking new volunteers.

Ms COURTNEY - It is a good question, and obviously throughout COVID-19 we saw a drop off in volunteers particularly for a lot of older Tasmanians who are perhaps are more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Ms ARMITAGE - And getting them back.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, and we saw that across a range of different areas of volunteerism across the state government, and indeed there are some areas where we actively encouraged, we wanted out volunteers to be safe, just staying at home. Perhaps I'll ask Ms Jack to elaborate further.

Ms JACK - That's exactly right, minister. During COVID-19 with a lot of our older volunteers we didn't want to see them putting themselves or our clients at risk. We have had a drop off and this year we had 716 active volunteers, which is still lower than previous years, but it is building back up. In certain cases we've had heaps of work in things like online transcribing where there's no COVID-19 risk at all.

In our digi-vols, which are our digital volunteers who transcribe historical records on our behalf, we had 199 of them. They are on top of the 716 volunteers doing home delivery service, or helping people with digital skills, our digital volunteers worked on 17 projects, and they indexed 21 433 records. There's a lot of work being done behind the scenes. The other thing which is pleasing is that in the last financial year each quarter we've had more volunteer hours being committed to Libraries Tasmania, so it is building, but it is slow.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. The other question I have, minister, is with regard the fact we don't charge fines now for book late returns. How is that affecting Libraries Tas. Are we having a greater number of books, e-books, and audiobooks not returned because there's no fine for not doing so, or no follow up? If we could just have an update, thank you.

Ms JACK - So e-books, and anything that's online, e-resources, that's not a return issue. But for physical items.

Ms ARMITAGE - I mean audio books, and yes, the physical books.

Ms JACK - CDs, DVDs, books, that type of thing?

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes.

Ms JACK - There's been really no change in the way of people's behaviour. I think last year I mentioned that there were people during COVID-19 when we were closed who were getting quite stressed because they couldn't return their books. One of the things we have done is started putting in after hours return chutes at a lot of our libraries. The issues are not about people remembering to take their books back, or it's not even the fines, or the lack of fines. It's that they might work in a farming community where there is a small library. In Exeter, for instance, it is not open every day, isn't open the hours that they want, and they can't get the book back. So we're starting to gradually roll out after hours return chutes at our library to make it easier for clients to return them.

Ms ARMITAGE - Do you find that there's not a huge number of books going missing?

Ms JACK - No.

Ms ARMITAGE - Do we follow up on those, I know that we don't charge fines, but if people don't return the audio books or the other books, do we chase those up and put a charge to those if someone doesn't actually return them at all, as opposed to late?

Ms JACK - That's correct. So being a library user myself, I get reminders if my book hasn't been returned in time, and after a certain period if the book has not been returned, we let people know that there will be a cost involved in replacement, and it is fair replacement value. So if it's a book that's 10 years old that's not worth as much as it was the day it was bought, we don't charge them the full price of the book. There's a sliding scale of what we charge.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, minister.

Mr WILLIE - What was the total recouping of costs for the last financial year?

Ms JACK - I don't have that in my head. I'm going to have to take it on notice.

Mr WILLIE - I've got some other library questions. The after-hours question is a good one, and I'm aware there are vending machines that have been introduced into some communities. How many of those are there now and are there plans to expand that to give greater access to the community?

Ms JACK - We had put in one book locker at the Chigwell Child and Family Centre as a bit of a pilot. Using the contemporary library resources funding that the Government provided us almost three years ago. That was well accepted by the community and well utilised. In looking at the ways that we can reach more members of the community it didn't stack up as well as some of the options that we might have. Vending machines have challenges in terms of stocking the machine, so it means that we're using staff time and resources to get books out to the lockers, and fill them up, and return them, so it's not on site.

We are trialling a few different things or looking at options to get out to more remote communities, and one of them is the idea of pop-up libraries, because we want to engage as many people in the community as possible, we want to encourage reading with as many members of the community as we can. As well as having services like literacy services and face to face digital literacy, for instance, we feel that is one way of providing options for people is pop up libraries.

Mr WILLIE - Just one last question.

CHAIR - If you take the member for Pembroke's question it will be looked out.

Mr WILLIE - She might ask this question. Are you going to ask about the Hobart library?

Ms SIEJKA - I was going to.

Mr WILLIE - I'll hand over to the member.

Ms SIEJKA - As a library user myself, one of the things I've noticed is that the Hobart library facilities are ageing. I wondered what plans there are to address that.

Ms COURTNEY - Ms Jack can provide some broader detail, because there has been a substantial amount of work done. We're still looking to the funding mechanism to support that and some of the master planning aspects are quite -

Ms SIEJKA - It feels like it hasn't changed since I was a child.

Ms COURTNEY - I want to pay credit to the team there in the innovative ways that they're using their space. Earlier this year when we had Dark Mofo, they partnered with that and produced a really exciting exhibition which brought people in from the local community. Library at night was really great idea.

Mr VALENTINE - It was excellent.

Ms COURTNEY - It was excellent, wasn't it? Providing opportunities for people to engage with the library that perhaps they wouldn't have in the past. Together with pop up libraries, it's how we can engage those new users as well. We talk about that broader literacy in the whole community, how we can engage people no matter where they live to be able to walk into a library. I'm very conscious that members around the table would feel very comfortable going in and walking into their local library, but a lot of people would be very intimidated by that. Having these types of opportunities, and this also goes to the other initiatives we've got across the TasTAFE co-investment, and the advert 26 10, and all these other things is how we can use libraries as a really accessible place for people to come and learn how to learn and be able to provide access. I'll get Ms Jack to talk about the broader planning around Hobart.

Ms JACK - Thanks minister. Yes, I agree, there's lots that could be done with Hobart Library. It's a wonderful building, it is heritage listed, or its façade is, which creates challenges. We've done a lot of planning around what it could be like and if it were to be fully redeveloped. It would be a huge cost for any government, and it's clearly something that would need support across local level of governments, not just the state government.

Ms SIEJKA - Is there a plan to start this work?

Ms COURTNEY - It's something which I'm looking. It was to come to me as a new minister. One of the considerations that I do need to think about such a project as this, is given the quantum of money that would be needed for it, how to also ensure that we've got investment

in rural and regional areas at the same time too. The library that we have here and the collections that are within it are great assets for this state and I know that particularly across Elise Archer's portfolio as Minister for the Arts, the intersection with some of the collections that we have across those portfolios have got a lot of state significance.

We must be cognisant in future funding initiatives we need to balance that against rural and regional communities and making sure that we're also investing there. I'm conscious that it is important that we have investment in our main state library and the infrastructure and considering the collections that we've got contained in that, it's a very special thing. I'm conscious that we need to ensure that investment in regional facilities is also balanced. So look, that's going to be the subject of future budget considerations.

Ms JACK - Minister, if I could add to that. Because we know that this would be a significant investment, internally we've looked at different options for redevelopment so it wouldn't have to be the entire building. It might be smaller parts of it. This year you will see a change to at least the foyer of the building, because as a library user at Hobart Library, I'm sure you would agree it's not the most inviting space, and as the minister said, some people are intimidated when they walk into a library.

We want to open that up and make it more welcoming to all people and we will be funding that through Libraries Tasmania's budget which the government has provided us. We will be making some changes to the foyer and that section, because it's not as though we have to sit and wait for a huge investment to do things that are going to make a big difference to the community's experience.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you. On the issue of regional and rural access, the other area that I wanted to ask you a question about was Online Access Centres. I believe they're currently funded through a digital grant through this line area. I hope I'm right. But one of the PESRAC recommendations was it being important for digital literacy and connectivity to keep the Online Access Centres, especially in those regional areas where people really struggle open. Will the Online Access Centres continue to be funded after 2022?

Ms COURTNEY - Clearly, with a PESRAC recommendation, this goes across a number of portfolios, including minister Ferguson. I'll have Ms Jack talk broadly around the mechanism of the Online Access Centres as it intersects obviously with Libraries Tas. I'm really keen to see how we work together with different ministries to ensure that we've got a really strategic approach to our investment. I'll talk about this this afternoon with regard to some of the funding we've done for TasTAFE to be able to have effectively an online access or an online campus, effectively.

Funding for that is provided for producing the course content, but there's also a partnership with Libraries Tas that we're working through so that we're investing the actual facilities at locations so that students can go in, so TasTAFE students can go in and use the computers. That work is currently underway where - through TasTAFE and libraries looking at demand, looking at need. An example could be - and while we don't have this - any of it finalised, could be perhaps one of the Bass Strait islands. It's much more sensible to be able for a government to be investing in a single location for access, and noting the fact that we might have a few different departments investing in that island or in access, we don't want to duplicate that. So that's some of the work that we're -

Ms SIEJKA - Are you looking at perhaps changing the way the Online Access Centres are delivered?

Ms COURTNEY - Not so much changing the way that they're delivered, but through the funding that we provide with TasTAFE we're looking at where that investment can actually be delivered, and that work has commenced but it's still only in the early stages. I don't have advice up to me yet on, precise detail advice on where that should be targeted. Perhaps Ms Jack will be able to provide some further comments.

CHAIR - We have five minutes to have another question as well, so we need to keep it short and sharp. Thank you.

Ms JACK - I'll keep it short then. Yes, the minister is right. Online Access Centres are only one of many ways that digital support and digital learning is provided to the community, and Libraries Tasmania partners with a number of organisations to do that. The community managed Online Access Centres are provided with grant funding - you were correct - and that's \$450 000 every year.

Ms SIEJKA - Is that continuing beyond 2022 at this stage?

Ms JACK - At this stage, there are lots of opportunities to build on that. We are looking at that and will provide advice to the minister on what and where the opportunities might be. If you look across the scope of everything that's offered for digital learning, we've got Men's Sheds that are providing support, Neighbourhood Houses, the Good Things Foundation, which is a federal Commonwealth government initiative through the Be Connected program which rolls out around the state. What we want to do is make sure that we're spreading our resources as effectively and smartly as we can so that there's no overlap and no gaps.

Ms COURTNEY - With that, I'm going to continue to work with minister Ferguson because he has a fair responsibility in this area in his portfolio responsibilities.

Ms SIEJKA - There would be communities that are very engaged in their Online Access Centre and rely heavily on them as well. It would be good to have some certainty for those users around what will continue. I recognise what you're saying about diversity of ways to access, but I think there would be people that are really concerned if their Online Access Centre was at risk.

Ms COURTNEY - Clearly, we see that high level of engagement in we recognise that, so that would be obviously a high consideration.

CHAIR - There will be elected members that will be concerned, not only community.

Ms COURTNEY - I feel confident about that.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Valentine, last question.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you, and libraries do a great job, I have to say. The question is in relation to Archives. It must be hell to be the state archivists having to deal with what you keep, especially in the digital space. Can you give us an understanding of what the real challenges are there are the moment? Are sufficient funds there to deal with it?

Ms JACK - Would you like me to -

Ms COURTNEY - I would love you to, thank you.

Ms JACK - If you'd asked me that two years ago, I could have given you lots of challenges, but in last year's budget the Tasmanian Archives were provided with much needed funding to digitise a lot of our collections that were at significant risk. That was our biggest challenge, because a lot of the formats, our film in particular, but other aspects of our archives were degrading because of their age. It has been -

Mr VALENTINE - Nitrate stuff, yes.

Ms JACK - Yes, and it's known that by 2025, there is a good likelihood that if things haven't been digitised we are going to lose them forever. The state Government has provided us with funding to support the digitisation of that, so we were given \$600 000. Libraries Tasmania committed another \$170 000 to that, and we have an ongoing commitment from the Government of \$150 000 a year to continue to help us to digitise those items. That makes a massive difference.

The problem now is there's just so much of it that you could throw buckets and buckets of money at it and still not have enough. But we are taking a strategic approach and looking at what we think are the most at risk and digitising those first.

As well as we're holding lots of other physical items in our collection, and also in the Allport.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you. It's nice to know that it's got some attention.

CHAIR - Thank you. Minister, I'd now like to move to education regulation, 3.1. Thank you very much, Liz.

Output group 3 Education regulation

3.1 Education regulation

CHAIR - A couple of questions in this area from me. An important aspect of education is the regulation. We talked this morning a bit about the fact that data into the system around teachers' registration, you're negotiating with the teachers, the Registration Board around that. How long do you think that's going to take to get a resolution? Is there some time frame attached to that? You touched on it this morning, Mr Bullard.

Mr BULLARD - We'd need to have advice on that so that we understand. I mean, there's two components; there's getting agreement to the data, and then building a link because we don't want to be double-handling.

CHAIR - A link, right. A couple of years ago, there was a problem with the Office of Tasmanian Assessment Standards and the certification. I'm interested in whether everything

has been sorted in that area. There were some issues around that. The minister might not be aware of it. She probably had her focus elsewhere.

Ms COURTNEY - Would you like me to get Wendy Spencer, the executive officer, to respond? She's in the building.

Mr BULLARD - Here she is.

Ms COURTNEY - Take a seat, thank you. For the benefit of Hansard, Wendy Spencer, executive officer, Office of Tasmanian Assessment Standards and Certification. Perhaps you could ask the question again.

CHAIR - A couple of years ago, there was some issues around the assessment and standards area of education regulation. I'm interested to know that all of those issues have been sorted and that there isn't any problem with that assessment process.

Ms SPENCER - I've been in the role 12 months now. In August last year when I commenced in the role, the former minister asked me to be implementing a workplan that was centred around issues associated with the system and with the assessments, the external assessments in particular, and given that it was a COVID-19 year and our learners were in a unique situation, that workplan was very well articulated and the risk around the assessments and the issues with the system were really highly visible. My role was to implement that workplan and manage the associated risks.

I am pleased to say that the assessment process during 2020 went very smoothly and our learners received their results and their certification on time, and -

CHAIR - And there were no complaints.

Ms SPENCER - There were no complaints. In fact, I might have said to the former minister that a success meter might have been that there were no ministerials during the month of January.

Mr WILLIE - Usually from my questions.

Ms SPENCER - I didn't get one from you.

CHAIR - My final question in this area - and then I'll ask if other members have a question - is around the number of those who are undertaking home education. We usually have that -

Ms SPENCER - That would be the registrar. That's going to be Katharine O'Donnell who's a registrar of education.

CHAIR - I did see Katharine out there at cup of tea time. Stay, Wendy, just in case other members have questions, and there's enough room on the end there for Katharine.

Mr WILLIE - I've just got a quick one. Not on TASC, but in the budget it says that there's going to be performance measures added in future years in this area. I'm interested in

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whether that's going to take the same format as public schools in terms of the performance measures, given that it's a cross-sector line item.

Mr BULLARD - That is in terms of the review of education regulation, and obviously they are moved to a new output for education regulators is new, and yes, as you say, there are no output measures. We will need to work with the regulators about what they say the success measures are going to be. They will be related to the functions that each of those regulators undertakes.

Mr WILLIE - It says here, 'The regulator impacts the quality of teaching, the learners' experience, how student learning is assessed and recognised, the quality and safety of learning environments, and the extent to which students are participating and engaged in learning pathways.' Do they sort of reflect that?

Mr BULLARD - We will have to work with the regulator. So the non-school government regulation board will need to come up with its measures, as will TASC, as will the Teacher Registration Board. So absolutely be working proactively. I don't want to pre-empt what they're going to put forward.

CHAIR - Will they be in next year's budget papers? They will be available in next year's budget papers.

Mr BULLARD - Yes. It depends on the type, so behind all this - sorry, minister.

Ms COURTNEY - No, no, you go.

Mr BULLARD - I was just going to say, behind all this is a piece of legislation that we need to get through. That's going to influence when the new architecture of regulation is established, and also too we don't know when the budget's going to be.

CHAIR - Thank you. Welcome to the table, Katharine. I've asked the question of the minister in regard to the number of those participating in home education. I'm particularly interested to see if there's been an uplift in numbers given that parents were home-schooling, or carers were home-schooling through the COVID-19. They may well have had a wonderful time and decided to continue on. Or not. I am interested in those numbers and any issues that may have arisen in that area of home education. Thank you.

Ms O'DONNELL - Thank you, minister. The answer is yes and no. There was an uplift and now there isn't, so you both get a bit each way with that one. As of 31 March, this year there are 1143 students from 664 families registered. We did peak in October last year with 1210 students, and -

CHAIR - What number of families did that equate to?

Ms O'DONNELL - That came from 673 families, so a light increase. But 20 per cent of the students who entered home education during COVID-19 came back out again within the year in which they entered. So, it does seem that there was a bit of a settling down, and the numbers are now where we would have expected them to be given the usual slight increase each year without COVID-19.

CHAIR - Minister are you aware, from the information that you would have received, that there are challenges that need to be addressed with home education?

Ms COURTNEY - Sorry Chair, what type of challenges? Is it about the actual provision of education, or is it around the?

CHAIR - It was actually more about the home educated use to gather together as a group for activities. That possibly hasn't been quite as readily available, so that presents a challenge for families interacting with other homeschooling families. I'm interested in whether really that has presented any challenges?

Ms COURTNEY - I might see whether the regulator has any comments on that one. I think she probably has better insight into the situation than I do.

Ms O'DONNELL - There was a very short period of time in which we were locked down quite heavily and there wasn't the capacity to meet, but luckily for Tasmania it was relatively short. Our office has worked with the local home educator groups to help them find premises and property since that time where they were able to meet - and meet the requirements for social distancing. So, where they may previously have met in smaller halls and that kind of thing, we've helped them to find bigger spaces that they can meet in and meet the social distancing arrangements, and still continue to have their home education play groups and that kind of thing. There was a very short period of time, but now they are continuing to meet regularly as they always have done.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any other questions on this particular area output group of education regulation? If not, I'm delighted that we're going to move to 90.1 - School excursions.

Output group 90
COVID-19 response and recovery

90.1 School excursions

CHAIR - Thank you very much Katharine and Mandy.

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much, Chair. Minister, the highlight certainly of my time at school and my children's times always were excursion time. This can be a terrific economic driver for the local economy as well. I'm wondering if you can provide us with some more details about the types of excursions that the COVID-19 funding has supported that we see in the budget?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, and I agree. I think we've all got fond memories and some unique events that always happened on school excursions which we look back and smile upon. As you say, school excursions are a fantastic driver for our economy, but they also provide a rich learning experience for our students. This is particularly the case when they are connected to the curriculum and linked directly to what they are learning about in the classroom. A really good example of this was when I was recently visiting Ravenswood Heights Primary School, and they were embarking in the coming days on an excursion to Beaconsfield Mine. The activities actually that I was watching in the classroom, they were

using online learning to learn about the mine, learn about the history, and projects ahead of that.

Last year, as part of our COVID-19 response and recovery measures, my predecessor, Jeremy Rockliff, announced \$1.5 million in funding for Tasmanian schools to enrich education experiences for students through excursions to Tasmanian tourism parks and heritage sites. Funding was provided across sectors, so government schools, Catholic and independent, and funds were available for eligible excursions from September to the end of term 4. The funding was extended to the end of term 1 this year to allow more students to take up the opportunities provided by these excursions. The Department of Education managed the scheme for the schools, and an equitable allocation for each school was calculated based on enrolment numbers, with the minimum allocation of \$1000, and a maximum allocation of \$15 000. The schools were able to claim back costs associated with off campus learning activities, transport, and any catering that may have been required.

So, DoE work closely with Tourism Tasmania and Department of State Growth to finalise a list of potential educational experiences. The list was compiled and provided to schools as a guide only. Schools were then able to book directly with the bona fide business with an ABN from September to the end of term 4. Health Department guidelines and DoE procedures for off campus activities and outdoor experiences had to be followed at all times.

As of 30 June 2021, government schools and CFLCs had undertaken approximately 837 eligible excursions, so it was a really wonderful opportunity to be able to get out and about, particularly after COVID-19 restricted a lot of movements to do that. As minister for almost Minister for Tourism, being able to support those local businesses was absolutely critical. And also knowing that school days, they're often the times when those facilities are quieter, so it was a really good way to help them. It was great to create awareness of young people and for promotion of the great things that we do have in Tasmania.

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much, minister.

CHAIR - Any other questions in regard to school excursions? We've all had some wonderful experiences and perhaps some not so.

Mr VALENTINE - I'm interested in funding associated with disadvantaged kids. Now I know some schools may have something in their budget, but can you give us a broader understanding of that space? How they are taken care of? Because it must be terrible not to be able to go on a school excursion because you can't afford to do it.

Ms COURTNEY - I might get the secretary to comment on how individual schools deal with that from a perspective of funding across different schools, clearly we've got a needs based funding mechanism so there are a range of parameters that the department looks at in terms of the provision of funding for individual schools. In terms of specific excursions, I'll ask the secretary to expand.

Mr BULLARD - So a number of excursions are learning opportunities and there's no charge attached. If there is a fee for attending a particular excursion than those young people who are on SAS, so the Student Assistance Scheme, don't pay.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay. So, quite clearly those schools have quite a number of students in that space. Their funding is boosted and the school simply delves into that and funds accordingly.

Mr BULLARD - Yes, that's correct.

Mr VALENTINE - What about - no, I think it's a different space actually. It's fine.

CHAIR - Thank you very much. I'm going to go straight now to capital investment because last year we short changed ourself in this area, and we don't want to do it two years in a row. I might well lose my position. I'll just move straight to capital investment, and invite the member for Elwick to ask the first question.

Capital Investment -

Mr WILLIE - Thank you. So, it's not your fault, Chair, it's usually my fault for asking too many questions.

Mr VALENTINE - Hear, hear.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, in the 2018-19 budget the Sorell School (K-12) was due to be completed this year. In the budget last year, the time frame blew out to 2023. In the budget this year the completion date is 2024. What is the status of this project, and why have the time frames blown out again in this year's budget?

Ms COURTNEY - Thanks for the questions, Mr Willie. We know that Sorell is clearly a region that's growing. That's why we're making significant investment to support the high-quality education facilities that we have there. We've committed to capital funding of \$25.75 million to undertake a major redevelopment of the school. The redevelopment will be a mix of new and refurbished buildings, consolidating the school, and creating a contemporary kindergarten to year 12 learning facilities. The project is well progressed, and the contract with Fairbrothers is commencing shortly with works due to be completed in 2024.

I understand a new, separately funded CFLC is also planned for the school site, but will be built once enabling works are completed as part of the school redevelopment.

In terms of the process being underway, there was a master plan developed by architects working with the project working group, including the School Association, the mayor, and the Department of Education, and we've been working through ensuring that we have good community engagement to ensure that we can deliver for the community what they want. So, looking forward to that exciting initiative being rolled out.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, in the 2018-19 budget the Brighton High School project was due for completion in 2024. It's now due for completion in 2025 according to your budget papers. Has the Government finalised the price of the land under the land acquisition, and has that process been completed?

Ms COURTNEY - Sorry, can you just ask the question again, just to I make sure I provide the right detail?

Mr WILLIE - Yes. Has the Government finalised the price to be paid to the land holder, and has the process been fully completed?

Ms COURTNEY - In terms of the price and the compensation process, that's not a matter for DoE. That's a matter for the Office of the Valuer-General, and I understand that that gets managed through the minister for Crown lands. So that process is not overseen by DoE. I understand that the decision was made, the land has been transferred, but ultimately the process around the figure, that is not managed by DoE so I can't provide any quotes on that.

Mr WILLIE - But surely as Education minister you would be across that?

Ms COURTNEY - I'm happy for the secretary to provide some comments, but if that is not finalised then I can't know it. I'm happy to seek advice from the minister, perhaps that'd be more appropriately directed to him.

Mr BULLARD - Our advice is that the Valuer-General is still negotiating that compensation. The impact on our project is none because the land has transferred to the department.

Mr WILLIE - Okay, I'll probably direct these to the Crown Services minister tomorrow, but it sounds like there's some further questions.

One last question before I lose the court in my own patch, and I'd like to put on the record the great job that Andrew Woodham and other staff have done at Cosgrove. I've noticed a real improvement during my visitation to that school in terms of the learning that you observe, and kids wearing their uniform, and a respectful environment. They're doing a good job.

Minister, in the 2018-19 budget the Cosgrove High School Revitalisation Project was due for completion in 2023. Your budget papers are now saying 2024. What's the status of that project, including the devastating fire rebuild? Are you expecting any further delays because of that?

Ms COURTNEY - I'll seek some advice on that one. So, I don't have any further detail if there's been further delays due to the fire, but my advice is that it's still expected to be completed in 2024. I don't have any further detail on -

Mr BULLARD - My advice is the project has been delayed as a result of the fire, and also consultation. From our perspective it didn't make sense to go and rebuild the burnt down block absent of the masterplan to redevelop the site, and in fact it's provided us with an additional opportunity to upgrade further infrastructure on the site.

Mr WILLIE - I'm assuming that the fire was covered by insurance and that would go into part of the rebuild master planning?

Mr BULLARD - That's right, yes.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, okay.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Palmer, then I'm coming back to Ms Siejka.

Ms PALMER - Thank you. Minister, in my electorate, there is great excitement about the Legana Primary School, which I'm certainly very excited about myself. Could you provide us with an update on how that's going? Also, if I could ask for a quick update with regard to the plans for the East Launceston Primary School redevelopment.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you. The development at Legana is exciting. I know that it's been something that's talked about in the community for a very long time. Every time I pop down to Legana there seems to be even more houses being built. It's a great area there, in terms of what the West Tamar Council has been - we've been doing.

As you're aware, in 2018 we made a commitment to building a new primary school, to provide state-of-the-art learning spaces for 350 students in 2024. We know that there's been rapid growth and we know that that growth is set to continue. This is going to provide great opportunities for those children now, but also certainty for families as well, who are considering where they locate to.

We've done extensive consultation with educators, students from nearby schools and the broader Legana community, to ensure the school is shaped as the community would like to see it. The initial phase of consultation was undertaken early in 2020, and encouraged residents and businesses from the West Tamar region to contribute their ideas. A community reference group comprising representatives from local government, sporting clubs, early learning centres and educators has been established to review the design and construction process; this is now meeting on a quarterly basis.

The West Tamar community has also been consulted about where the primary school should be located. The department now has in-principle agreement with the land owners to purchase the site at 612 West Tamar Highway, Legana, and it will be co-located and share resources with the West Tamar Council-owned sporting precinct, which will provide a hub for the Legana community. I think West Tamar Council has demonstrated their commitment on recreational facilities along that area there.

An additional \$4 million was committed to this project in the 2020-21 budget, taking the total project to \$24 million. A local architecture firm, Cumulus Studio, was appointed earlier this year for the new school and is working with the project group, which includes representatives from the council and the Department of Education on the site master plan. Further community consultation is planned for later this year, to provide this site master plan to the local community for review and feedback.

CHAIR - Right. East Launceston?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. With regard to East Launceston, we've made a commitment of \$4.5 million to redevelop it. This includes a new kindergarten, general learning areas, staff facilities, new amenities, as well as a multi-purpose space. The kindergarten was completed in February 2020 and is now operational. There's also funding to finalise work, including landscaping and a new playground. It's exciting to see those initiatives being delivered. I know, as with many schools, there is a strong local love of that school. Indeed, I know that it's very well regarded by the local community.

Ms SIEJKA - My question is about the Southern Support School upgrade, which is in my electorate, and also of interest to me as shadow minister for disability. The upgrade in the

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2018-19 budget said it was due for completion in 2019. In last year's budget the completion date was 2021, and in this year's Budget it's 2022. I really want to know what the status of that project is and whether that completion date will be met.

CHAIR - We still have a couple of other questions as well, minister.

Ms SIEJKA - All right. Okay. I'll be concise.

Ms COURTNEY - So my advice is yes, it will be met. As you've pointed out, the Southern Support School provides really important learning facilities for students with physical or intellectual disabilities. The school enrolments have grown significantly over time. The project has been delayed due to a significant expansion of the scope of the works, to deliver an even better outcome for the staff, for students and their carers. The original budget was \$4.3 million. But as the project evolved and expanded and included additional elements, the budget has now expanded to \$8.25 million, so almost double, which will provide a facility that will be meeting the needs as the community grows. My advice from the department is that's -

Mr SALTER - Yes. At the end of last month it was showing as 55 per cent complete. So due for completion in February 2022.

Ms SIEJKA - Great. It's such an important school.

CHAIR - Thank you. Do you have another question?

Ms SIEJKA - I was going to ask questions about a couple of other schools, but I might save the committee some time. In the past, Mr Rockliff provided us with the Department of Education - I think it's called the infrastructure priority list. Is it possible to get a copy of that or table that? Or question on notice? It just might save a whole bunch of time.

Ms COURTNEY - No, that's fine. I've got a copy of that.

Ms SIEJKA - That would be appreciated.

CHAIR - We're happy to take that when somebody finds it, minister. I'll go to Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - As you already commented on East Launceston, I'll ask you with regard to -

Ms SIEJKA - Happy to have that tabled. I know that those sorts of documents are difficult - and Hansard.

Ms COURTNEY - I think that's - thank you.

CHAIR - All right. Blue's the latest priority rating? It goes from blue down to orange?

Mr SALTER - So priority 1 down to priority 5. Yes.

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you.

Ms COURTNEY - I have two answers from previous questions, if I might, Chair. Lost books, \$27 000. Mr Dean's question around truancy, the 17 per cent - my understanding from the review the department's done of *Hansard*, that was Mr Dean's assertion, not the number that was provided by the department.

CHAIR - Right. Okay. I wonder where he got it from. I'm sure he would have done his homework.

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm sure he - yes.

Mr BULLARD - I think *Hansard* -

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm sure he got it from somewhere.

Mr BULLARD - *Hansard* records, I'm told, it's 17 per cent.

Ms ARMITAGE - He probably couldn't say who told him.

Mr BULLARD - No.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. I have left off Queechy. Are you able to give me an update on what work was undertaken at Queechy? I believe that it was always the toilet block and some other areas - and I think the gym might have been an issue as well, from memory.

Ms COURTNEY - A few areas that needed attention.

CHAIR - While Kane's looking for the information, I want to put on the record that in my electorate of McIntyre, where there are approximately 24 schools, not one of my schools received any funding, minister. Nothing. But I am pleased to say, on that priority list, I have two for next year. Thank you.

Mr WILLIE - They might be there for a few years.

CHAIR - No, that'll be next year, I'm sure. Ringarooma and Deloraine. I'm still hoping to work on the school farm; it's got Stow as well.

Ms COURTNEY - In terms of Queechy, since 2016 there's been significant investment in new and upgraded facilities. In 2016 and 2017, there was \$5 million for major learning areas upgrades. There was \$200 000 provided in 2019-20 for the maintenance stimulus funding for the fire services and switchboard upgrades. 2020-21, there was \$50 000 for the gym toilets to be upgraded. There's also been \$300 000 invested in stormwater infrastructure in 2020-21. There's also an investment of \$1.46 million for the Year 11 and 12 facilities.

CHAIR - Thank you. Obviously, the member for Hobart wants to get in on the action.

Mr VALENTINE - No, it's okay. First of all, Lansdowne Crescent Primary School, fantastic effort.

Ms COURTNEY - Is a delight.

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Mr VALENTINE - That was a great day, looking at that. Well done on the upgrades there. I am interested to know exactly what is being envisaged for Campbell Street Primary, South Hobart Primary.

Ms COURTNEY - I'll speak to South Hobart to start with. You've identified, with South Hobart, one of the schools that's on our priority list. We understand that there is a strong need at that school. We discussed yesterday, in Estimates, there's been a large growth profile of in-area enrolments because of the changing demographics of that community.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes.

Ms COURTNEY - So that's an exciting thing that we're rebuilding it. We've previously invested some funding in 2017 - \$3.6 million, to provide additional learning areas, and additional funding of \$600 000 in 2020-21 for civil works. I acknowledge there's extensive work that the local community has done. There's been a community consultation process as part of their mastering planning. An architect was engaged in the development of a master plan, and this has been informed by the school association. We're working with the school association.

You've now got the list that's tabled, looking at the priority schools. I'm happy for the secretary to perhaps expand on how we look at the prioritised list. Ultimately, there's a range of different things that put schools there. Some of it's around demand, because simply too many kids for the room; some of it's around facilities that are just outdated and unsafe. So perhaps the Secretary can talk to that. What the other schools, Mr Valentine?

Mr VALENTINE - Campbell Street, Albuera Street and Goulburn Street, but I don't expect you to go through them all.

Ms COURTNEY - I might get the secretary -

Mr VALENTINE - But Campbell Street, I think, would be -

CHAIR - Once the committee receives a look at the priority list, they may well be on that priority list.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes.

CHAIR - We should have asked for that at the beginning of this session, and we could have had a look at -

Mr BULLARD - We did put the roof back on Goulburn Street a couple of years ago. It blew off in the wind.

Mr VALENTINE - Did it? It's got bolts now, to hold it down?

Mr BULLARD - I don't know if Mr Salter has information around Goulburn Street, Campbell Street.

Mr SALTER - I'll have to look that up.

Mr BULLARD - So we would need to take that on notice.

CHAIR - Is the member happy to take that on notice?

Mr VALENTINE - Happy to take it on notice.

Mr BULLARD - Absolutely, we look at capacity, condition and demand when we're prioritising. We have to prioritise within the priority. We're always got an eye to that. And condition and safety have to be our first port of call, but, then, obviously, where we can be doing upgrades and expanding learning areas, then that's where we'll go next. Yes, we do need to keep an eye to that. It's really great that we've got an asset management system in place now. We are going out and doing condition reports on sites, and that's going to allow us to not be coming back year on year but actually to be able to plan three, five, 10 years into the future about the upgrades.

Mr VALENTINE - And reduce this political pressure.

Mr BULLARD - That might be one of the outcomes. But, also, it allows us to plan. So, it's too late, when something's fallen over, to go and fix it; it's a lot better if you can maintain and upgrade it on a rolling cycle. As an agency, that's where we want to be.

CHAIR - Minister, I did notice - and I know we have left the output group, but we haven't left education - that the funding for school excursions is a one-off, and, yet, you talked about how valuable it was for all students to be able to participate. Are you going to reconsider that funding?

Ms COURTNEY - So that funding was provided through one of the COVID-19 provisions, I understand.

CHAIR - Yes, it was.

Ms COURTNEY - That was a point-in-time funding, but, as minister, we're always going to be open-minded to initiatives in the future. However, we also need to look at the funding mechanism for it, because I understand that excursions are very valuable. There are a lot of very valuable ways to invest money in our schools as well.

CHAIR - Yes. I understand that.

Ms COURTNEY - So it's making sure that we're -

CHAIR - So you will consider it?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, if Department of particular State Growth gives me money to do it.

CHAIR - I think it'll be the Treasurer.

Ms COURTNEY - The Treasurer.

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CHAIR - The Treasurer will give you money. I'm sure the Treasurer will, if the minister requests it. If there are no further questions -

Mr WILLIE - I've got a couple of more school ones I can ask.

CHAIR - We have a minute. Grab one. Most important.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, the Brighton School Farm redevelopment in the 2018-19 budget was due for completion in 2019. Last year, the completion date blew out to 2021. In this year's Budget, the completion date is 2022. What's the status of that project?

CHAIR - Kane might be able to help you there, minister.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I'm just reading the -

CHAIR - You've just got it. Thank you.

Mr SALTER - So at the end of last month that was showing as 10 per cent complete, due for completion in April 22.

Mr WILLIE - Ten per cent complete. Right.

CHAIR - Thank you. Just around the corner.

Mr WILLIE - And the other school farm, 2018-19 budget said it was due for completion in 2020, and the Budget's saying it will be completed this year. I'm just wondering if that's going to happen.

CHAIR - That's the Sheffield?

Mr WILLIE - Yes.

Mr SALTER - That one is showing as 98 per cent complete.

Mr WILLIE - That's very precise.

Mr SALTER - Yes. It is, isn't it?

Mr BULLARD - Obviously a bit of landscaping to go in or something.

Mr WILLIE - Put a heating system in, and that'll be the other 2 per cent.

CHAIR - Or the art installation.

Mr SALTER - So, yes, due for completion December 21.

CHAIR - Yes. It means some of my Railton and surrounding area students get to use that facility, so I'm not completely done over as the local member, so -

Mr BULLARD - I did have to buy a milking machine which was a new experience for me.

CHAIR - Rightly so. Minister, we will suspend the broadcast for a lunch break. Thank you.

The Committee suspended at 1.00 p.m.

The Committee recommenced at 2.00 p.m.

CHAIR - I would like to welcome everyone back and recommence the broadcast. Thank you. Minister, you are here with a new team and in your area of responsibility for skills, training and workforce growth, so, thank you. An opening statement and an introduction.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you, Chair. To my right I have got Kim Evans, Secretary and to his right Angela Conway, General Manager of Workforce Development and Training. Thank you, Chair. I'd like to put on the record how pleased and excited I am to be the inaugural minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth. Through this portfolio, as well as my education portfolio, we are supporting Tasmanians of all ages and backgrounds on lifelong pathways through education to training and into jobs no matter where they live. This is something that I'm passionate about.

We've been ensuring Tasmanians can access skills, development and training services to help them find a career that is right for them by investing more than \$100 million in the Tasmanian training and workforce development system each year. This year we have established Jobs Tasmania to expand this focus to also encompass getting people into jobs and helping align jobseekers and skilled workers with employers and industries that need them.

This is an important plank of our plan to secure Tasmania's future. Jobs Tasmania will deliver the local jobs for local people and work with Tasmania agendas. The goal of Jobs Tasmania is to increase local employment, workforce participation as well as re-engagement with education or training. Director Stuart Hollingsworth and his co-workers are getting on with the job and I'm pleased to say they've been recruiting new staff around the state, and the full team will be up and running in coming weeks.

At a local level we're investing over \$10 million in new regional jobs hubs around Tasmania to bring the total number to seven. This will provide regional areas in Tasmania with access to these jobs hubs. Each new hub will be governed by a local board which will support coordination with school, TasTAFE, vocational training, existing community networks, the non-government and local government sectors, and most importantly perhaps, as well as the local community. Importantly, we're supporting the regional jobs hubs with a range of specific funding programs, including our \$6.5 million Tasmania employer bonus fund; our \$1.5 million Jobs Tasmania partnership fund; and our \$2 million job ready fund.

Skills Tasmania, led by Angela Conway, continues to deliver real results for real people, especially young Tasmania seeking the right career path for them. But we know that our VET system isn't only supporting young Tasmanians; it is also widely accessed by people who are looking to upskill or considering a career change later in life, and those who have found themselves needing a new career. Obviously, COVID-19 has contributed to this situation for some Tasmanians which is why the VET system and now Jobs Tasmania is so important to

make sure new opportunities are available. We need to ensure that our VET system will lead Tasmanians into jobs and help businesses and industries get the skilled and able workers they need, especially as the businesses sector and our economy expands, including into newer industry sectors.

In this regard round two of the Energising Tasmania Training Fund will open this Saturday 11 September to help more Tasmanians build a career in the energy sector and support the Tasmanian Government's ambitious clean energy plans. This fund was created to help meet the significant demand from both industry and learners, and we've already seen 244 training places provided through the first round of this program. Delivered through Skills Tasmania, Energising Tasmania is funded through the Australian Government's Delivering Skills For Today And Tomorrow initiative. There is up to \$5 million available for this round of the Energising Tasmania Training Fund which will accept and assess applications on an ongoing basis until 5 September 2022 or until all available funds are allocated.

That leads into the other new major initiative we have commenced, being the transition of TasTAFE to a more dynamic future-focused training provider, and we've so far received a great response from our plans to improve TasTAFE since we've released our transition plan for a better training future late last month, and we look forward to working with staff and industry on this process. I want to be very clear: there is no pathway and we are not going to privatise TasTAFE. TasTAFE will remain in public hands, and by giving our biggest vocational education and training provider a more focused direction and greater flexibility, we aim to make it even stronger. We're making sure the new TasTAFE has the resources it needs to succeed with an almost \$100 million injection in this Budget. For those of you who have already met Grant Dreher, CEO of TasTAFE, I know that he is as excited as I am about the potential new initiatives such as the investment in the virtual campus which supports Tasmanian learners and employers in regional areas.

Importantly, we have given the learners of Tasmania the commitment that 80 per cent of the overall state training budget will go to TasTAFE. I'll close by noting that across the last full calendar year, state funding for the VET system supported more than 25 000 students across more than 27 000 program enrolments with 5.2 million nominal hours of training delivery. The vast majority of this training was fully or largely free to learn through our VET system. I'd like to congratulate all involved in delivering this quality training. You're contributing to success stories for individuals and helping build a better Tasmania.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister, and I'll invite the honourable member for Hobart, Mr Valentine, to commence questioning on 1.3, Skills and workforce development.

1.3 Skills and workforce development

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you very much. Minister if you look at last year's budget papers and compare them to this year's budget papers, for 2021-22 you've got a 40.8 per cent lift in funding; you've got 46.7 in the following year; and 26.6 per cent the year after that in 2023-24.

Ms COURTNEY - Can I know which table you're on at the moment?

Mr VALENTINE - It's page 364.

Ms COURTNEY - Okay.

Mr VALENTINE - The line item is 1.3, Skills and Workforce Development. Just underneath minister for skills.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay. So, what I'm referring to as well as this budget paper. I'm referring to the previous year's budget paper, and between the two for 2021-22 there's been an uplift of 40.8 per cent; then the 2022-23 there's been an uplift of 46.7 per cent; and then 2023-24 there's been an uplift of 26.6 per cent. So, significant lifting of the funding. Can you explain to the committee what is justified or what is included in that significant increase in the appropriation? It's only been since the 2021 budget was delivered.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, and I think this goes to the importance that this government places on skills and training and workforce development. I might go to the secretary to discuss that line item in more detail, or perhaps Angela.

Mr EVANS - No, I'm happy to do it. Thank you, minister. Predominantly, it reflects the significant new commitments to TasTAFE, some of which are ongoing, particularly the hundred new teachers, and the creation of Jobs Tasmania, both of which arose out of the work that PESRAC did.

Mr VALENTINE - But this is skills and workforce development. It's separate to TasTAFE, isn't it? I mean, it's a registered training organisation that this helps with, but -

Mr EVANS - Skills are the - we fund TasTAFE under the Workforce Training and Development Act.

Mr VALENTINE - So that appropriation is in this line item, not under the TasTAFE. Okay. No, that explains that. I suppose, then, when I look at page 348, where we have the performance indicators, there doesn't seem to be anything in there specifically associated with this line item. Please correct me if I'm wrong, unless it's the supporting access to a skilled workforce, but that's about skilled migrants; it's not really about this particular line item.

Ms COURTNEY - There are some down the bottom of that table about VET graduates employed and apprentices and training commencements and training.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. I was looking at that as separate to this line item, so that's okay. You're saying it's all wrapped up in there. I can understand what you're saying. How many training providers does this division manage?

Ms CONWAY -. We have currently got 136 endorsed registered training organisations that are eligible to apply for Tasmanian Government subsidies. I'd also note that the VET system has fee for service providers that just run commercial services, and we don't have a relationship with them, so we only support the ones where government subsidies are being passed through.

Mr VALENTINE - But don't you have some degree of regulation over those?

Ms CONWAY - No. That's the national regulator, ASQA. They regulate the whole VET system and the whole VET market in Australia.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay. When you fund organisations, then, a capacity there of 136 possibly, what sort of mechanisms have you got in place to be able to monitor how they're delivering on what you're actually funding them for?

Ms CONWAY - We run - all of our programs and our funding runs through contestable program funds, so we run a range of different programs that registered training organisations are eligible to apply for, and that's a competitive process that we run in accordance with the Treasurer's instructions. It's very much led by demand, so what do employers and what do learners need and want at the moment? We try and be as responsive as we can with those programs and we allocate places to training providers who then provide the learning to learners.

Mr VALENTINE - But how do you measure their delivery of those courses that they're actually delivering in the way that the government? Through you, minister.

Ms COURTNEY - I'm very happy for Angela to take charge.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. How do you measure their performance?

Ms CONWAY - We have a range of funding agreements that you have to sign on for when we allocate funding to you, and that's got a range of requirements that say what we will check. We will not pay until we have evidence that the training's been completed satisfactorily. We have a number of checks and balances in the way we pay training providers. We only pay for every unit of training that they don't pay up front. We hold some money back if it's for a full qualification. We only pay some if the whole qualification is completed. Then we also have a sort of a compliance and monitoring arrangement where we check if we get any, I suppose, concerns raised by either learners or other organisations, then we will look into those, so we have a monitoring arrangement in place as well.

Mr VALENTINE - So you do that with TasTAFE, too, do you?

Ms CONWAY - We have a different arrangement with TasTAFE, so they're funded under a different separate deed, a purchasing arrangement, and that's funded through the Secretary's powers under the Training and Workforce Development Act. We also have the minister set annual policy expectations for TasTAFE which describe at a fairly high level what we are hoping TasTAFE can contribute to the VET system in Tasmania, and so we monitor those as well.

Mr VALENTINE - So, do you have industry partners that you deal with?

Ms CONWAY - Yes, we have a number of industry partners. Through you, minister.

Mr VALENTINE - If you're happy for me to ask the question.

Ms CONWAY - No. We have a number of, I suppose, particularly the peak industry associations and some employers that we work with very closely with, to try and identify what

the demand, future demand, future needs for training are. We also have a number of workforce advisory committees which we have set up under our legislation in particular sectors where we work really closely with employers, industry, training providers to try and make sure that we are meeting any demand and that we're also addressing any gaps in what's been delivered in the training area.

Mr VALENTINE - I'm assuming that relationship would help design and deliver the courses as well.

Ms CONWAY - It does, yes, that's right.

Mr VALENTINE - Those commercial bodies are being involved in the actual delivery?

Ms CONWAY - Yes. We share that information as broadly as we can. So, training providers know that in our criteria for assessment of our programs you'll score much better if you can show you've got those established. That you're meeting a need of an employer or an industry. We definitely try and prioritise that way.

Ms COURTNEY - In addition to that, if we go back to the PESRAC recommendations, one of those was - more broadly, in training - around industry compacts. That's work that we're undertaking as well to make sure to inform TasTAFE, but to also more broadly inform government, because while obviously we have the lions share of responsibility in terms of the actual training delivery, it's really important that industry comes and partners with us to be able to provide really concise advice, and PESRAC went to that in their recommendations around the role of industry as well to inform training.

Mr VALENTINE - How many students are actually covered? How many students are there across the board? Do you have that number?

Ms COURTNEY - I do. I think it's around 27 000 per year.

Mr VALENTINE - It might have been mentioned in the minister's opening.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, it's quite a lot.

CHAIR - That was VET students, wasn't it, the 25 000?

Ms COURTNEY - I'll find that, sorry. More broadly, in 2020, Tasmanian government investment in VET support had 25 025 students, 27 202 related program enrolments, and 5.2 million nominal hours of training delivery. We've seen strong numbers. However, we also know that this is against a broader national decline that we are seeing in VET training as well.

We're conscious that we've had really strong enrolments recently. Indeed, the data that's coming through has shown a real uplift. But we're conscious that there's a national headwind. This is how we think in terms of engagement with the industry, making sure that the training is appropriate for pathways into jobs, because that's ultimately what will drive a lot of the demand as well.

Mr VALENTINE - How many industries are directly involved in assisting with course delivery? Is that something that happens directly, where students actually go out - I'm not talking about apprentices - where students actually go out on site, and they experience -

Ms COURTNEY - Through TasTAFE, we have strong relationships with a range of industry groups. I think we had a round table with industry a couple of months ago, to distil some of the challenges that industry has with TasTAFE, and, importantly, what the opportunities are through the process that we're undergoing at the moment. What came out of that made really clear to me as a minister that some industries and sectors do it really well, and other ones perhaps have a bit more of a way to go.

There have been some industries that have worked very closely with TasTAFE, and they've worked to both make sure that training is current and relevant, in terms of the skills of the workforce, as well as the materials that people are training with. We're seeing that in the collaboration with some of our centres of excellence as well, and the heavy engagement that we've got from industry.

Mr VALENTINE - It would change quite regularly, one would think, in this digital world we're in.

Ms COURTNEY - I know that from TasTAFE's perspective they look towards one of those areas of demand. A good example is the investment that we've had through the budget particularly around the investment at Alanvale in the north of the state. We've got, effectively, the health infrastructure there to provide training for the nursing workforce. Being able to complement what we've got there we are putting in the foundations for a centre of excellence around drug and alcohol and youth mental health training.

We know, more broadly in the community, and we know across some other portfolios, we've got demand for that, to be able to upskill current workers of that industry and also bring in new workers, things like that. As that rolls out, there will clearly be strong partnerships with a range of areas of the community sector to make sure that we're understanding demand. That's a strong role that from Skills Tas, in terms of the role that Angela and her team play in that contestable funding. But then, TasTAFE themselves also look to what is there as well.

Part of the investment that we've got in TasTAFE and the additional staff that we're putting on board, the capital infrastructure, the virtual campus, that's all about making sure we can offer those opportunities to more Tasmanians to be able to have those pathways. I've actually a bit of detail in terms of some of the industries. We've got sector-specific engagement in place or underway in a range of priority areas; so, advanced manufacturing, including defence and maritime. There's a steering committee in consultation with TMEC being established to develop a workforce development plan for advance manufacturing related sectors.

Aged care and disability: TasCOSS is establishing a workforce advisory committee, and they're doing a very good job in this space, as a key component of supporting the community sector election commitment, and to support implementation of the community services industry plan. We're working with TasCOSS, and this committee will function as a component of Skills Tas engagement.

Agriculture: we've got a Tasmanian agribusiness workforce roundtable. That's been established to work with industry to meet needs, particularly with regards to the impact on seasonal workers with COVID-19. We know that that's had a big impact on many industries, particularly berries.

Aquaculture: through Skills Fund and other programs, Skills Tasmania fund seafood and maritime training, the industry-led training organisation. Building and construction: which has a relationship with Keystone, the Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Training Board, leads industry consultation. A construction industry roundtable with Keystone, master builders, Housing Industry Association, and civil contractors is being held to support the High Vis Army commitment that we've made.

Energy and infrastructure: there's a Tasmanian Energy and Infrastructure Workforce Advisory Committee which has been established to guide the development of workforce development and planning. I mentioned in my opening statement around the Energising Tasmania opportunity. There we have a developing a workforce to be able to take advantage of this opportunity. Broadly, we've got workforce planning and engagement across information and communications technology, tourism and hospitality, and transport and logistics.

Mr VALENTINE - I did ask.

Ms COURTNEY - You did ask.

Mr VALENTINE - I certainly got a full answer.

Ms COURTNEY - The thing that's important is for each different industry we try not to - and as the detail for each of those I've highlighted, there's not a kind of a cookie cutter approach for each industry. We've got to look at what the industry is like, what the structure is, what their challenges are. Some industries you've have a lot of homogeneous players, and so in some ways, that can be easier, to be able to roll something out. Other industries, you've got very different types of businesses in different types of markets, and how you can respond to them, and particularly some of the regional differences. We kind of look to each industry, to what they need.

Mr VALENTINE - So, for instance, with ICT, which is an area that I've been familiar with over the years, how do you make sure that what you're delivering there, given that it's a pretty constantly changing environment, do you communicate with TasICT, or the Australian Computer Society? What do you there, to make sure that training that's provided in that space is up to scratch? Or do you just rely on each of the individual industries to communicate their needs to you?

Ms COURTNEY - So we have an ICT Sector Workforce Development Action Plan Advisory Committee. This has been established to advise the development of the sector workforce plan. The Committee reports to the minister Mr Ferguson, as Minister for Science and Technology, so he is perhaps best placed to talk more broadly about the engagement with that sector, but Angela can add to that.

Ms CONWAY - I was just going to say Skills Tasmania is involved in that committee, obviously it's an area that cuts across, almost every sector has ICT needs, so it's a really important enabler.

Mr VALENTINE - If I can just move on to Jobs Tas. How is the jobs hubs network going?

Ms COURTNEY - I might actually invite Stuart Hollingsworth to the table. Stuart Hollingsworth has come to the table.

CHAIR - Welcome, Stuart.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Thank you.

Ms COURTNEY - I'm really excited that Stuart has taken up the mantle of the Jobs Tasmania unit. This is a really exciting initiative. We've got quite a large suite of policies that we're currently implementing, and Stuart can start going to each of those. Each element, we can dive into a bit more detail. The thing I would like to say more broadly is, Jobs Tasmania is working, particularly with this workforce growth component of my portfolio, how we can not only work with industry to try and encourage and facilitate being able to employ more Tasmanians, but, importantly, removing any impediments for either young Tasmanians or Tasmanians returning to the workforce.

So, the suite of initiatives that we have, the reason that they're broad is we're trying to make sure that we cover all aspects of what we need to do to support somebody into a job. Particularly the local jobs hubs and the local leadership is a great way to ensure that we're getting the right solution for a local community.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Thanks, minister. So, we started planning with all the regions; it's been announced as part of the election commitment. A number of the jobs hubs are already up and rolling. The model is very much leveraging the experience in the south-east, which has delivered a number of employment outcomes over the last 18 months, and also the work in George Town. So, planning is - we've had a forum with regional stakeholders in August, to start to discuss what the jobs board should look like, and the support that Jobs Tasmania will provide for each of the jobs hubs.

It's a very exciting agenda. There's already a lot of activity which is already occurring, a lot of connections and information sharing about what's worked in the regions where we've been already. We are now, as we are tooling up Jobs Tasmania and finishing our recruitment, starting to develop concrete plans with communities. But the whole strength of the model is that these are community owned. It's about creating the networks, and we're providing the support to address those barriers that those communities face, whether it be employment or access to training, or whatever they need to participate in the workforce or re-engage with training.

Mr VALENTINE - Through you, minister, the placement of those jobs hubs: Can you just run through again where they are?

CHAIR - There's seven.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I will tell you about each of those particularly, because with them, we're looking at the catchment areas around so that we can make them as accessible as

possible. I'll just run through the detail. They're building off the existing hubs in the south-east, in George Town and Glenorchy, and so -

Mr VALENTINE - They're the three that exist at the moment?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, and then there are four new.

Mr VALENTINE - South-east being Sorell, is it?

Ms COURTNEY - Correct, yes. What we're doing with each of these jobs hubs is looking at how we can support them with the local community. In terms of the expansion, we've got the four new hubs, there are going to be the north-west and West Coast jobs hub at Burnie, and that will outreach to the West Coast, King Island and Smithton. The south-central jobs hub in Brighton, which will cover Central Highlands, Derwent Valley, Southern Midlands and Brighton areas.

The Huonville jobs hub, which will focus on the channel region, including Geeveston, Dover, Cygnet, and Bruny. The St Helens job hub, which will include the East Coast, the north-east, as well as Flinders. And the regional northern employment and business hub will be expanded to cover George Town, West Tamar, Launceston, Midlands, and Meander Valley local government areas.

Mr VALENTINE - That's going to take up - that's six and a half million, is it?

Ms COURTNEY - So that's \$10.6 million.

Mr VALENTINE - So the six and a half you talked about in your opening remarks, was that - I thought it was six and a half.

Ms COURTNEY - That's the employer bonus. That's one of the initiatives that we're rolling out through the jobs hubs.

Mr VALENTINE - All right. Can you explain that employer bonus, please?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I'm more than happy to. This is an employer bonus, an incentive scheme for an employer to take on a Tasmanian who is long-term unemployed, has a disability, is a parent or a carer returning to the workforce, but also older Tasmanians deciding to return to the workforce. What we're trying to do is provide an incentive for the employer to take on an eligible person from one of these cohorts.

There are payments at the three-month and six-month point in time, so you can get up to six and a half thousand dollars if you take on an eligible employee and you keep them on board for six months. And that's paid in staged ways. So that's for full-time. There's also a smaller amount offered if you have them part-time, and there's an incentive if you move them from part-time up to full-time during that period of time to get the full six and a half thousand dollars. This is relevant for it can help remove any impediment in the employer's mind to somebody coming on.

And from a practical perspective, we know that if someone perhaps hasn't been working for a little while, or is coming back to work, they may need to have a bit more time re-training -

Mr VALENTINE - Get up to speed.

Ms COURTNEY - What this does is it provides that employer with the flexibility to be able to look at what they need to do to perhaps bring onboard somebody which might take a little bit more time. Yes, so that's been well received and it's only been opened. It opened last month.

Mr VALENTINE - You mentioned employer bonus but you also mentioned a couple of other things. Can you just explain what they were because I wasn't quick enough in writing them down.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I'll go through. No, no, there's a -

Mr VALENTINE - And I'll have one last question after that.

CHAIR - That's filled up 31 minutes already.

Ms COURTNEY - Okay. So -

Mr VALENTINE - You're not being very pointed, are you, Chair?

Ms COURTNEY - I have to say, these are really good initiatives.

CHAIR - They're all important.

Ms COURTNEY - The fact that they get to be locally driven I think is really important. We've got the Job Ready fund, so I opened this one at the beginning of July. This is a \$2 million program for eligible Tasmanians who face barriers to get the support and training to access tools and PPE. We work with the governments, our skills matching service provider which is Searson Buck, and people who are eligible can get up to \$500 to assist them. It can be for a wide range of things. It could be PPE, it could be tools, it could be a licence that they need, it could be getting their working with vulnerable persons card, so there's a range of different costs and again, I'm going back to the removing a barrier. This can actually be a barrier for someone being able to get into a job. That's in the market.

I talked about the Tasmanian employer bonus. There are a number of other initiatives we've got through these. We've got the Youth Navigators Project. The Youth Navigators Project was proposed by the Youth Network of Tasmania, which I know they would be very -

Mr VALENTINE - I'm sure Jo would know about that.

Ms COURTNEY - This is to safeguard disadvantaged youth who left school in 2020 and this is now being actively administered by Colony 47 for the next 12 months. Colony 47 will support our youth employment alliance of skilled providers to assist up to 300 Year 12 school leavers reconnect in 2020 and 2021.

The other initiatives, we have the Youth Connectors Program. We're running this through some of the hubs, so through Sorell, Glenorchy and George Town Launchpad Hub. This is being piloted. We've got a \$1.5 million Jobs Tasmania Partnership Fund, which is for

partnerships in the state government and the nongovernment sector. We're investing \$170 000 in Youth Family and Community Connections in Devonport to provide the Fit for Work Project and we've also got funding for MRC in the north and the south to support migrants.

There're also other ones that fall within these areas of the portfolio, we've got funding for \$3.2 million to expand Area Connect services with Community Transport Services Tasmania help regional people get to work and training. \$400 000 Workers Connect portal. \$200 000 for regional jobs shows and \$2.4 million to expand the Skills Matching service. There was a lot -

Mr VALENTINE - No, that's fair enough and just the last question is in terms of any revenues that are generated by this particular output, what are you getting back any revenue into this item?

Ms COURTNEY - I'm hoping that we're going to get back many more Tasmanians having the opportunity to participate in jobs.

Mr VALENTINE - No, I appreciate that but that's a sort of a benefit, an outcome.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, there's a broader, community and social benefit but -

Mr VALENTINE - Do we have any revenue figures though? I mean, is there expected to be a revenue generation in this or not?

Ms COURTNEY - No, it's not expected to be a revenue generated.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you, Madam Chair.

CHAIR - I've got a question in regard to synergies that you've used to join up the areas for the hubs. I can understand the west coast one, I can understand the Brighton one and I can understand the Sorell one but I'm not quite sure how the east coast and Flinders Island works together. Normally, people from Flinders Island fly into Launceston or Bridport, they don't head to the Breakaday community, so I'm just interested in how you see that working for those people there.

Ms COURTNEY - What we've done, particularly with the one that's at St Helen's and George Town and now encompassing a much broader area and Bell Bay, we have looked at some of the existing networks that have already been in place. I'm not sure whether Stuart wants to expand further, particular on Flinders.

CHAIR - So you're taking over from what used to be in place?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - No, so to the minister's point, the Flinders Island relationship will work in a combination of the hub that's operating through Launceston. There are linkages but again, we're creating a network where the hubs will work, there'll be soft boundaries where there's existing flow of labour supply or relationships. I guess this is quite an organic and new way of working but what we are trying to do is not necessarily come over the top. It's about building on what exists already in those regions. In Sorell, for example, where we've worked there, we work with the local school community, the trade training centre, employer committees, the council has a key role there and actually provided support

enhancement and able to bring in the commonwealth government in terms of Job Active and service providers to make those linkages.

The intent is to create, particularly for some of those bigger regions, hub and spoke models, so across the northwest coast. That will continue to build off the work that's happening in Smithton and Circular Head where there's already an active group.

CHAIR - As I said, I can understand the synergies there but I don't see them out of the northeast into the Breakaday community. It's just too far, people aren't going to head over to St Helen's to get a couple of hours worth of training, IT training, and they certainly won't have any opportunity to live there. It's very difficult to get accommodation.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Through the minister, in terms of - I guess the term "hub" can be a little bit - so it can be both a physical hub but also a hub and connection. What we find is again, similarly with the work in the southeast, again is working down into Tasman, so there's a physical location as part of the hub network but it's really a matter of hub of relationships and networks, so it is to trying to get activity training connections happening and put in place. The model doesn't require people to travel into a centre. It is actually connecting out and trying to deliver services remotely, in some cases, or finding new ways of working.

CHAIR - Interesting. I'll look forward to some outcomes. I can't quite see some of the initiatives there working on the ground, given that I know my communities and I just know how they tick, and again these things arrive and nobody asks the local members what they think. I just find that interesting but that's not a question, that's a statement. Thank you. Any other questions in Skills and Workforce Development? If not, we'll move to Rapid response skills initiatives 90.2. Thank you, Mr Willie.

90.2 Rapid Response Skills Initiatives

Mr WILLIE - Thanks, Chair. Minister, why does the funding for this initiative stop in 2022-23 and isn't there a need beyond that time?

Ms COURTNEY - These are around the COVID-19 response funding. I will ask the Secretary to expand on the detail of each of these. The ones that are under the Output group 90, that was funded through last year's budget. The initiatives that were funded as part of the COVID-19 response, so as a COVID-19 response they are time limited funding initiatives. Perhaps I'll get the secretary Angela to talk through that initiative.

Ms CONWAY - That particular investment was a COVID-19 response, the line you're referring to. When the COVID-19 pandemic started we knew there was going to be an upsurge in people who needed assistance. The Rapid Response program itself is about re-training people who have been made redundant or who were in imminent danger of becoming redundant. We uplifted that program. At that point in time it was a little bit unknown about what level of demand there would be immediately and we certainly definitely utilised some of that funding.

The program itself, Rapid Response, has not been an ongoing initiative that has been managed out of Skills Tasmania but will shortly be transferring to Jobs Tasmania. That is a core program we've always had to support workers where they've been retrenched, particularly where businesses have closed down or people have become displaced. That's a core program.

That will continue but the COVID-19 money was really to help through that COVID-19 period and certainly, we saw an increase in demand and then it dropped away as our economy went into a slightly better position than we'd first anticipated it would.

Mr WILLIE - Yes. I was interested in the Response Skills Initiative too because obviously they respond to situations where the employer might shut down or whatever else.

CHAIR - Can we have some numbers around that?

Mr WILLIE - Yes, that was my next question, minister. How many people have accessed the initiative?

Ms COURTNEY - I've got the data here for the Rapid Response. Between 1 July 2020 and 30 June 2021, 887 applications for Rapid Response training were approved and between April 2020 and 30 June 2020, 487 Jobseekers had registered with the Skills Matching Service.

Mr WILLIE - How many applications weren't approved?

Ms CONWAY - I don't have that information in front of me.

Ms COURTNEY - We can take that on notice.

CHAIR - Thank you. Sorry, I didn't realise you'd finished. Can we have a breakdown of regions for that as well, for those numbers? The 887 and 487. Thank you. Again, another question, thank you. Any other questions in this area, members? If not, we'll move to 90.4 which is Targetted Small Business Grants Program and Apprentices and Trainees. Thank you, Ms Palmer.

90.4 Targetted Small Business Grants Program and Apprentices and Trainees

Ms PALMER - Yes, thank you very much, Chair. Minister, this also comes under the Output group 94, COVID-19 response and recovery. Can you provide us with some information in broad terms about this funding program and whether it has been successful or otherwise?

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you. The government opened the Targetted Apprenticeship and Trainee Grants Small Business Program in 2018 as a replacement for the Small Business Grant to support apprentices and the trainees pilot program. The Targetted Apprenticeship and Trainee Grant for Small Business Program ran from May 2018 to December 2020 with \$7.5 million allocated over three years. It was targetted to three sectors; tourism and hospitality, manufacturing and building and construction. These were the only sectors eligible to apply. It provided support to small business operators who weren't eligible to claim the payroll tax rebate scheme, administered by the State Revenue Office which was aimed at larger employers. It made grants of up to \$5000 available to eligible businesses for each new apprentice or trainee taken on and was structured to provide payments in two parts; at six months and 12 months from the commencement date of the apprentice or trainee's new training contract.

In March 2020, the government increased the allocation of this program by providing an additional \$2.1 million as part of the Tasmanian's support and stimulus package, to tackle the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It closed to new applications as at December last year but

payments are still being made. The budget paper this year includes a balance of the funding for the program. The program supported 2354 apprentice and trainee commencements and 1227 employers between May 2018 and December 2020, and it has been a very successful initiative.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms PALMER - Thank you for that, minister. We have heard a lot about VET training broadly so far and it certainly is exciting to see Tasmanians take up opportunities. What are the other funding programs in place to encourage small businesses to take on apprentices and trainees?

Ms COURTNEY - Thanks for the question, and it goes to the heart of some of the answers I was giving before with regards to Stuart's portfolio area around making sure that we're creating incentives for business to take on, particularly young people as well. We know that we need to ensure that they've got opportunities to participate. The apprentice and trainee grant for Small Business Program opened in January 2020 and has already attracted 1780 applications between its opening on 1 September this year with over 1430 grants approved supporting 877 employers, and that one's available to all industry sectors.

As part of our ongoing commitment, in this budget we're delivering an additional \$10.8 million over two years in 2021-22 and 2022-23 to this program. There are a number of other programs in place as well to support small businesses take on new employees, including apprenticeships and trainees. These include the Mentoring for Success Program, which delivers on a number of government and industry priorities included in PESRAC interim report - recommendation number 15. It was also a priority action in the Tasmanian Building and Construction Workforce action plan.

The program provides \$6000 per successful applicant for full time apprentices or trainees payable over two instalments, being \$4000 for the first instalment on completion of probation, then \$2000 as a second instalment on completion successfully of 12 months of training contract. The group training organisations applying for part time or apprentices, or trainees are eligible for \$2000 for the first instalment and then \$1000 for the second instalment. Tasmanian and national data researched by the Productivity Commission indicates that GTOs both in Tasmania and nationally deliver better completion rates for apprentices and trainees than SMEs, and that mentoring programs lead to higher completion rates. Training outcomes are also supported more broadly by the team of workforce training consultants who work with apprentices, trainee's and employers in workplaces to maximise employer retention and apprenticeship trainee completion.

As I announced yesterday, the new north-west school-based apprenticeship grant program, which I understand Mr Valentine would be interested in, will open on Saturday providing grants of \$2500 to encourage local employers whose businesses operate in identified growth industry to find students looking to learn a new trade while they're in Years 10, 11 or 12, and that's part of the northwest \$3.9 million Job Ready Generation Package. So, with this program, it's going to support 100 school-based apprentices and trainees to gain practical qualifications while still engaging with schooling, letting them commence their pathway to employment. Other sectors that are eligible for this include the building and construction, energy and infrastructure, accommodation and food services, age and disability services, agriculture and aquaculture, and transport and logistics.

The other major training programs funded with the state budget are the Skills Fund, which covers the cost of training for existing workers. There's the Apprentice and the Trainee Training Fund, User Choice, which subsidises training costs for apprentices and trainees, and there's up to \$20 million allocated in 2020-21. There's Training and Work Pathways which funds projects that increase opportunities for people experiencing disadvantage and barriers to participation in compulsory education and employment. That's got \$1.95 million allocated. there's also the Job Trainer fund, which is \$20.5 million, and that provides grants to endorse RTO's to provide free nationally recognised training for job seekers, school leavers, and young people aged 17 to 24 to support their employment as Tasmania emerges from a pandemic.

As you can see from that response there's a substantial amount of support out there in the market to be able to support the training of young people in particular, but also Tasmanian's wanting to re-engage in the workforce.

CHAIR - Is there an initial point of contact? I mean, the amount of grants and opportunities available is a bit overwhelming to listen to, let alone try and navigate your way through. So, is there one point of call?

Ms COURTNEY - Through Skills Tasmania.

CHAIR - And somebody else.

Ms COURTNEY - So, through Angela's team, and Angela can provide some -

CHAIR - And then someone else, or somebody in Skills Tasmania will work out where your application belongs and assist in putting that together, is that how it's going to work?

Ms COURTNEY - Angela will - because it is complicated to navigate it.

Ms CONWAY - Most of our training funding is provided to registered training organisations who - and then they're the ones that go out and secure the learner, and enrol the learner in the course. So, we provide the funding through our competitive programs, and obviously TAFE has its own separate process for, you know, accessing learners. So, the RTO will get funding allocated and they will either have a learner already waiting to enrol, or they will have an employer that's got existing workers that they have said they're really keen to get trained in a particular area.

CHAIR - Right, so if 80 per cent of the training funding is going to TasTAFE, that only leaves 20 per cent, if I'm correct, to go to the training organisations of which there are around 136. Is that correct?

Ms COURTNEY - So in terms of the commitment the government has made with TasTAFE going forward made a commitment around 80 per cent - minimum of the 80 per cent of that training budget going to TasTAFE.

CHAIR - So that leaves 20 per cent to be spread across approximately 136 training organisations. Is that correct?

Ms CONWAY - Broadly, yes, that's correct.

CHAIR - So I can see that probably 136 is going to be whittled down fairly substantially.

Mr EVANS - I think it's worth just adding that TasTAFE is the public provider, and so it has some staffing capital other operating costs that it can't avoid, and so the government has a requirement to provide some core funding to the public provider. That's a significant part of the 80 million.

CHAIR - Yes, I'm not arguing with that, I'm just interested in how 20 per cent of the funding is going to be spread across 136 training organisations, because I can see that there's going to be a heavy reliance on TasTAFE, and I don't have an issue with that, but at this point in time industry is relying on 136 other RTOs to deliver training or organise training. So, do you see that there may be a shortfall here?

Ms COURTNEY - Industry is relying on TasTAFE as well as other organisations. Depending on the industry sector that we're looking at, they'll have a different reliance on different training providers. There are some industries which actually just do their own training. Different industries and sectors will have different relationships accordingly. It's also, in terms of - I think where we started with Mr Valentine's question - it's around, when we look at the funding opportunities from government funding, the outcomes we need for students and industry rather than, I think, funding an organisation per se. It's around the outcomes that we're looking for, areas of demand, areas of opportunity, and making sure that we respond to that. Angela can expand further, we don't think about it as funding the organisation per se, it's about funding the outcomes that they deliver which align with the priorities for government that have been determined through the engagement we had through that list of different industry collaborations.

CHAIR - Okay, so can I get someone to stand in before we leave this area, of how much funding - of the percentage of funding that these - currently goes to training organisations out of that 100 per cent. If TAFE is going to be given 80 per cent, and the other registered training organisations are going to have 20 per cent, can I have some idea of what that percentage that they were gaining prior to this new arrangement is?

Ms COURTNEY - Well what we'd have to do is also back out the funding for skills as an organisation.

Ms CONWAY - I could also just perhaps comment, if we look back, I think, at last years allocation of funding it was approximately 80 per cent of our funding went to TAFE and 20 per cent.

CHAIR - Right, so no real change.

Ms CONWAY - Not materially, no. No. One of the really important things we try and do is maintain a stable level of funding into our private providers as well, because they're also really important in our system. We try and manage the forward estimates and the money across the forward estimates to make sure that we don't have volatility, because obviously that could have impacts on businesses, and I would note many of the private training providers are what I would call or very small businesses. They're not big, and they often deliver in a niche area, and might have very bespoke arrangements with one or two employers.

CHAIR - Right, so the announcement around 80 per cent of the funding going to TasTAFE is no different than what happened in previous years.

Ms CONWAY - In the previous, yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. If we'd heard that first up, wouldn't have had to ask the question.

Mr VALENTINE - I suppose in a sense it might come back to my original question in terms of outputs. Sorry, in terms of performance indicators. What performance indicators do we have for this particular area - sorry, no disrespect to you - to be able to know how Skills Tas is actually performing? In doing what's just been explained.

Ms CONWAY - Well, one of the key areas of feedback that we get is from industry itself. So, the industry itself is where a lot of this demand is driven from, so that we're looking to how we can actually respond to the need of industry, and indeed the fact that we've got sort of such specific initiatives around that. I'm not sure whether the Secretary would like to comment more broadly being the Secretary across this area.

CHAIR - Who puts the KPIs together?

Mr VALENTINE - I mean given it's a fairly well funded area, and -

CHAIR - It's a lot of money.

Mr EVANS - Thank you, Minister. Of course, you've got key performance indicators in the budget, but separate to that we would, through our normal processes, set business plans for Skills Tasmania. There is a performance agreement in place between the Deputy Secretary and Angela, and we report fulsomely in our annual report on our performance in a lot more granular detail than there is in the budget papers.

Mr VALENTINE - These ones that are actually in there are really more about TasTAFE in a sense, aren't they? Yes, anyway.

CHAIR - Thank you. I'll now move to 90.25, which is priority industry skills funding, more teachers at TAFE.

90.25 Priority industry skills funding - more teachers at TasTAFE -

CHAIR - Mr Willie, which we heard, was going to be 100. Is that correct?

Mr WILLIE - No, this is a budget commitment from last year that carries over. It's \$1 million this one, it's not the 100 new teachers. But, Minister, obviously this is a pre-existing commitment from last year's budget. How's recruitment going? I'm hearing reports that - Allied Trades, it's very difficult to recruit teachers, that they're - in some courses like painting there are 170 students and only two and a half teachers, and then there's a need for five teachers. The glazing, there's 107 students and there's a need for three teachers, and that it's increasingly difficult to recruit staff.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question. Yes, we recognise that particularly some sectors where there's high demand it is challenging around recruitment. It is important that we have obviously quantitative but also quality of trainers at TasTAFE. This goes to the very heart

of what we're doing through our commitment, it also looks to the PESRAC recommendation which talked about, 'We want TasTAFE to be' - and I don't have the words exactly in front of me, but, 'more like the industries it serves'. This is what we're looking to achieve, is being able to be more flexible so that we can provide more competitive recruitment options, particularly in those high demand industries.

Mr WILLIE - So what does more competitive recruitment options mean?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, to be perfectly blunt, for some industries it's around the fact that we're out of the market in terms of the amount that we pay people for some industries.

Mr WILLIE - So higher salaries.

Ms COURTNEY - Sorry?

Mr WILLIE - Higher salaries.

Ms COURTNEY - Potentially for some areas. You need to be able to respond to demand. These are the things that are part of the thinking of that, because we need to make sure that TasTAFE can be competitive.

Mr WILLIE - We'll get to the debate in TasTAFE line item, but I'm very interested in this in terms of what you can't achieve now in the stated aims in that document, the transition to - I can't remember what the exact words are of that document, but there's not very clear aspirations. But the aspirations in there I find it very difficult to understand what can't be achieved now. You've got one negotiated agreement now, you're going to have one negotiated agreement if you go to a Fair Work Act. You could negotiate all of those things in that document if you want to.

Ms COURTNEY - So, thank you for referring to the TasTAFE transition document which is very helpful because it outlines the fundamental positions the government has taken throughout that, it looks at, effectively, the transition, the destination; looking at training offering, training delivery, workforce infrastructure, governance. There has been - through the extensive PESRAC process - a lot of engagement across Tasmania through that to ensure that we do have a broad view on some of those PESRAC recommendations. But I'm really excited by this. I think this is about strengthening TasTAFE. I think that the importance of TasTAFE is absolutely critical, not just now but into the future. Being able to ensure that we're investing in the people, as well as the infrastructure, and in regional areas, is something that I think should be celebrated. I know that industry have provided very supportive commentary around it.

Mr WILLIE - I'll wait to the line item, Chair, but I've got a lot of questions on this.

CHAIR - Thank you. We'll try and get there, because we're a few minutes short already. The next line item is 90.26, which is Expansion of Apprentices and Trainees Small Business Grant. Sort of almost covered this, but - the member for Pembroke.

Ms SIEJKA - My question's fairly brief, at any rate. How many apprentices and trainees will this additional money allow for?

Ms COURTNEY - I'll go to the secretary and see if he or Angela have that data.

Ms SIEJKA - I guess, follow-up, what industries have the greatest shortages of skilled people, as it does shift.

Ms CONWAY - I can probably partially answer that. The \$10.8 million over two years has already attracted 1780 applications up to 1 September, and we've approved over 1430 grants so far. That covers any industry that's engaging an apprentice or trainees. Eligible small businesses can apply for up to \$5000 for each apprentice or trainee that they employ on a full-time basis. It complements the payroll tax rebate that also exists for the large employers who employ apprentices and trainees. So it's on track. We're spending the money. I would have to come back to an answer on how many we estimate we'll cover because you can apply as a part-time worker or a full-time worker - and I don't know what - I can't predict what applications we'll get. It's a little bit hard to predict exactly how many we'll support.

Ms SIEJKA - No, that was helpful. Although it does sound like there's quite a lot of demand for it.

Ms CONWAY - There is. Yes.

Ms SIEJKA - If the funding discontinues from 2022-23, I think - if there's more support if it's popular, is that something that you would look to extending at this point?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, I think, as we've seen, there's a pretty broad suite of policies around this space. It's important, at any point in time, that we're responsive to the prevailing demands and the industry conditions. We also know national trends around VET training, that they do tend to be responsive to what their economic environment is as well.

Ms SIEJKA - Certainly been declining for a while, apprenticeships and -

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. We're conscious there are, sort of, different factors driving different levels of demand. This is where the engagement with industry is really important, so that we can see where the emerging need is and how to support those types of businesses and the types of industries.

I'm not going to, sort of, commit to a specific singular initiative. I think, more broadly, we'll continue to monitor how we can more broadly be responsive when we need to be.

Ms SIEJKA - So there's an evaluation process that would be built into this initiative, would that be - for the department?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, ultimately, with initiatives the diversity and the range of initiatives that we have, there's a range of things that we would look to such as areas of funding - obviously have completion. So, looking at how that worked, looking at the overall numbers of demand, which is usually a good indicator. There are other aspects that you look at as well, such as - and this goes to some of the initiatives in Stewart's area as well - is how you - have you created an incentive for a new training opportunity or was that -

Ms SIEJKA - An existing -

Ms COURTNEY - Was that training that was already going to go ahead. There's a range of parameters and things that we look at.

Ms SIEJKA - Well, data around completions will obviously be very important. Might be one to follow up next year, by the sounds of it.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes.

CHAIR - All right. Thank you. 90.27, which is Funding of key VET courses (JobTrainer). Thank you, Ms Armitage.

90.27, Funding of key VET courses (JobTrainer)

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair. The minister has covered off on quite a bit of this already.

CHAIR - A bit of wandering, this one, isn't it?

Ms ARMITAGE - But that's all right. I'm just wondering, are you able to tell me how the JobTrainer policy's being benchmarked?

Ms COURTNEY - Look, I might go to Angela, particularly, on this one, to talk through JobTrainer.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you.

Ms CONWAY - The JobTrainer program was a joint Tasmanian and Australian Government program. It made free training available, as a response to the pandemic. We allocated that funding - we've actually fully allocated all the funding to registered training providers, and I understand we're at about 80 per cent take-up of all those places. We've had very good take-up of our JobTrainer places. Most places have now been filled, but there are some places still available till the end of September. It's probably also just worth noting that, because it's been a very successful program across Australia, because -

CHAIR - Probably pay not to hang onto the microphones, Angela.

Ms CONWAY - Sorry, am I making problems, am I? Sorry.

CHAIR - Well, just getting a bit of feedback there.

Ms CONWAY - Getting this - sorry. Apologies, everybody.

CHAIR - No, that's fine. Just make it easier for Hansard. That's all.

Ms CONWAY - Yes. No, sorry. I'm sitting in a funny position, I think. It's also probably worth noting the Australian Government has signalled its intention to extend JobTrainer, and it's currently in negotiations with all of the states and territories around that. That might work better.

Ms COURTNEY - We have two.

Ms CONWAY - Thank you. Double whammy. Thank you. We're working through those processes at the moment.

Ms ARMITAGE - So extend past 2022?

Ms CONWAY - I think, from memory, they're looking at another two years of an agreement that runs for another two years. Yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - All right. We're looking to go to 2023 then, at least?

Ms COURTNEY - Potentially.

Ms CONWAY - That's potentially.

Ms COURTNEY - Potentially.

Ms ARMITAGE - So the \$4 million - is it the state funding that - equal to the federal funding?

Ms CONWAY - Yes. Yes, we had to match -

Ms COURTNEY - They're matched funding.

Ms ARMITAGE - So it's the matching -

Ms CONWAY - - The Commonwealth's contribution, and we'd have to do that again if the Tasmania Government agreed to do that.

Ms ARMITAGE - Do you have any idea of how many positions have been created? How many training places?

Ms CONWAY - Yes, I can tell you that we funded 2141 full qualifications across 23 different training packages, and 4816 skill sets across 11 training packages. We've got coverage across all local government areas, which was really important to us - to get that regional distribution.

Ms ARMITAGE - It's fairly evenly distributed through the north, north-west -

Ms CONWAY - Yes.

Ms ARMITAGE - - and the south?

Ms CONWAY - We aimed to do that when we allocated.

Ms ARMITAGE - All right. Thank you. Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - Good. Thank you. If there are no further questions, then we'll move to TasTAFE, which is in a different volume than our big folder. Mr Willie. Thank you.

Mr WILLIE - Thank you, minister. Specifically, what are the stated aspirations in the TasTAFE transition to a better future document that can't be achieved under the existing arrangement? You just mentioned competitive salaries; that could be negotiated now. I've heard you talk about flexibility; that could be negotiated now. You could buy back holidays if you wanted, you could change hours of employment now, through negotiation. I'm just interested, what specifically are you trying to achieve? Because it's very unclear - and there's conflicting messages coming out of Government.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, Mr Willie. For the purposes of Hansard, I've got Grant Dreher, who's the Chief Executive of TasTAFE, who's also joined us at the table.

CHAIR - Welcome.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you for the question, Mr Willie. I mean, this has been one of the - a key election commitments that we took to the election with regard to TasTAFE. In terms of the development - and we went to this somewhat yesterday - we obviously had the extensive PESRAC program, which I think the Secretary is able to talk to and the feedback that we heard from industry.

Mr WILLIE - With one submission recommending it turn into a government business.

Ms COURTNEY - Look, I might get the secretary to talk a bit further about the PESRAC process.

Mr EVANS - Thank you, minister. I'm just trying to find the relevant piece of paper that I had a few moments ago.

CHAIR - That happens to me as well, from time to time. You have it, and then all of a sudden, when you really need it, can't find it again.

Mr EVANS - I was going to make the point, though, that the PESRAC recommendations were informed by a range of different sources. They obviously took written submissions, but they also conducted cross-sector workshops and regional workshops right around the state. And also a UTAS well-being survey. They drew on inputs from a broad range of sources. I've heard it said that there's only one written submission supporting the changes to TasTAFE.

In my discussions with both the individual members of the PESRAC committee and also the secretariat - and the report itself says that, 'The single most common topic' - and I'm quoting this, 'The single most common topic at our workshops was that skills, training and TasTAFE are central to the recovery from the economic and social impacts of COVID-19. Then the report lists a whole heap of key messages that came out of all of those sources of input. It's framed up a broad range of recommendations with respect to how to address what the feedback says is the single most common issue raised in the PESRAC forums.

Whilst the Evers Network may have been the only one to specifically raise TasTAFE reform in a written submission, skills issues were raised by just about everyone, including the TCCI, Tas Costs -

Mr WILLIE - Skills issues or specifically that - it should turn into a government business enterprise?

Mr EVANS - - TasICT, for example.

UNKNOWN - Sorry?

Mr EVANS - Without going into detail about the solution.

Mr WILLIE - That's very different.

Mr EVANS - So others have -

Mr WILLIE - Through the minister.

Mr EVANS - - raised the issue -

Mr WILLIE - It's very different, skills issues to turning the organisation into a government business and changing the governance arrangements.

Ms COURTNEY - So with regards to - I'm sure you've read PESRAC. In terms of the calibre of people we had, actually, on the PESRAC committee, they had, I think, the somewhat challenging task of distilling the extensive feedback that was provided in the facilitated sessions around the state, to be able to distil that in what their recommendations were for Government. To deal with the immediate challenge of Covid-19 but put Tasmania on a strong footing, going forward. It was a clear recommendation that came from them. Obviously, we've talked around being able to make sure that TasTAFE can respond to industry, but then the questions often go to IR. But it is broader than IR; it's around investment in infrastructure, it's around investment in people, and it's -

Mr WILLIE - Can't that happen now?

Ms COURTNEY - It's also around the recommendations in PESRAC, around how decisions are made and the governance around TasTAFE. There is a body of work that is underway that has been outlined in the transition for a better training future document. That will go to the breadth of the challenges TasTAFE face and some impediments for them to be able to be as strong as they can be in the future.

I want to make it really clear for members I value TasTAFE. I want to see it strong into the future. This is about investing in it, investing in the people, investing in the infrastructure and ensuring that, through Grant and his team, through the board structure that we have, that they can be responsive. Ms Rattray went earlier to the quantum of funding that goes to TasTAFE, making sure that TasTAFE can be accountable to the minister, making sure that we've got the right governance around that, and that is the work that is being done at the moment.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, I've been keeping a list of the reasons why it needs to turn into a government business that you've said. You've said competitive salaries. That could be negotiated now. You've said flexibility. That could be negotiated now. You just mentioned investment in the infrastructure. Can't that happen now? And an investment in people. Can't that happen now? I'm really interested in why the need to change the governance arrangements. I haven't seen a reason that is plausible.

Ms COURTNEY – Mr Willie, I just answered that in the last question around the fact that we need to ensure that there is contemporary governance around the way that the board works, around the way that the CEO and his team works so that we can drive accountability for TasTAFE. It's a significant amount of government funding that goes into it, and what we want to do is make sure that TasTAFE is able to be responsive into the future, and I'm really excited by the initiatives that we've outlined. To be frank, Mr Willie, your side of politics has said that TasTAFE is broken and needs to be rebuilt from the ground up, so I mean clearly you're of the view that there are significant challenges in TasTAFE. We don't quite share the Labor Party's view, but what we're doing is trying to strengthen TasTAFE.

Mr WILLIE – I think we all want to see TasTAFE be successful, but the things you're talking about can be done now. It's underinvestment from your government that has caused some of those problems. I'm not hearing any plausible reason to change the governance structures from government, and I guess in your document there's some really confusing things in terms of the messaging. One of them that I picked out, minister, is in your TasTAFE transition to a better future document, it says that, 'No existing TasTAFE employee will be worse off.' Does that mean future staff will be? Are we going to have a two-tiered staffing arrangement?

Ms COURTNEY – I can make commitments about the current staff that we have, quite clearly, that they won't be worse off, and quite clearly, looking at better salaries is part of this. You asked the question before about the challenges of organisations actually being able to recruit trainers and teachers. That's some of the constraints that we have at the moment within TasTAFE being able to do that. So that's part of the work that we're doing, is making sure that we can be responsive. We need to obviously look at how we do recruitment considering the significant demands there are on teachers and trainers.

Mr WILLIE – You've got one negotiated agreement now, minister. If you change the governance arrangements and you move the industrial arrangements over to the Fair Work Act, you're going to have one negotiated agreement. I'm just trying to understand what can't be done now under the current arrangements in the things that you're saying?

Ms COURTNEY – As has been outlined substantially by stakeholders within industry, within the feedback that we got from PESRAC, and indeed from discussions that I have had with a range of colleagues, what we need to do is ensure that we can have TasTAFE on a future footing. We've made a number of commitments around it not being privatised, remaining not-for-profit, no existing TasTAFE staff member will be worse off, no forced redundancies. They are the objectives that we have. We want through this process for TasTAFE to be valued as being a forward looking and supporting the Tasmanian economy and community by delivering training in areas where the public provider is best placed to deliver.

TasTAFE training and delivery meets the expectations of Tasmanian learners, employers, and industries. TasTAFE is a future focused market facing organisation whose staff take great pride in their workplace and are supported to gain industry experience. That TasTAFE's physical and digital infrastructure supports best training delivery. That TasTAFE has a flexibility to adjust its operations to meet customer need and has clear lines of accountability.

These are the destinations that we've outlined that we're seeking to achieve. Clearly, the legislation that we brought before the parliament is part of that, but part of it is also the

significant investment we're putting into people and to infrastructure. I think the Secretary has further to add.

Mr WILLIE – Again, all of those things –

Ms COURTNEY – Can I just go to the Secretary to finish –

Mr WILLIE – You mentioned all those things and they can be done under the current arrangements. My concern here, minister, is you're going to create a heap of inertia around the organisation and that's going to be detrimental to industry, it's going to be detrimental to students, and it's going to be detrimental to teachers. Why don't you just get on with the job and fix the things that you're talking about under the current arrangements?

Ms COURTNEY – I'm hoping the inertia that we're creating is positive and forward. This is about investing in TasTAFE. The inertia that these –

Mr WILLIE – You can do that now. You should have been doing it.

Ms COURTNEY – This is what we're doing, Mr Willie, and I think that this is an exciting time, it's an exciting opportunity. I want to get this right. It is important for industry, it's important for Tasmania, but importantly it's for the people that train at TasTAFE and want to get those pathways into jobs.

CHAIR – We had a supplementary from Mr Valentine.

Mr VALENTINE – It's just another observation. Chair, I'll hear what the Secretary has got to say.

Mr EVANS – I was just going to support what the minister had to say about – the destinations that are described in this document we haven't just made up. We have consulted broadly building off the PESRAC recommendations. The Minister hosted a roundtable with over 20 industry leaders from every single sector. We heard from them. I've engaged with the board, the CEO, we've had 200 employees of TasTAFE involved in workshops to hear their views about where is a better destination for the organisation.

This plan has been informed by all of those discussions, including the employer representatives. I've had meetings with them and I've got a workshop with them in a couple of weeks' time to work through the project itself. But as the minister said, the legislation and the governance piece is only one part of this overall package, and you're quite right; a lot of this can happen, and in fact is happening. TasTAFE itself does have direct responsibility for implementing a number of parts of this work program, as defined through the implementation plan.

CHAIR – Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr VALENTINE – I just want to make an observation.

CHAIR – We need a question. Observation and a question.

Mr VALENTINE – I think the minister said that it's going to provide accountability to the minister. It also removes it to arm's length from our scrutiny, doesn't it, minister? We get one opportunity a year, not continual opportunity to be able to ask questions on the floor direct to the organisation if it becomes a GBE. What's your comment on that?

Ms COURTNEY – That's not my expectation. It's not about removing it from scrutiny from parliament.

Mr VALENTINE – No, but that's effectively what it does, doesn't it? By creating a GBE?

Ms COURTNEY – Just for clarity, we've talked about becoming or transitioning to a government business. We haven't said GB capital E, so in terms of that, that is what will be presented in the legislation to parliament and once that is finalised, to be able to do that, we'll be able to provide briefings on the rationale behind the final model that's determined. Ultimately, it's around - there will always be a mechanism for accountability to this place.

Mr VALENTINE – But you know what I'm saying? We have the same problem with hydro, with TasNetworks, with Aurora, with MAIB.

CHAIR – It's only every second year.

Mr VALENTINE – Every second year, our committee here gets an opportunity to ask questions directly of those GBEs. Now, you're saying it's not going to be a GBE, so what other mechanism is there that you can say, well it's like that.

Ms COURTNEY – At the moment, that is all the work that State Growth is doing, so Kim and his team, as well as Angela, are leading a body of work across government, including different agencies such as Treasury and DPAC and the State Service Management Office around matters around governance of it. I completely take on board all your comments, Mr Valentine, and I think that they're very really valid comments. I don't have a model to present you today to be able to argue the pros and cons of that. I hear the feedback that you're saying and that's why, with regard to the government business, it hasn't been specified what government - what that actually is.

We wanted to be able to do the body of work behind it, and ultimately this is what will be presented to parliament later in the year. But I think that you've raised a number of really valid things. We also need to look at not just reporting to parliament, but how the lines of responsibility work in terms of the employment of a CEO, the role of the board. There are some things within the current legislation that we have that are sometimes at odds and point to the Corporations Act when it is not – that's not the mechanism by which it runs. There's a whole lot of other aspects to the current legislation that TasTAFE is stood up under that we are considering at the moment.

But I don't have a final decision to be able to argue with you, but I or debate, or consider even, but look, I take your feedback on board and they're the things that we're working through.

Mr VALENTINE – It's just the statements made in November. Jeremy Rockliff; it was about the seven year registration with the Australian Skills Quality Authority. So well done Jenny and her team. They were one of three training providers last year in the Australian Trade

Training Awards to be shortlisted for the large trainer training provider of the year. Three students were shortlisted as national finalists and two of those won their category, and I quote Jeremy Rockliff in last year's *Hansard*: 'This is a sign of an organisation competing with the nation's best.' I mean, don't you see that it's a very quick turnaround to have something being feted for its performance in November, and yet getting to this budget, we're changing it?

Ms COURTNEY – The intent of government is to strengthen and invest and bolster TasTAFE and make sure that it is – it has the staffing, the facilities, things like the virtual campus so it can be responsive for the future. From my perspective as the minister, this is about strengthening TasTAFE. This is about investing in its people and investing in its facilities and empowering the board and the CEO, and also making sure that we've got these strong relationships with industry to inform it.

I agree, we've had some exceptional results from TasTAFE, particularly on the national platform, and I congratulate those Tasmanians that have achieved that. I know in terms of accreditation how much work went into that and that's a critical part of obviously of TasTAFE and ensuring that we do have that accreditation. I'd like to assure you, Mr Valentine as well as other members, this is about investing and bolstering TasTAFE, making sure it can be strong for the future.

I'm also very conscious that we've got a lot of a lot of broader discussion around reform of skills funding. At the moment, there is a lot of discussion about how that may happen in the future and I want to make sure that TasTAFE is in the best position possible, and Tasmania, through TasTAFE to be ready should there be any changes in the future. I believe in this organisation. We spoke this morning in terms of my education portfolio. I want pathways for Tasmanians to be engaged with work and education. TasTAFE is absolutely critical for that.

You also talked about some of the successful people that we've had on the national stage. If I go back to a gentleman called Chris Medhurst who was an award winning apprentice, I think he was, through TasTAFE. He's from the north-west coast. He can and spoke to me. His circumstances was he used to work at the papermill. That shut down. He had very limited skills. He went to TasTAFE and TasTAFE support that they provided and wrapped around in terms of other literacy and other support, and he is going from strength to strength in the community sector, in the disability care sector, and when you hear people like that who find themselves in just really unfortunate situations, and the fact that TasTAFE can provide these pathways, that's really, really empowering.

Mr VALENTINE – Got other questions, but –

CHAIR - Yes, I know you will. So, I've got a supplementary in regard to the -

Ms ARMITAGE - Virtual Campus.

CHAIR - Campus, that's it. And then I'll come back to it.

Ms ARMITAGE - I was reading about the virtual campus, that's on page 120, minister. I notice the \$2 million funding for the regional virtual campus in 2021, followed by \$8 million in 2022-23, and then also TasTAFE and Libraries which is also virtual campus. Can you tell me where that money will be spent initially, particularly - so it's basically \$4 million in 2021-22,

and \$10 million in 2022-23, noting that I said that the Libraries and TasTAFE are still with regard to the virtual campus.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, so I'm just getting a little bit further information on that for you, but with regards to the virtual campus, I'll actually ask the CEO to talk more broadly about the benefits of this initiative. The virtual campus is a really exciting part of, not just the investment that we're going to see in infrastructure and collaboration with Libraries, but importantly being able to provide access for Tasmanians, not just in regional areas, that's part of it, but also flexible training so that people can participate in training while they're undertaking other work. I might get the CEO to talk more broadly about that, and I'll then talk about the funding.

Mr DREHER - Through you, Minister.

CHAIR - Might lean over that microphone a little bit if you might, thank you. They do tend to, you know, not necessarily pick up that well if you're not looking at them a bit.

Mr DREHER - Not a problem, thanks for that advice. Look, as the minister said, the virtual campus is a very exciting opportunity for TasTAFE where it will help us to predominately increase access across the state to our training. The first steps of the virtual campus are about building it, so design and development is, you know, years one and two. At the moment we'll be looking at how we stand up the virtual campus, making sure that we don't invest in new technologies if we already have technologies that are already in place. So, you know, we've made commitments to our current learning management system, our current student management system, that type of thing, and how we knit those together.

Ms ARMITAGE - So we're talking the new building as well?

Mr DREHER - The virtual campus will not have a physical presence.

Ms ARMITAGE - Because \$10 million, it seems to be an awful lot of money if you haven't got a physical presence, that's all. Number two.

Mr DREHER - Is that question to me?

Ms ARMITAGE - Well, you might as well. Yes.

Mr DREHER - Yes. To stand up a virtual campus also includes the product that you deliver out of the campus or the course that you deliver out of the campus, and you can't take what we're currently delivering in classrooms and put it into a virtual campus and expect it to work. There's a lot of course development work that needs to happen in that \$10 million as well as the technology and infrastructure that has to go with it. But it's not about building that infrastructure, technology is very expensive.

Ms ARMITAGE - Obviously. Is it ongoing? Because it stops.

Ms COURTNEY - So what we're doing is there is capital investment as part of it, but as the CEO said there's also funding to develop the course provision. In terms of the development of that, I actually released earlier this year through TasTAFE the virtual campus implementation plan. So, this maps out the objectives around the hybrid learning, the content. It also looks towards the development of the content, so as the CEO was -

Ms ARMITAGE - Up to 2025, is that the one?

Ms COURTNEY - Sorry?

Ms ARMITAGE - Is that the one that it goes on up until 2025? The five stages? Or the 75 products by quarter four to 2025?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, so and a lot of - in terms of the implementation plan, so that looks up to the targeted 75 products by 2025. In terms of the funding profile, we've obviously got a front ended component of that with for course development as well as we roll out sites, and as we move forward we'll look to work with TasTAFE on event future funding opportunities.

Ms ARMITAGE - I just assumed it must have been self-funded from 2023-24 onwards.

CHAIR - So in a practical sense, if I might, does that mean that, you know, if you're rebuilding an engine, that somebody's doing it and somebody's looking - I mean, how does this work?

Ms COURTNEY - I absolutely agree that VET training is very face to face, very hands on. So, this is not about learning how to -

CHAIR - Rebuild an engine.

Ms COURTNEY - Rebuild an engine. This is not learning how to - for the nurses, this is not learning how to draw blood, or to be able to do a -

CHAIR - Or wire a house, or.

Ms COURTNEY - Whatever the - this isn't about teaching that.

CHAIR - Doing my hair.

Ms COURTNEY - Indeed. This is about the learning that can be provided. We know at the moment a lot of the courses that we do have - and I'll get the CEO to talk -

Ms ARMITAGE - Can you give an example of some of the courses, as I said, for the \$10 million? It's more than that. It's \$14 million if you consider the libraries.

CHAIR - How does it work? In a practical sense.

Mr DREHER - Well, rather than nominate the courses because that's a process that we're doing now.

Ms ARMITAGE - We can give an idea.

Mr DREHER - We can talk how it works in practice, and we might use as an example our nursing course as the working example. That will be one of the things that come into the virtual campus. But to support what the minister has said, vocational education's kind of a

skills acquisition journey, and we're not taking that away. You still need, for want of a better term, to get your hands dirty if you're going to become a hairdresser or mechanic, or the examples you used there, and we certainly wouldn't want to send students out into the workplace that hadn't done that. The idea here is, with the hybrid learning model, is that it's - the flip classroom's been around for a very long time, so this is formalising a flip classroom, where you access the knowledge up front, and you come into the campus for meaningful simulation, practice, skills acquisition, demonstrations with teachers.

Ms ARMITAGE - So you're doing the theory.

Mr DREHER - You're doing the theory. And this is already happening in nursing, so in the past -

Ms ARMITAGE - New South Wales. Are we still working with New South Wales in nursing?

Mr DREHER - No. No, no.

Ms ARMITAGE - Not anymore?

Mr DREHER - No. So, we have a new model in our nursing program where in the past people would have to come on campus four or five days a week, and they would do their theory on campus. Now they come on campus two days a week, and they do their theory from a location of their choice. Now that could be home, all right? That could be in the future a Libraries Tasmania facility. It could be where they come on campus and access computers or whatever that we have because they don't have that infrastructure or device at home.

CHAIR - It could be at a hub at Sorell.

Mr DREHER - It could be a hub at Sorell.

Ms COURTNEY - One of the benefits of this is particularly I was speaking to some of the nursing students at Alanvale on a recent visit, and what this means is it allows them to be able to consolidate the time that they need face to face learning into more discreet times. So, if this woman I was speaking to, I think she was up towards Devonport way, and for her it was much more convenient to do some learning from home for the theory side as you mentioned, and then coming to Launceston a couple of days a week rather than coming every single day. The other part of it is we know that what we've heard through feedback from students as well as employers is that they want to be able to access training at times that are convenient for them.

Many people have caring responsibilities, they might have a current job, particularly people that are wanting to upskill, which I saw a lot actually in the nursing qualification as well. It means that that way they can still continue to work a few days a week, they can study when it's convenient for them, and then they are able to come into a site in a more efficient way for them so that they can work and study, or care and study at the same time.

Ms ARMITAGE - Can I have a little bit more explanation though? Just regarding where the money is spent, because it is a lot of money. I understand \$2 million in the first financial and then \$8 million. I know you're saying it's very expensive, but what are we spending it on?

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Are we putting out a tender for these products, or for this IT, or whatever it is? It's an awful lot of money, I just want to know how we're spending it? How we're actually choosing to spend it, and where we're spending it.

Ms COURTNEY - So at the moment we've established a working group, so that's between TasTAFE, and Libraries that are scoping the work to understand what's required in the regional areas and remote communities in particular, and also what we need at these sites. So, the area that they're doing is, obviously as the working group coordinator, managing the project, exploring and identifying the areas of need, and looking at ensuring that we don't duplicate things that are already there. Particularly for regional places, and the example that I've used in other estimates is perhaps things like the Bass Strait Islands. If we're partnered with Libraries Tasmania to invest in the actual physical infrastructure there, we want to make sure that it's a cohesive, more of a whole of government approach rather than replicating lots of things.

Ms ARMITAGE - Who would be on the working group, Minister?

Ms COURTNEY - So we've got - Libraries Tas and TasTAFE are the main participants in the working group.

Ms ARMITAGE - And we have a steering committee as well, or is that the same?

Mr DREHER - No, that's not the steering committee. The steering committee for the virtual campus -

Ms ARMITAGE - It's another committee. So, are these paid committees, or?

Mr DREHER - No. No. And it wouldn't be a steering committee, it would be an advisory committee.

Ms ARMITAGE - I'm just reading from the papers - it actually calls it a steering committee.

Mr DREHER - Steering committee. Yes, well, because it requires advice from regional areas and remote areas, because what service we put into those areas would not be the same as the service we put into Hobart or Launceston.

Ms ARMITAGE - But just so the steering committee will initiate a working group and provide oversight to the development, that's all.

Mr DREHER - Well, steering or advisory. There will be a community based and industry-based community that will provide advice.

CHAIR - Will it rely on efficient and reliable information and technology access? Because that's not terribly a reliable and efficient in some of those more regional areas.

Ms ARMITAGE - It's not available everywhere.

Ms COURTNEY - That's at the very core of why we're doing this, because there's a development of the actual course content as Grant has spoken about, but it's how we look at

the - what we currently have, and the hubs that we've got in different areas through DoE, training centres, through TasTAFE, through Libraries Tas, and looking at not duplicating those, but imbedding those. Looking at where those areas of need are, because ultimately the purpose of this is to try and get more access for more Tasmanians, so this is for Tasmanians that don't have access at home to a computer, don't have internet. We want to provide that. The exciting thing about the partnership, particularly with Libraries, is because Libraries Tasmania provides a lot of support services, particularly around, we discussed earlier, online access and also literacy.

CHAIR - But they're not open 24 hours a day.

Ms COURTNEY - No they're not, but part of this is how we're looking at those. That is the work that is underway at the moment.

Ms ARMITAGE - Well I assume that \$2 million from Libraries would be capital works in order to - for computers and other areas for people to go into? Is that right?

Ms COURTNEY - In terms of that funding we're looking at how we - this is part of the work at the moment that's underway to identify the allocation, the profile of that. The scoping work needs to be done with Libraries on locations to really understand where that demand is.

Ms ARMITAGE - So hopefully, if we get TasTAFE and a GBE, we might be able to get some more detail next year, or later on, of where the money was spent.

Mr WILLIE - Once every two years.

CHAIR - Might be the year after.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, minister.

CHAIR - I've made a judgement decision here that we will finish TasTAFE by 4 o'clock, and then have a 15-minute break for an afternoon tea, and then head into disability after that. So, Mr Willie. So, we've got about 15 minutes of TAFE questions.

Mr WILLIE - Just want to pick up on what the member for Hobart was talking about around the accreditation, and we all saw the relief on the former minister's face when they achieved that. I know it was a big ordeal, there was audits and all sorts of things involved. Can you confirm that if TasTAFE is turned into a government business it will need to re-seek accreditation as a new entity with new governance arrangements?

Ms COURTNEY - I agree the importance of the ASQA accreditation, that was something that a lot of effort went into ensuring that. We've been doing work to ensure that that ASQA registration is maintained through this process. So, that is the work, that part of the work was underway to have that confidence that the work that's underway will not impact that. We did receive that seven years re-registration in July 2019. It's very positive, it's a maximum term you can be reregistered for, so that's something that we're mindful of. The advice that I had today is we're not expecting for that to be impacted.

Mr WILLIE - Okay. Minister, would you agree that public education and skills and training is a public good, and that TAFE has a number of responsibilities. It has an importance

to serve industry, which I hear the Premier and yourself talk a lot about, but there are other functions of TAFE that are different to RTOs. Things remedial literacy, numeracy, English as a second language. There's a whole host of work ready programs. It's host of things that TasTAFE does in the public interest. How are you going to preserve those values if you corporatize the institution?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, we've made a strong commitment that TasTAFE is going to remain a public provider of training. That's been a core part of it. In the example that I used before, about Chris Medcraft and his journey, clearly the wraparound services that TasTAFE provides have been critical. That is what we want to do, and we've spoken a lot this afternoon about removing barriers for training and removing barriers around education, as well as accessing jobs. Perhaps I'll get the CEO to talk more broadly about the role of it and the importance of it.

Mr DREHER – Thank you. Through you; I think the issues you talk about, or the supports you talk about are what make a government-training organisation, which TasTAFE is. I've come from another jurisdiction, and I know that in other jurisdictions that component - the governance arrangements are different, but that component is still preserved, as part of the public provision. I wouldn't see that that could change. A lot of what we're talking about with the virtual campus a moment ago was about access, and quite often it's about access for learners who have missed out prior to post-compulsory education. I don't see that that is at odds at the moment. I think it's just a given, that your public provider needs to be able to do that.

Mr WILLIE - Well, I mean, the experience in other jurisdictions - South Australia, for example, where TAFE has been corporatised, there's a whole range of things that are happening to that organisation.

Ms COURTNEY – Well, as the minister responsible for this organisation, we've got a firm commitment about what we expect TasTAFE to do. This is around a public provider of training. The work that it does - and I've spoken here about the benefits of those services that it provides, to ensure that learners can get engaged, can stay engaged. We know that, for some Tasmanians, there are significant barriers to accessing training. Some of those are geographic, some of those are technology, that we've spoken about, and some of those are challenges around learning, challenges around the way that they engage with learning. I want to see Tasmanians that want to participate be given a pathway to participate. This is exactly what TasTAFE has done successfully, and will continue to do.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, in South Australia, where TAFE has been corporatised, courses have been slashed last year. There were cuts to 20 courses in areas of high need: childcare, aged care, and disability. This year there are further cuts proposed, to retail, dental, performing arts, photography, rural operations, counselling, work health and safety. How can you guarantee your corporatised reforms will not impact courses, cost to industry, student enrolment numbers, apprentice numbers, campuses, and course availability, particularly in regional areas?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, the confidence I can provide the Tasmanian community is the fact, as the minister responsible, the investment that we're making is providing more opportunity and more choices for Tasmanians. I know that you keep talking about the corporatisation. We've made it really clear that TasTAFE is not being privatised. We've made

it really clear that this is about increasing access for Tasmanians. This is about being responsive to industry.

This is around ensuring that TasTAFE can be strong and responsive in the future, noting the changes around industry and demand. We're seeing increased investment into TasTAFE in many strategic areas that you just mentioned. We're looking at Newnham, at the significant investment we're doing there to build on a health hub, building the foundations of a centre for excellence around child and youth mental health and wellbeing - sorry, alcohol and drug services there, in response to the demand that we're seeing in the community.

Mr WILLIE - You can do that without changing the governance arrangements, which you are doing.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Valentine.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you very much for that. One of the concerns seems to be around the issue of price gouging by the private sector of students. So, students might end up being the ones that actually pay more for courses if it goes down this track, to full privatisation. Can you guarantee that the TAFE model that you use, as it's not expected to be a GBE, according to you, minister, that it's not going to burden students with unnecessary costs associated with the provision of courses maybe from the private sector?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, this is about strengthening TasTAFE as a not-for-profit. This is around ensuring that we have got more choice for learners, improved conditions, flexible hours to align with industry. So, I want to be really clear, that this is - there is no intent around privatisation. This is embedding and strengthening the Tasmanian public provider, and indeed the accessibility of the courses that we do have for Tasmanians.

Mr VALENTINE - But will the government provider be purchasing in private enterprise services to deliver courses? That's the question, and being able to make sure that the costings around that aren't going to disadvantage students over what they're currently paying.

Ms COURTNEY - I expect for students that are currently at TasTAFE - I mean, the fact that we've got the commitment about remaining not-for-profit, and the fact that we provide such significant funding to TasTAFE to subsidise the operations that it does provide, there is no intention around making it more difficult, or increasing any barriers for students to be able to participate. That is definitely not the intent, and this is why we've also guaranteed the minimum 80 per cent of funding, to ensure that there is that confidence there, of that funding through to TasTAFE.

Mr VALENTINE - So there's no intention for - well, because it's not going to be a GBE, there's no intention for TasTAFE to be paying a dividend back to the government, is there?

Ms COURTNEY - No.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you. I appreciate that. I just want to get that on the record. Now, my other questions are in relation to the significant boost in the income provided in the 2021 budget. With respect to that, the amount of work and effort needed to expend that, as well as going through this change, this model change that you're talking about, are you going to have enough staff to actually make that happen, or are they going to be in a really stressed

circumstance, trying to meet the expectations of dealing with that extra funding and what it's supposed to provide, along with going through a whole restructure of the way they operate?

Ms COURTNEY - That's a really good question. Making sure that we're supporting TasTAFE throughout that transition is really important. I have regular conversations with the CEO as well the Chair around making sure that TasTAFE gets the support that it needs from a leadership level during this period of change. Importantly, there are a number of initiatives that were flagged during PESRAC that I know that the board is - and the senior leadership are already focused on. Part of that is a long-term capital plan that's outlined in this implementation plan. Looking at - and we've got specific initiatives that outline the budget. I've spoken about the one at Alanvale a few times.

But it's how we look at the broader suite of assets within TasTAFE. That work is commencing, so that we can have a strategic way that that investment is done. In terms of the investment in additional teachers, that is in - effectively it rolls out in a staged way, to be able to do that. Again, I've been engaging with the CEO, and he's already well and truly turning his mind to the best way to respond to the demand from industry, and also respond to match up with the capital infrastructure that we're doing. Planning work is underway and continuing. The board is engaged with the work that that is involved in that. This is about providing a sustainable pathway for TasTAFE through this time.

Mr VALENTINE - When you say Alanvale, are you talking about the Launceston City Campus?

Ms COURTNEY - No, I'm talking about Newnham.

Mr VALENTINE - That's all right, because I want to ask you a question about - in the 2021 budget, it provided for the sale of the Launceston City Campus properties of TasTAFE. However, this sale doesn't appear to be provided for in the 2021-22 budget. Maybe you can point me to it. Can you outline why this sale decision has been reversed, and why the Launceston City Campus will now not be sold, and what development may be undertaken to these properties to meet the initiatives identified in the budget?

Ms COURTNEY - It was sold.

Mr VALENTINE - Well, can you just clarify for me, for the record?

Ms COURTNEY - I might just get the CEO to clarify. So, in terms of -

CHAIR - Well, it's a yes or no. Was it sold?

Mr VALENTINE - Was it sold?

Ms COURTNEY - So because there are two buildings, two properties - yes, the two properties have both sold. One of the buildings has a longer settlement, which, I understand, will settle early next year.

Mr VALENTINE - Is that why it's not in this year's budget?

Ms COURTNEY - I would have to seek advice on that.

Mr VALENTINE - Can we clarify whether it's in this budget?

CHAIR - But it would've gone into a consolidated fund, wouldn't it, or did it stay with the Department?

Mr VALENTINE - It might be.

CHAIR - Scott, come on down.

Ms COURTNEY - Scott Adams, who is the chief operating officer at TasTAFE.

CHAIR - Do you have a wad of money from the sale?

Ms COURTNEY - He can unpick this for you.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you. I appreciate that.

CHAIR - And we've got one more question. So however long it takes, it cuts into our afternoon tea break.

MR ADAMS - Thank you. I can answer. Yes, the two buildings in the city have been sold. One of them is fully settled, and that money has been received. The other one does have a longer settlement period, and will settle in January of next year. The funds are retained by TasTAFE; they don't go into -

Mr VALENTINE - Where are they in the books, in this budget, is the question?

MR ADAMS - They wouldn't appear in -

Mr VALENTINE - Well, one would, but the other wouldn't. One has been sold - when was that sold?

MR ADAMS - The first one was settled in April of this calendar year, and the next one will settle in January next year.

Mr VALENTINE - Tthat should be in this budget, should it not? Sorry, this calendar year?

MR ADAMS - Yes.

CHAIR - So it should be in the revenue.

Mr VALENTINE - It should be in the budget somewhere.

CHAIR - Is it listed in the revenue?

MR ADAMS - Yes, it is in the revenue received by TasTAFE, yes.

Mr VALENTINE – Is it in these budget papers or not? Or is it just in a bulk amount somewhere?

Ms COURTNEY - I think Angela is in the process of unpicking it.

Ms CONWAY - I think I can point to where it's probably - it's not specifically shown, but on page 123, non-financial assets, property plant and equipment, it will be - I think Scott captured in that line there, but not specifically identified.

CHAIR - It's always good to put a note in for members.

Ms CONWAY – There is a note down number three, 'The variation in property plant and equipment reflects additional investment as part of the TasTAFE facility upgrades and transition fund election commitment, and the anticipated sale of Launceston City Campus properties.'

Mr VALENTINE - Sorry, which page are you reading from?

Ms CONWAY - Page 123 in TasTAFE -

Ms COURTNEY - The other book, not the big book.

Mr VALENTINE - No, that's fine. Thank you.

CHAIR - What was the sale price, please, of the two properties?

Mr ADAMS - So there were two properties. The smaller property sold for \$1.2million, and the large property for \$6.385million.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you for that.

CHAIR - Well, that will fund the virtual show, just about.

Mr VALENTINE - I look forward to receiving a briefing on the TasTAFE bill when it comes through.

Ms ARMITAGE - Just a quick question, a follow-on from Mr Willie's with regard to the 100 teachers. I'm just wondering, so what's going to happen if you can't get those 100 teachers, and where actually do you think you're going to get them from?

Ms COURTNEY - I outlined earlier part of our plans around the -

Ms ARMITAGE - You did.

Ms COURTNEY - So what I might do is ask the CEO to talk more broadly about the workforce planning going forward, and how we're going to look to identify - some of the objectives of the TasTAFE transition that we're doing, is around looking to how we can recruit particularly in these areas of demand. It was recognised by Mr Willie in an earlier question that -

Ms ARMITAGE - It was, and I was talking to Mr Willie about -

Ms COURTNEY - There is a constraint at the moment. These are the things that we're looking to address through this, so that we do have the ability to be able to -

CHAIR - I'm probably looking more for specifics than broad, because obviously we're looking for trade, for trade teachers at TAFE, which means they would be current people. A lot of them are operating their own businesses I would think at the moment, these teachers. How much experience do they need to have to become a teacher in their trade? Is it hands on that they automatically can then teach their trade or do they need to go back and do extra study? The more tradies we take from the community to teach, the less we actually have. I appreciate that we're bringing apprentices up but they still have to reach that certain level of training. It's a little bit of a chicken and egg, what comes first. I'm just thinking 100 teachers is a big ask and I'm really after more than a broad outline. More specifics about where you actually think they're going to come from.

Ms COURTNEY - What I might do in a moment is get the CEO to talk to some of our ambitions in that area, more broadly with regards to this. I spoke earlier on about the compacts with industry. This is how we encourage and work with industry so that we can look at how we use their workforce and skilled workforce -

CHAIR - But 100 is a lot.

Ms COURTNEY - It is a lot.

CHAIR - And what will you do if you don't get them?

Ms COURTNEY - I'm very ambitious that we will be able to. We've got need -

Ms ARMITAGE - You always need a plan B, so I'm just wondering what is plan B if plan A, one hundred doesn't come off and you've only got fifty. What is plan B? All of a sudden this new TAFE can't operate as you're planning because you can't get 100 teachers and I'm really wondering where you're going to get them, but I'm happy to hear from the CEO.

Ms COURTNEY - Obviously I recognise the challenges around recruitment. This is one of the challenges or impediments has been raised through the substantial engagement that we've had with industry, and so this is what we are trying to achieve through this process, the mechanisms, so that we can be able to pay more.

Ms ARMITAGE - Are some of them virtual teachers?

Ms COURTNEY - There are other people that produce the content but perhaps I'll go to the CEO -

Mr VALENTINE - You mean teaching virtually, don't you?

Ms ARMITAGE - No, I was thinking virtual teachers because they're not going to really exist.

CHAIR - Thank you. We need to wrap this up so that we can get some response and then we'll call an adjournment. We'll call a suspension, thank you.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister. There are no plans for virtual teachers in our workforce development strategy.

Ms ARMITAGE - I was being facetious.

Mr DREHER - But we acknowledge that it will be difficult to recruit 100 teachers but -

Ms ARMITAGE - A hundred extra teachers.

Mr DREHER - A hundred extra teachers, but that is over four years.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes, I appreciate that.

Mr DREHER - So we do that and it's across the state. We're quite confident that we'd be able to do that. I think the important thing to support what the minister said is this is not just a challenge for TasTAFE, this is a challenge for developing Tasmania's future workforce.

Ms ARMITAGE - Team Tasmania.

Mr DREHER - And we will be working very closely with industry on how we can recruit and attract people from industry into TasTAFE to be able to deliver programs that we need to deliver to develop the workforce for today and the future. That key point is that we will need industry's help to do this.

Ms ARMITAGE - But then we're going to be lacking in industry and we all know how hard it is now to get a tradie.

Ms COURTNEY - But ultimately it's industry that's crying out for more students out of TasTAFE.

Ms ARMITAGE - It is. It's very difficult.

Ms COURTNEY - This is going back to my earlier comments about strengthening TasTAFE and ensuring that industry does play their role. Because TasTAFE has a crucial role to play in training but TasTAFE, it can't do everything. It has a scope of what it does, including the additional support it provides for people to be able to access that training. We need industry to be able to be there partnering with us and I think there are some sectors that have done a really good job and that we look to as examples as we go forward with these interesting compacts.

Ms ARMITAGE - Bearing in mind, of course, these 100 extra teachers is without the teachers that retire, leave the industry. It's obviously more than 100, so thank you.

CHAIR - Certainly some challenges ahead.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, minister. We will suspend, thank you, Shae, and we will return at 20 past four and head into the area of Disability. Thank you.

The Committee suspended from 4.04 p.m.

The Committee recommenced at 4.18 p.m.

CHAIR - We'll recommence the broadcast for the final part of today's Estimates process and welcome back, minister, with your responsibility as the minister for Disability Services, and please introduce your team at the table, and I know - or I feel sure that you'll have an overview to share.

Ms COURTNEY - I do, thank you, Chair. I have Michael Pervan who's the Secretary of the Department of Communities Tasmania, and Ingrid Ganley who's the Director of Disability and Community Services.

CHAIR - Welcome to you both.

Ms COURTNEY - Chair, this year's Budget includes significant new initiatives to improve the lives of Tasmanians with disability focused on delivering the commitments we made during the 2021 state election and supporting our ongoing commitment to the NDIS. We want to ensure more Tasmanians are able to access the service and support they need following the broader rollout of the NDIS which has changed the lives of so many Tasmanians with a disability. As at June this year there are now just over 10 900 Tasmanians being supported by the NDIS. This includes early childhood intervention support, early intervention support and, importantly, Tasmania's NDIS cohort now includes more than 6000 people who are receiving supports for the very first time. Tasmania's contributions to the NDIS will be \$264.1 million this year rising to \$274.6 million in 2022-23.

More broadly, Chair, I've been closely engaging with state and territory colleagues on a range of matters since taking on this portfolio through the disability reform minister's meeting which are crucial forums to discuss these issues. One of the matters discussed this year was the Commonwealth's proposal for independent assessments, and I thank the many local community members and organisations who made representations with respect to this matter. As members of the community are aware, it was agreed in July - or likely to be aware, that in July that this proposal would not proceed, and instead a new process would be established with ministers determining that the new process will feature the co-design of a new person-centred model that delivers consistency and equity in access and planning outcomes.

Other commitments that are now being prioritised at a national level, having been agreed from the disability reform minister's meeting, include official-led work on improving access to housing for people with disability, commitments from the Commonwealth to undertake appropriate consultation on draft legislation, work on combatting NDIS fraud, and further analysis so that jurisdictions can better understand the cost drivers relating to NDIS. Moving to the budget, we are providing \$1.2 million over the next four years to establish the first-ever Tasmanian disability services commissioner. This is a top priority for government with consultation already underway and initial feedback having been sought for the ministerial disability consultative group. The government will be working closely with the MDCG as well as other key disability stakeholders and the community to seek further feedback on this important role. The government is also acting to meet growing demand on local autism

diagnostic services which we know is the largest proportion of NDIS users. The budget provides \$1.4 million dollars over four years in additional funding to boost a Tasmanian autism diagnostic service, and this will be used to recruit additional assessors and put downward pressure on the waiting lists for this vital service.

Our commitments also include new funding for national disability services, the local peak body for service providers as well as continued funding of more than \$1 million for advocacy services and support for local programs to promote participation in sport. I can also advise the Department of Communities Tasmania has commenced a review of the Disability Services Act 2011, and I confirmed yesterday there will be opportunities for broader community to contribute to that process and registration is now open to ensure that Tasmanians are engaged. Chair, we are committed to making these investments and providing more support for our community.

CHAIR - Just in regard to that review, have you got a timeline around that?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I can provide some more information on that. One of the things that's a key priority for us is ensuring that we have plenty of engagement. It's a bit like the work that we have underway in regard to the disability services commissioner to ensure that we've actually got the appropriate mechanisms to engage with Tasmanians, particularly those that have a disability.

I'll just provide you some more - it's not in there. Found it. So, the Disability Services Act 2011 has provided a strong foundation for the provision of disability services in Tasmania; however, the act is 10 years old, and in that time many things have changed and, in particular, the introduction of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Communities TAS has commenced a review of the Disability Services Act, and the purpose of the review is to create a piece of legislation that provides a contemporary vision for a safe and inclusive Tasmania for people with a disability. To do this, we do need to hear from people with a disability, families, carers, disability support providers, and the broader Tasmanian community. So, we want to ensure that we're consulting with people with lived experience. We have prepared a review discussion paper to provide context to the review and provide questions to get people thinking. The discussion paper and easy English discussion paper are now available, and stakeholders can register their interest in participating in the review. We're expecting a report on the outcomes of the review will be prepared later this year, potentially earlier next year.

CHAIR - Right. And I'll now hand you over to the chair of the legislative council select committee inquiry into disability services, the Jo Siejka.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - Thank you. Because that committee will have a report with very good information.

Ms COURTNEY - I think I'm appearing before the committee in a few weeks' time which will be really helpful.

Ms SIEJKA - Minister, in Estimates in November 2020, last year, it was put to the then minister that state-funded disability support organisations had their funding substantially cut, and the minister responded that there have been no cuts in disability service organisations;

however, many state-funded disability organisations lost all their core funding in March 2020 which was discussed, I believe, in estimates as well. These organisations provide vital support to Tasmanians living with disability, many of whom are not eligible for the NDIS and who also require significant support to participate in our community. They include important organisations such as the Brain Injury Association of Tasmania, the Acquired Brain Injury Service, Welways, Tadtas, Tasmania Amputee Society, Independent Living Centre, Spina Bifida Association, Multiple Sclerosis, Paraquad and New Horizons. These organisations have been directed to apply for ILC grants, yet those grants are nationally competitive time limited and narrow in focus. What will the minister do to ensure these organisations are viable and competitive and what are you doing to make sure that NDIS-ineligible clients are not falling through the gaps?

Ms COURTNEY - So, thank you for the question, and I know that this is a very important topic, particularly for these organisations. I understand that federally there's a review around the provision of ILC funding, and we'll look to engage with that particularly to advocate for those Tasmanian participants. I understand - or my advice is that it's - DSS is leading that review, and looking broadly at the directions of ILC. So, with regards to the ILC funding, as you are aware, the transition has been part of the broader transition to the NDIS, and so as part of that transition, you know, we've worked and tried to assist with providers about how they would operate in the new NDIS system. Some have been able to receive by the grant of funding through the ILC. Some have built an individual support component in their organisations and some have become registered providers of support. So, we're engaged with these organisations.

I know that we've had earlier this year some successful grants to some of these - some Tasmanian-based organisations, including the Brain Injury Association of Tasmania, New Horizons, the Richmond Fellowship of Tasmania, the Northern Tasmanian Badminton Association Incorporated. So, look, we continue to engage with the Department of Social Services through the department as well as more broadly with my federal colleagues around ensuring that with the ILC funding that was always part of the broader NDIS reforms.

Ms SIEJKA - It's very hard for these small organisations, which I'm sure you're aware - so, for example, all four brain injury organisations partnered together to apply for the national information program grant, and of the 37 grants awarded, no Tasmanian-based organisation was successful. So, core funding obviously provides a very different thing to project funding as it is, and it just - it provides the glue for them to be able to be responsive to provide for other grants and do other work that's needed. So, I understand that review is happening, but it seems to me that there needs to be more done from your side of it as well. Other than participate in a review, what's the intention for you there?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, I think more broadly - and I don't think that we can, I mean, decouple the changes in the way that ILC funding has happened - decouple that from the broader NDIS, and as I outlined in my opening statement, the substantial commitment the state government is providing to the NDIS and that's going up, and we've seen that NDIS has seen over 6000 Tasmanians receiving support for the first time and through the transition to the full implementation of the NDIS. I'm continuing to work and through - particularly through Ingrid and her team with these providers on how we can work with the federal government, work with DSS to support them to do the important roles that they do do. I do acknowledge the role they play in the lives of Tasmanians and their families.

Ms SIEJKA - There just seems to be emerging gaps. Is the department sort of monitoring to see where these gaps are - because there's far more people living with disability not on the NDIS who are eligible and I imagine, you know, initially when you first change these things that these gaps may not be obvious. But as time goes on and there's no brain injury support organisations left then it should become more and more obvious and a bigger and bigger problem and then end up in the other areas of the budget as well.

Ms COURTNEY - We're continuing to monitor the situation with regards to these participants. I'm not sure whether Ingrid or Mike have anything further to add in regards to how we engage.

Ms GANLEY - Just to reinforce, yes, that we do monitor what's happening and -

CHAIR - Microphone over a little bit towards you, Ingrid.

Ms GANLEY - Little bit more?

CHAIR - Yes. Just come down a little bit, yes.

Ms GANLEY - Sure.

CHAIR - They won't break, they just might rattle a little.

Ms GANLEY - Yes, so we are monitoring and we do keep a close eye on how the funding is allocated through the ILC program, what are the projects and supports that are funded and we actually work quite closely with DSS in terms of how the ILC is implemented and advocating. They have invited us to be part of selection panels to be able to provide that dedicated Tasmanian input into the process.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you. It just seems to be a problem that's growing and not going away which is really concerning to me. Another question I have was around the interface between mainstream services, minister, such as health. Patient going into the hospital and maybe have the NDIS to support them but once they're in hospital or through the hospital admission, there's often a gap that seems to occur, but also in other areas. What's being done to ensure that that interface is improving? Is there any work that's being undertaken at the moment?

Ms COURTNEY - It's a really important interface. It's important for people with disability. Obviously, when they're experiencing the healthcare system but we also know that it could - there are also with the challenge in our health system we also need to make sure we've got support for people to actually exit the health system as well as that. Perhaps Mike might be able to expand more broadly.

Mr PERFAN - Only in that the NDIS after a national meeting with health CEOs a couple of years ago agreed to fund hospital liaison officers. I'm not sure how many of those we've got on the ground in Tasmania. Ingrid will know more of the detail of that than I would.

Ms SIEJKA - We've had some constituents that have had issues at that level and I'm aware that that's in place but it still seems to be on the ground when somebody's presenting that there's still a problem there.

Mr PERFAN - Access and connection to them.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes.

Mr PERFAN - There's similar issues in all the major hospitals with Aboriginal liaison officers and translators and people like that. It's that making the connection to that person with the skills and the network to support them. But we can certainly -

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, and look one of the things I can follow up particularly with Jeremy Rockcliff as the minister responsible, these are some of the things that I think came to the fore, particularly during COVID-19 when we had restrictions on access as well.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes.

Ms COURTNEY - I mean obviously it escalated up the tree to me, particularly in those individuals who perhaps couldn't have carers with them and support people. What is best probably if I seek some advice from the minister and seeing as I'll provide it through another minister, perhaps I can, when we come in front of the committee, provide more detail about that then and I'll make sure I've got a comprehensive response and engage with the minister's office with regards to that. The work that has happened.

Ms SIEJKA - I'm sure we'll have some questions along that line when we see you as well.

Ms COURTNEY - Can I ask, is the Minister for Health appearing before the committee?

Ms SIEJKA - No, but perhaps they should.

Ms COURTNEY - No, I wasn't going to - I wasn't going to suggest that but seeing he's not, look, I can on his behalf work through his office.

Ms SIEJKA - It's not a bad idea. We might discuss that as a committee.

Ms COURTNEY - To provide some advice. I'll try and be very comprehensive then but I'll work through his office to see what advice we're able to either table or orally provide at that hearing if you like.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you. On a related health front, there's a slow uptake of the COVID-19 vaccinations amongst people living with disabilities. What are you doing as a minister and the department doing to support that and improve that situation?

Ms COURTNEY - That's a really important thing that you've raised and clearly as an ex health minister it's one of our key focuses earlier in the year and indeed the prioritisation of people, both with a disability but their carers and disability staff to be able to get vaccinated. There has been - so more broadly as a government in October last year we released our state specific disability service providers preparedness and response plan. This was actually around how we look to the broader response within the disability sector. We know that the federal government clearly plays a strong leading role but it's how we - like with aged care, but we're really cognisant of making sure that we provide the further support that people need. Within

that there's a range of mechanisms including emergency accommodation and low-income payments and things like that to support people with a disability, or those that care for them.

In making sure that we've got vaccinations, the Commonwealth is in charge of the rollout in disability residential settings with two or more residents. That has commenced. With regard to the state government, it has been a priority for us making sure that we are vaccinating people with a disability. We've encouraged people clearly to ring the hotline, we've engaged to make sure we've got communication going out in a range of different mechanisms and indeed through - I can't remember if it was PDAC or - I think it was PDAC we had very constructive feedback from a few - from one member around how we engage with the vaccination booking system. We're looking and Mike can talk to you about the accessibility that has been worked through, particularly on that coronavirus website.

What we did in partnership with Aspen Medical, we've put in additional support for vaccination clinics for people with a disability in Hobart and Launceston, so they're people with a disability or mental illness, carers and recipients, disability support workers and we have worked to ensure that we have got targetted communications around that but importantly, the actual style and setting of the - were specifically tailored for a range of needs. We had slower numbers of people going through so there was more time there. We had quiet days so that people could participate in an environment where there was less stimulation and we were working very closely to ensure that we had the - I guess a bespoke thing so that there weren't any impediments.

In terms of communication, we've sent out plain English resources such as social media tiles, newsletter scripts, posters to advise people with a disability and their support workers about eligibility. We've also sent these out through networks, including community groups run by and for people with a disability; peer groups, carer groups, advocates, peak bodies, disability service providers, volunteer networks and local council. We've got easy read information on the website to support the understanding of the decisions to be vaccinated and the vaccination process and indeed we got some feedback about how we can look at that booking system and I think it's demonstrated in Tasmania - we've done a response to specific cohorts like this, and it has demonstrated the close relationships we have in Tasmania and to be honest, the practical way of just getting stuff done. It's been I think a credit to the team. We're still obviously encouraging people to get vaccinated.

The latest stats I have and these are the NDIS stats. Participants, 47 per cent first dose and 34 per cent full dose. Staff, 61.4 per cent, fully 47 per cent. I also note that they're the figures that are reported through the NDIS but more broadly if people are accessing a vaccination perhaps through their GP or potentially through their pharmacy, particularly for a worker, then that might not necessarily be picked up in the data reporting.

Ms SIEJKA - It's a lot of work happening and to still have quite a low rate, so it's obviously a very big issue.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. This is something that the vaccination EOC, emergency operation centre is very focused on in terms of these cohorts that are the most vulnerable. We obviously had access available early on. The federal government is obviously leading their body of work into those residential facilities and we're encouraging people more broadly, but I feel confident that if there are ideas or initiatives, I know that the vaccination EOC would be

more than happy to partner. We're very responsive to ideas from the community around how we can drive take-up but also limit any barriers for somebody accessing a vaccination.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you. Another thing that has come up in previous Estimates was the Tasmanian government's review into amputee services which actually may be health. Yes, okay. We've had a query recently around the content of the reports and outcomes being released but it's just occurred to me that that may be health. The other thing that I wanted to know some more about was the Disability Services Commissioner which I know you touched on, but just in terms of timeframes and process.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I can give you - I'm just trying to work out. I've got in many different piles of information. No, that's the wrong one, sorry.

CHAIR - It's just arrived. Thank you, Chris. Gold star and a cold coffee.

Ms COURTNEY - The Tasmanian government has made a commitment around the establishment of the Disability Commissioner. We've got funding to support that in the forward Estimates of \$1.2 million and consistent with the plan I met with the minister's disability consultative group a little while ago to discuss the establishment. This is going to be part of the broader review of the Tasmanian Disability Services Act. As I mentioned, particularly with the review of the act, the engagement and indeed the breadth of what the Commissioner will do and what the role is, is something that I will be engaging on. This was the purpose of the MDCG meeting, was to understand through a range of different people of this experience what they would like to see from it. There's a range of different, I guess, models in terms of what services they provide.

Ms SIEJKA - What's the timeframe for that?

Ms COURTNEY - The timeframe we're expecting the position to be in place next year, so that's the timeframe and so in regarding feedback that we received from the minister's disability advisory group, that's driving the next stages of work so we're looking at how to develop a - the next stage of developing a comprehensive positioning paper. I'm not sure whether you'd like to provide some more details on the progress.

Ms GANLEY - We're at the moment doing a bit of - we've done a jurisdictional scan on what are the other models used interstate. We've certainly listed the feedback from the minister's consultative group. We're looking at what other mechanisms exist within our own state and we're putting an options paper together that we want to take back to the minister's consultative group and then that will come to the minister, all of that by the end of this year.

Ms SIEJKA - Is there opportunity for wider consultation as part of that as well?

Ms GANLEY - Yes. Yes.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes.

Ms SIEJKA - That would be after the options paper I presume, or before the options paper, which stage?

Ms COURTNEY - The options paper, my expectation is the feedback that we've got from the ministerial advisory committee has informed the types of breadth and diversity of scope that people have interest in. My expectation is that is going to form the paper that then goes out more broadly so that then we can get a broader sense of feedback on that. The initial conversations we've had with the disability advisory group were around framing up some of the scope and some of the aspects that were important to them.

One thing that I found very informative was there were quite diverse perspectives on what the role should be, and so this is why it was very helpful so that we could understand that breadth, but also so we can get feedback on that. Some of the things perhaps are mutually exclusive that were suggested, so we just need to actually get broader feedback on what we're seeking to achieve with that. Also, particularly with the fact that we're looking at the Act itself as well, it gives that opportunity of which things are potentially picked up by the disability commissioner, which things might be picked up through that other bit of legislation. The fact that they're occurring in similar times is very helpful because we'll be able to bring that feedback together in a pretty cohesive way at a similar timing.

Ms SIEJKA – The wider community consultation is later this year? Or where does that fit within that?

Ms COURTNEY – Yes, that's my expectation, and one of the things I've asked of the department is to pay particular focus on the breadth of ways that we do communicate, obviously, so that it is accessible and also making sure that we've got timeframes on our people to respond. We also are working to make sure that we've got a breadth of ways and the people – as with the review of the act – can provide feedback because it's important that we have a range of ways of feedback that can be provided so that we can get the feedback of people with lived experience. I know that the team in Department of Communities, that's a – there's always a strong focus and I'm confident that we'll be able to do that.

CHAIR – Supplementary, Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE – Just on the disability services commissioner, minister, I'm just interested in whether that's going to cover the education system in terms of its oversight.

Ms COURTNEY – Ultimately, we've got a discussion paper out, as we said, later this year, so we'll look at the scope of what that comes back with and if we get a substantial amount of feedback with regards to education, then we'll work through that with DoE.

Mr WILLIE – I'm not sure whether you can answer this, but \$300 000 a year doesn't seem like a lot of funding to run an office like that. What will that pay for?

Ms COURTNEY – The fact that we've actually got funding committed shows that we're committed to implementing this. Ultimately, the scope of funding will be determined via the consultation that happens, and ultimately in partnership with the Disability Act. Look, I can't – you mean commit on what the final funding may or may not be. We need to do that work first, but the fact that we've got funding across those forward Estimates shows that we're committed to implementing it.

Mr WILLIE – So it may require a top up and you're open to that?

Ms COURTNEY – Potentially, but ultimately I want to wait and see what we get from the feedback, and also in concert with the review of the Disability Act too.

CHAIR – Thank you. Minister, you would be aware that any person living with a disability over the age of 65 isn't covered, isn't eligible for the NDIS scheme. Do you have any numbers on what that might look like for Tasmanians? Have you had any input into – I know it's early days for you as minister – in the advocacy for those people?

Ms COURTNEY – I might throw over to Michael or Ingrid to provide some detail on that.

Ms GANLEY – The over 65 space predominantly is funded by the Commonwealth government, and I know there are advocacy organisations that are funded and they get Commonwealth funding to deliver that service. There are numbers of the people over 65, but I don't have them right here.

CHAIR – Would you be happy to take that on notice, minister?

Ms COURTNEY – Yes.

Ms GANLEY – Yes.

CHAIR – It would be interesting to know how many Tasmanians living with a disability fall into that over 65 bracket.

Ms GANLEY – Yes.

CHAIR – And around the advocacy for more support for those?

Ms COURTNEY – You mean from a Tasmanian perspective?

CHAIR – Absolutely.

Ms COURTNEY – We're always –

CHAIR – Team Tasmania.

Ms COURTNEY – Team Tasmania, indeed. Always advocating in terms of wanting to get our – further funding from the federal government. Through this budget we've seen funding for a range of advocacy here in Tasmania. Ingrid referred to the work that the federal government does in their funding for their advocacy groups, but we've also seen through this budget our recognition of the importance of advocacy services because they do play an important role.

CHAIR – Some of these groups, from my understanding, pretty much run out of the front room of somebody's home and print their own newsletters and really get next to nothing in funding. I am somewhat surprised to hear that they receive federal funding, but I'm not sure that it filters right down.

Ms COURTNEY – Depending on the organisations, we have some funding agreements. The Department of Communities has funding agreements in place until the end of 2023. That's over \$1.1 million and that's going to – in three independent advocacy organisations; Speak Out Advocacy, Advocacy Tas – Your say, and the Association for Children with Disability.

CHAIR – These are more specific to a particular disability, so is that not addressed by the Commonwealth that you're aware of?

Ms COURTNEY – In terms of the way that the Commonwealth fund advocacy groups from their perspective, I mean I can't comment on their rationale. Perhaps Ingrid if you could expand on the advocacy space here in Tassie.

Ms GANLEY – Yes.

CHAIR – I know the amputee organisation is one such group that runs out of – a member pretty much does all the admin and gets as much information out to those that fall into that bracket. I'm just interested in how they might access that federal funding.

Ms GANLEY – When I referred to the advocacy, I was specifically talking about the over 65's, but the Commonwealth is also looking at funding advocacy along with the states, as the minister said, funding advocacy, and it really is looking at that program opportunities as they come out. This also dovetails into the conversation around information linkages and capacity building, because information provision is a category under that. It's the difference between information provision and advocacy services. Yes.

CHAIR – In real terms, members of this committee, and any other member or community member that might like, can send those organisations to the department and they will be able to put them in the right direction? Thank you. We have a win today, so that's terrific. My other question, minister, is around the estimation of costs for the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability. Have we got an estimation of cost?

Ms COURTNEY – The federal government's royal commission?

CHAIR – Yes. It says in the budget papers that there will be an expectation on the Tasmanian government to provide some indirect cost, but also there will – it's likely that there will be costs associated with any Tasmanian government response to the royal commission's findings and recommendations. Have you started to address your mind to that, minister?

Ms COURTNEY – Clearly, we have seen hearings underway and I understand that there is going to be a further hearing scheduled in Tasmania on 18 October, is my advice. As this royal commission takes its course, we're conscious that no doubt there will be a range of recommendations that come out of it. I understand that the royal commission has been granted an extension until 29 October 2023 to present their final report, because of the interruptions with COVID-19.

With regard to the outcomes more broadly, we recognise there is likely going to be recommendations that have funding implications and until we know the breadth of those recommendations, how many of them are the responsibility of the state government, what the

responsibility is compared to the federal government, it's difficult to predict that quantum. But obviously –

CHAIR – You're watching closely.

Ms COURTNEY – Sorry?

CHAIR – You're watching closely.

Ms COURTNEY – It's incredibly important. We know that it's looking at a range of things that are really important about preventing and ensuring that we better protect people with a disability from experiencing violence and neglect. We want to receive best practice in reporting and investigating so that we can respond when we do see violence and neglect, and also more broadly, promoting a more inclusive society so we don't see violence, abuse and neglect even escalating in the first place. There's a reasonably broad remit into the scope of work that's underway. I look forward to the outcome. I know that it's being keenly watched by both the department, but also those within the – those either – who have a disability or their family or carers.

CHAIR – Thank you. Any other questions, members, in this area?

Ms SIEJKA – I think most have been answered.

CHAIR – Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE – Yes, I think they have.

CHAIR – Then in light of that, minister, we'll now move to your responsibility as Minister for Children and Youth, and you may need some changes at the table.

Mr VALENTINE – Before that, there is one question that I had in mind earlier and I just remembered again, about the number of group homes. Do they still have group homes, and how many of those are in the state? Or perhaps by region.

Ms COURTNEY – I'll perhaps get Ingrid to speak to that.

Ms GANLEY – Yes, so we –

Mr VALENTINE – Take it on notice if there's –

Ms GANLEY – Yes, the numbers we'll need to get back to you, but yes, they're called Supported Independent Living.

Mr VALENTINE – Supported Independent Living.

Ms GANLEY – Yes.

Mr VALENTINE – That's all right. I've come up to speed with that.

Ms GANLEY – Yes.

CHAIR – That Legislative Council select committee inquiry into people living with a disability, disability services, would be an excellent committee for the member to be on if he wasn't so busy.

Mr VALENTINE – Yes, that's right, if I wasn't so busy. Public Works Committee, that's the trouble.

CHAIR – Thanks, Ingrid, and thank you, Mark.

Ms GANLEY – Thank you.

CHAIR – Yes.

Mr VALENTINE – Which you are also on.

Ms COURTNEY – Could I just have five minutes, please?

CHAIR – We shall suspend the broadcast, thank you, and be back in just three or four minutes.

Ms COURTNEY – Thank you.

CHAIR – Thank you.

The Committee suspended from 4.57 p.m.

The Committee recommenced at 5.02 p.m.

CHAIR - I'd like to recommence the broadcast thank you Shae. Minister, welcome you back, and you have a new person at the table, and do you have a brief overview?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I do. Thank you, Chair. Chair, there is nothing more important than the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. Since 2014 the Tasmanian Liberal Government has taken strong action to improve safety and wellbeing outcomes for children, young people, and their families. The 2021-22 State Budget initiatives continue to enhance our response to the needs of children and young people, particularly those who are most vulnerable or at risk.

Our headline commitment to children and young people is the development of our state's first ever comprehensive long-term whole of government child and youth wellbeing strategy. I was very pleased to participate with the Premier in the launch of the strategy at West Moonah Community House on their 30th birthday celebrations late last month. This strategy will provide the blueprint we need to deliver the services and supports that children, young people, and their families need so that they and our state can thrive in the future. Through this Budget the Tasmanian government will invest \$100 million across the next four years on an action plan to deliver Tasmania's new strategy.

Among the range of initiatives, we are investing significantly for vulnerable children and young people. This includes a \$6.5 million Bringing Baby Home program, \$6 million for the

Kids Pediatric Clinic's, and \$1.3 million for the outreach model of child and family learning centres. Complementing this strategy, our range of initiatives announced during the election which are already progressing. Chair, we are extending the supports for informal kinship carers with an additional \$2.25 million over four years. Informal kinship carers play a crucial role in the lives of many Tasmanian children who are unable to live with their parents, and we are providing greater support for these arrangements. We're also providing priority access to government service supports and concessions for children and young people who are in out of home care with an investment of \$2 million into the Sure Start initiative over four years. We're also committed to a comprehensive review of the Children, Young Person's, and Their Families Act 1997, because we want to ensure the act is contemporary, aligned with our new nation leading approach to child safety under the Strong Families and Safe Kids redesign.

In this budget share we are providing \$1.46 million to continue funding under the Strong Family Safe Kids program for Aboriginal liaison officers. These positions enable Aboriginal people to access timely and culturally appropriate responses to concerns regarding the safety and wellbeing of Aboriginal children, including accessing family support services. Our funding commitment will see these important positions continue and increase the capacity to deliver these services more equitably statewide. We're also progressing two key initiatives to further the Aboriginal tribe placement principles for children in out of home care. We're committed to work with Aboriginal community organisations to develop an Aboriginal led case management service model for Aboriginal children out of home care, and identify and build capacity for Aboriginal family group conference facilitators to oversee these conferences that relate to Aboriginal children and young people. We are also significantly enhancing our response to young people at risk of homelessness with an investment of \$10 million for three years for under 16 Lighthouse Pilot Project to assist young people under 16 who are unable to live at home. We recognise that young people under 16 at risk of homelessness in a broad response, not just about accommodation, but is more broad about their care.

Along with the Lighthouse initiative, we're developing a policy framework to better respond to this group of young people with a cross sector working group progressing consultation on the framework at the moment. The government is also well advanced on a \$7.3 million infrastructure redesign and upgrade at Ashley Youth Detention Centre to make it part of a state-wide contemporary therapeutic youth justice system. We've seen recent positive feedback from the custodial inspector that suggests our redevelopment is providing benefits to people there. Work has also commenced, Chair, on the development of a youth justice blueprint that will provide an overarching strategic direction for an integrated youth justice system in Tasmania. We want to ensure that we are intervening and supporting young people early, providing supports and services that meet their emerging needs before they come into conflict with the law, and enter the statutory youth justice pathway. Ultimately our objective across these range of initiatives that we're investing in is to see young people thrive, be happy, and reach their full potential.

DIVISION 2
(Department of Communities Tasmania)

Output group 1
Children Services

1.1 Children services -

CHAIR - Thank you very much, and I'll invite Ms Palmer to ask the first question, thank you.

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much Chair, I have a couple of questions on this line. First, minister, I see in the footnote that this is line item includes some of the funding recently committed in the 2021 state election, can you please talk us through those commitments?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. Thank you for the question. We've got our significant additional funding to respond to children that are vulnerable. We're providing \$5 million over four years to support new, stable, permanent family placements for children out of home care because we know that we want children to thrive there. The extended support for kinship care is also really important with \$2.25 million because kinship carers really do play a crucial role in the lives of Tasmanian children that aren't able to live with their parents. That's why we're providing greater support to these arrangements. I also mention in my introductory statement the provision of priority access to government service supports with the Sure Start initiative. That's making sure that we are prioritising those that have the most need, and also looking at that comprehensive review of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families Act.

With regard to the broad initiatives that we have around government, the one thing that I would like to focus on, it was mentioned earlier, was around the significance in our response to young people who are at risk of homelessness. I mention the \$10 million for three year under 16 Lighthouse Project to assist young people who are unable to live at home. There's also \$4.3 million to supply new modular transitional housing for young people, including young people leaving Ashley Youth Detention Centre, out of home care, or youth shelters, as well as \$1 million over four years to provide a Dispersed Youth Foyer initiative to assist young people to share Housing Tasmania Properties. So, we're looking across a range of initiatives, because we know particularly for young people, are making sure that we're addressing barriers to be able to have a home is really critical.

Ms SIEJKA - Can I ask a supplementary on that one? I'm just wondering how many young people are exiting Ashley into homelessness, or into a homelessness provider. Well, in the past year, I suppose I should say that.

Ms COURTNEY - With regards to the transition out of Ashley, it's a really important aspect, and what my expectation is with the youth justice blueprint that we're developing, this is around supporting people early, and also looking at those transition arrangements as well. I'll provide some more -

CHAIR - There it is, Minister.

Ms COURTNEY - When a person who is on detention is released from Ashley Youth Detention Centre with notice, exit planning is undertaken by the case management team. The exit procedure for young people ensures that there's a collaborative exit planning and review process that's applied for young people leaving detention after serving their sentence. During this process there's engagement with parents, carers, or guardians of the person who encouraged and supported to contribute towards the exit planning process.

Part of the exit planning process is - the work involves community youth justice, child safety, Save the Children, education, NDIS and other relevant stake holders, so we want to make sure that the plans align in the best interest of the child, and all children have an accommodation option confirmed in their exit plan.

Mr VALENTINE - So is that part of the blueprint?

Ms COURTNEY - Actually, I'll talk more broadly about the blueprint.

Ms SIEJKA - Sorry, I was just was after the numbers that have exited detention straight into homelessness potentially, because I imagine despite all the planning that can still happen. And into homelessness providers.

Ms COURTNEY - Look, as I said, in terms of my advice is all children, all young people have an accommodation option confirmed when they leave Ashley. One of the challenges that we do have is particularly for the older cohort and how we re-support them. Perhaps Mandy might be able to provide a bit more.

Ms SIEJKA - The accommodation plan could well include a homeless provider or shelter, is that correct?

Ms CLARK - Yes, in the exit plan for every young person, I mean in the majority of cases it is always to family or kin of some kind. It's rare. But we also know too that sometimes young people will choose sometimes a pathway that we adults would prefer that they didn't do, but again, the exit planning is fairly detailed. It's a care team approach around that young person with an exit plan. And the majority of those are actually family and kin.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

CHAIR - Can we have the current numbers of Ashley detainees?

Ms COURTNEY - My current advice is that it's ten.

CHAIR - And that's about the average number that we say?

Ms COURTNEY - Mandy would be able to provide information on how the numbers fluctuate throughout the year.

Ms CLARK - So, the average number of young people in Ashley for the last financial year was 9.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - Well, I was just asking, and I've heard so many different things come across as being youth related, and I was just wondering how it all strings together. So, you know, you've got Strong Family Safe Kids, and you've got young people at risk of homelessness, and the Lighthouse Initiative, and the Youth Justice Blueprint, and I'm just - how would all these fit together? Can you just run through that? The hierarchy maybe? I don't know how you do them.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, a lot of the work that my predecessors have done, the minister Mr Jaensch and the minister Mrs Petrusma, have been around a reformed process to make sure that we do have those mechanisms in place. The broader intent behind the reforms is making sure that we are supporting families and young people so that they don't enter the out of home

care system. There's a range of mechanisms, I've outlined some of the ones that we've - further funding in the budget, but how we can support families and young people to stay at home. That's a large part of the reform. With regards to the youth justice component of it, this is the work that we're doing around the development of a blueprint.

We know that the vast majority of young people who come into conflict with the law are dealt with by diversionary measures such as police cautions and community conferences, and if they do reach the court system most young people are dealt with via community supervision sentencing options. What we're doing in the development of a youth justice blueprint is providing an overall strategy for an integrated youth justice system in Tasmania, knowing there aren't a lot of participants.

This is going to be very much focused on prevention, early intervention, diversionary strategies as well as rehabilitation for those young people already involved in the youth justice system. We want to ensure that we are providing those opportunities for intervention earlier, and support, and that's effectively what the youth justice blueprint will do. This is a strategic objective that's using the refocusing of support and services towards meeting the need of a child and young people and their families. Using a public health approach to addressing youth offending, emphasising and supporting early intervention, and diversion of children and young people away from the statutory youth justice system, and outline a service system for those high-risk young people.

Engaging their offending that address the factors leading to the offending behaviour and hopefully prevents reoffending with the ongoing engagement. That work is underway at the moment and I look forward to having more to say on that in the coming weeks. That's a very important part of how we support young people so that we don't have them escalating to needing to be under a court order.

Mr VALENTINE - I don't know whether I've interrupted someone else.

CHAIR - The member for Rosevears. She has another question and then I'll come back down.

Ms PALMER - I did. I just had another question on this output line, and it was around the Strong Families, Safe Kids redesign. Just wanting to know how the rollout of that is progressing.

Ms COURTNEY - This perhaps goes also to Mr Valentine's question. In 2014, as I mentioned, under my predecessor we acted to improve and reform the child safety system. We've implemented significant funding for that throughout that time and the original child safety redesign was a \$51 million commitment. The initiatives that we have implemented: we've introduced the advice and referral line as a redesigned front door to Tasmanian family support and child safety services. That's a really important part of this initiative.

We're continuing to monitor the flow that comes through that so that we can service that need appropriately because it is quite a breadth of engagement that we have through that. We've established the intensive family engagement services to deliver intensive support to families on the brink of entering the statutory service system to enable children to remain safely in the home. again

We are again trying as much as we can to support the family because ultimately that will lead to the best long-term outcomes for the child, but we clearly need to make sure they've got the support to be safe. We launched the Tasmanian child and youth wellbeing framework, providing an agreed definition of wellbeing to support a consistent approach across the sector. We've introduced the interagency student support team to support improved outcomes for students in Tasmanian government schools. We've implemented the student wellbeing survey that monitors well-being across our students, and we've also made significant advancement into additional staffing resources in child safety services.

We're now seeing more support for these families that are at risk. We're seeing fewer cases referred to the statutory child safety intervention process and a decrease in the rate of children and young people entering out-of-home care. We now have a new plan to build on these achievements and consolidate the steps that have already been achieved prior to me becoming minister. That's part of our strong family safe kids next steps action plan.

The next stage is and we've already made significant progress delivering actions that are within that action plan. The development and the launching of the child and youth wellbeing strategy, which has obviously been auspiced by the Premier with additional funding. We've commenced our review of the Children, Young Persons and Their Family Act. We've commenced development of a whole of government policy framework for young people under six who are at risk of homelessness and we're having good engagement with a range of participants on that right now.

We've established youth wellbeing officers in the advice and referral line. I mentioned earlier the further support for informal kinship carers and we've commenced consultation on draft standards for out of home care. So, that is, I guess, a summary of some of the work that we have been. I think it's fair to say a lot has been achieved over the past seven years; however, I'm very much committed to continuing this process. There is still more to do, and we also need to make sure that we are continually monitoring and assessing the strategies that we have implemented, and that's always part of what we do is looking at the data, understanding what is happening in terms of children and their families and being able to be responsive.

Ms SIEJKA - I would like a bit more information about the advice and referral line. How many notifications to the ARL involve family violence, and is that a criterion for referral to child safety services? If not, how many cases of family violence are referred to CSS and how many are not?

Ms COURTNEY - I will talk broadly around the ARL and what has happened to date, and then perhaps Mandy can go more to the operational side of what happens within the ARL. This is effectively, as I mentioned earlier, the front door for child and family services. It was established in December 2018 and is one of the largest structural parts of the change that we've undertaken as part of this. This is a collaborative work environment, so we're working with government and non-government agencies and it only started in December 2018, so it's still a relatively new service, and so as it imbeds further, we're using the data that we get from that to actually inform further policy work as well.

That is one of the good benefits from it is the actual information it provides about how we need to invest and particularly in that earlier intervention. There was a 12-month review of the service in December 2019 which found promising results. The actions of the advice and referral line were reducing the overall number of initiated child safety assessments by 16.5 per

cent when compared to the prior year, and the service has seen increased demand which we think is a good thing. People are phoning up. Which was positive, and we anticipate there would've been increased demand. Staffing has been improved to ensure that the service can continue to respond. As part of the action plan that I mentioned earlier, that includes actions to support the ongoing development of the ARL. Mandy will talk more broadly about how matters are dealt with from an operational perspective.

Ms CLARK - Specifically in relation to the question around family violence. Many of the reports into the advice and referral line actually came from police. The trigger in Tasmania is if the Tasmania Police have attended an incident or an argument and there's been children present, their mechanisms kick in. They record those, and then through their mandatory reporting obligations they then notify the advice and referral line. The advice and referral line team then actually assess those cases. They do it one by one every day. They then make decisions, which is - our government work is obviously in the advice and referral line - about which matters.

Now, often in family violence matters there might be other safety matters, and so the team would be making broad assessments in relation to what might relate to being advice and referral or support to a family, more broad support in the community or what might actually be a matter of safety to do with children in the home. Family violence can be one of those contributing factors. Following an initial assessment there may be matters that are then referred in to the child safety service for further - for a child safety assessment.

Ms SIEJKA - Is there data collected that can be shared around the number of notifications that involve family violence or -

Ms CLARK - I can provide - I've actually got it here somewhere. We can have a look while people are chatting. The number of notifications we received from Tasmania Police into advice and referral, yes.

Ms SIEJKA - If that's what's available, yes, okay.

CHAIR - They wouldn't all come from Tas Police, would they?

Ms CLARK - Of course not, no. So, the majority - what I was saying - I mean, members of the community, of course, or other mandatory reporters, of course, make contact, but the majority of matters, as it relates to family violence, come from Tas Police.

Ms SIEJKA - So perhaps the number, but the percentage overall would be useful as well to give an idea of -

Ms COURTNEY - And just more broadly, in terms of the increasing numbers and the fact that we expected them, because of the fact that it is a single front door, we want to be encouraging families and people and community members and organisations to ring particularly at the advice end. This is a mechanism so that we can refer people to the right support which is available across either government or non-government organisations. In some of the other areas that we've talked about today the discussion has been around advocacy and the confusion of different systems. What this is doing is providing a single pathway. It could be a parent; it could be someone that has concerns, and clearly there's the mechanism there and the expertise to be able to escalate that to child safety and, indeed, be able to provide swift

responses if appropriate. Importantly, it provides that extra wraparound that families need and those referrals because ultimately a decrease in those numbers into the out of home care system, the best way we can do that is by supporting families early before they reach that escalated level where the child is in a dangerous situation.

Ms SIEJKA - Am I able to have another question or do you need to spread?

CHAIR - No, you can have another question, then I'm going down to the end of the table.

Ms SIEJKA - Okay, thank you. I know that this is - and it must be a very, very challenging area for staff that work in this area. Can you give me an idea of the FTE and actual positions for child safety services? I'm also interested in the turnover of staff in child safety and on the ARL as well in the last 12 months and what was the length of service for employees or average lengths of service. I might add as well how many staff have had workers' compensation claims this past year and how many have been for stress-related illness or injury?

Ms COURTNEY - Look, I might more broadly just talk about staffing and then perhaps Mike or Mandy can go to some of those statistics that you're looking for.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

Ms COURTNEY - Ultimately, it's really important that the child safety service is well resourced. They play a crucial frontline role in sometimes extraordinarily challenging circumstances. So, since the beginning or since we came into government, our frontline staffing has increased by 20 per cent and we've worked steadily to strengthen the capability of staff and, importantly, provide structures and support.

I recognise very clearly that there's still more that can be done, and we're listening and engaging with staff and stakeholders on that. In 2018-19 the government invested \$24 million for the recruitment of 25 additional child safety officers and other frontline staff, and this brought the establishment to over 250. These are the staff that are working either on the frontline or directly supporting child safety officers. We have also a range of roles, including clinical practice consultants and educators, child safety liaison officers, support workers, unit coordinators, court coordinators and staff safety and wellbeing officers. With regard to recruitment and vacancies, we do recognise there is a low but stable vacancy rate in the workforce, and this is why we have approved an additional 10 full-time positions to support the child safety services frontline. These are relief positions and they're intended to offset the impact of vacancy rates. I'm pleased that the department's done a lot of work in the way we actually recruit, and looking at how we can drive down the timeframe about recruitment, and we've got new processes for routine recruitment and group selection are also contributing to better outcomes. So, I might go to Mandy for some of that detail, or Mike.

Ms CLARK - In relation - to just identify the FTE, based on the position numbers the minister was referring to. For child safety officers, we have 164.3 FTE, other Allied Health professionals, so that would be in the Allied Health categories one and two, 50.79. We have 27.4 support workers. We have 10 administration staff and we have eight child safety managers.

Ms SIEJKA - Those last couple of numbers are FTE equivalent or actual numbers?

Ms CLARK - They'll be FTE equivalent.

Ms SIEJKA - In terms of workers compensation claims?

Mr PERVAN - We'll take that on notice through the minister.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

Mr PERVAN - What I would say is someone who's been around the service for seven years, the turnover rate and vacancy rate has actually slowed down a great deal. We've recently despite COVID-19 had a very successful recruitment campaign in the south and appointed a number of additional staff to vacancies that were quite long standing there. With the borders being what they are, we can't recruit from the mainland at the moment and that slows things down but I think one of the positive things about the additional resources, the implementation for three years now of the advice and referral line and what you're seeing in this lower turnover rate, is that as well as having benefits for children, the reforms are actually having a benefit for staff.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes. That was one thing I was - I know that it came up in my time at YNOT that not having a relief workforce was a real problem even whether it was professional development opportunities or just respite. That's obviously -

Mr PERVAN - Absolutely and in fact earlier this year we implemented 10 new mobile positions that were created to move around the state as needed to offset that sort of temporary vacancies, particularly in areas like the north west where the office establishment is quite small, so if there's two people away they really -

Ms SIEJKA - Effects everyone, yes. It's a lot of pressure for workers.

Ms COURTNEY - I have a little bit of data actually I've provided and then if there's further information we can take that on notice.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

Ms COURTNEY - As at 30 June 2021, there were 37 Workers Compensations claims lodged by Communities Tasmania employees for the 2020-21 financial year. This compares to 51 claims lodged in 2019-20 and 45 claims lodged in 2018-19. As at June 2021, the number of claims from Children, Youth and Families for the period was 30 and this compares to 48 claims in 2019-20.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Mr Valentine and then I'll come back up to Mr Willie, and then Ms Armitage.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you very much, Madam Chair. I think we all have heard of the Brahminy boot camp issue some - what is it, how long ago is it now, I don't know how long ago that Brahminy Youth Camp - boot camp issue happened in the Northern Territory with

children going up there for various programs. I've been given some information with regard to an organisation called Out Bush On Country. Are you aware of that organisation?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes.

Mr VALENTINE - Obviously, you know, involved with designing programs and the like for Indigenous children as well, I guess. They forwarded a few questions and I'd just like to ask those on the record. Will such organisations as this already designing and delivering evidence informed On Country programs in Tasmania and with capacity to expand and be involved in co-designing and delivering On Country services for out-of-home care for young people, are they able to be - groups like this, able to be involved and how do they get involved if they wish to add to the mix in terms of designing and having an input into the design of these of programs?

Ms COURTNEY - I appreciate the question and it's probably a good opportunity for me to update the progress that the government has made. In terms of that background, in October 2020 the Department of Community Tasmania undertook an investigative review into the safety and wellbeing of young people who were participating in MC1D. The review recommended the Department of Communities progress work on a potential Tasmanian-based program informed by an expert panel with specialist skills and experience in relevant fields.

This panel was stood up and on 28 July this year, I released the advice and recommendations from the expert panel examining an improved service system response for Tasmanian children and young people with highly complex needs. I would like to, on the record, thank the members of the expert panel. They dedicated a considerable amount of time and expertise and the fact that we had such high calibre and diversity of representation I think was a really good thing, and I'd also like to thank the Commissioner for Children and Young People because as the independent Chair of that expert panel they made four key recommendations with a number of sub-recommendations under that. They were developing a whole of government approach to promote and drive systemic change to develop the Tasmanian Out of Care system to improve its efficacy and increase and enhance placement options for children and young people.

The third one was transition away from the utilisation of MC1D and commit to robust inclusive and collaborative decision making in relation to interstate residential placements of young people throughout the transition. The fourth one was adopting a whole of government focus on implementation and investment. We've accepted all the recommendations in principle, including the transitioning away from MC1D, however the panel does recognise that that transition may take some time.

In readiness for the panel's recommendations there was some seed money set aside. There's \$500 000 there -

Mr VALENTINE - Yes, \$500 000.

Ms COURTNEY - \$500 000 clearly there will be further funding required going forward as we implement these recommendations. We've done a range of consultation. One of the things that I've been very focused on and indeed the report from the expert panel goes very much to the fact that the solution is broader than just a government response, and much broader than just a Department of Communities response. We need to be partnering with a range of

organisations in the community to be able to deliver the scope and the breadth and that recognition of the expertise lies in a whole lot of different areas.

We also need to make sure that the governance around that decision making and the oversight is robust to ensure that the intent of the expert panel recommendations is implemented to their intent. A cross-sectoral oversight group is being established, which will drive the accountability and coordinated approach. I'm expecting this group will meet later this month for the first time to be able to progress the terms of reference. The terms of reference, Mr Valentine, they don't name or go to a specific program. What the expert panel report actually does is it calls out the attributes from the MC1D program that are beneficial and also provides broader input onto what attributes we need in the service provision here, and then talks to the governance around that decision making. We've got the get the governance sorted as a priority and that was one of the priority recommendations.

Mr VALENTINE - Will that work towards capacity building and workforce development as well?

Ms COURTNEY - I expect that will be part of it. Ultimately, we've got an implementation plan that's under development at the moment. There's been a substantial amount of work been done to that but ultimately, I'll be looking to the broader cross-sectoral group to be able to provide oversight and accountability into how we deliver these initiatives. The positive engagement that we've had from a range of experts I'm really heartened about and I do look towards them because we really do need to ensure that we have that broader engagement than just government to make this work. I'm pleased that we've got a pathway. It's now my responsibility as minister to drive this and make sure that we deliver on it. Specific programs or things like that will all be driven through the expert group and indeed the governance we have within the department.

Mr VALENTINE - I don't know whether you have that document but I'm more than happy to -

Ms COURTNEY - I'm happy to take that.

Mr VALENTINE - Pass a bit of paper the other way.

CHAIR - For a change. I have a supplementary on that.

Ms SIEJKA - It's a very short supplementary. How many children from Tasmania are still at the Many Colours One Direction Program in the Northern Territory?

Ms COURTNEY - Five.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you. And they will be coming back here once - at some point in the near future?

Ms COURTNEY - In terms of the recommendations that the expert panel actually came to, they recognised the fact that it might be some time until an alternative option is available here. Ultimately, decision making is in the best interests of the child and the expert panel also developed a framework should a decision need to be made about a child in the intervening period, around what type of governance there should be around any decision making. The

expert panel's recommendations are very explicit around that. I might get Mandy or Mike to speak more broadly to the transitions for young people -

Ms SIEJKA - And what sort of monitoring or is there enhanced monitoring now that - yes.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. There's a significant oversight in terms of the children and young people that are participating.

Ms SIEJKA - Sorry, that became longer. I do apologise, Chair.

CHAIR - So we won't see the failures of the previous arrangement?

Ms COURTNEY - There's oversight at the facility and one of the things I found really interesting and also heartening is there are a lot of key attributes from the MC1D program that are pulled out in the expert panel's report that go to attributes that we would like to continue in the development of a Tasmanian -

Mr VALENTINE - Tasmanian-based?

Ms COURTNEY - Tasmanian-based initiative.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. I mean I think there is an opportunity. There's a fair bit of expertise on the island here.

Ms COURTNEY - I agree, and that's what we recognise and it's how we engage that expertise that's much broader than government.

Mr VALENTINE - We've got the environment to do it in and I think that's important.

Ms SIEJKA - The age of those five would be of interest too, if possible.

Ms COURTNEY - Currently the mechanisms and safeguards in place at MC1D at the moment, the Australian Childhood Foundation is on the ground at MC1D in the Northern Territory, and is contracted by this government to provide essential therapeutic support as well as clinical expertise to the young people. Child safety staff regularly visit MC1D in person. Each young person has a child safety officer responsible for oversighting and coordinating their care. Staff have built relationships with the young people over time and include regular private phone calls and video contact. Each young person has a care team that convenes to review the young person's need, their progress and the case direction. These teams include child safety staff, MC1D staff and other professionals and family members where that's possible. The Tasmanian child advocate conducted a review of MC1D in December 2019 which included a visit to the program. The child advocate determined that MC1D is not only providing excellent program support to young people with exceptionally complex needs but it's helping these young people change their life trajectory.

CHAIR - Ages?

Ms SIEJKA - Age and -

CHAIR - Ages of the five?

Ms SIEJKA - And even the length of time they've been there. Happy to take it on notice because I don't want the wrath of the Chair.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I might take those ones on notice so that we can -

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

CHAIR - That would never happen.

Ms SIEJKA - No, not with you and I.

CHAIR - Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - Thank you. Minister, yesterday you were asked whether any state service employees named in the redress scheme or royal commission are still employed at Ashley Youth Detention Centre. You said that was a question better off directed at your colleague the Attorney-General. She said today, "I honestly don't know the answer" but a representative from her department went on to describe the process and that was that if individuals working in the state service were identified throughout the redress scheme the department, as in the Department of Justice, were required to notify the agencies employing them.

Those agencies, which could include Ashley, would conduct their own investigations in line with internal policies. Those agencies were not required to report back to the Department of Justice. The question is whether your department has been notified that people named in the redress or royal commission are still employed in the state service and whether the investigations have taken place, and whether they still remain employed?

Ms COURTNEY - We take our obligations around protecting children incredibly seriously. As the member would be aware, there are national redress claims received from the Child Abuse Royal Commission Response Unit within the Department of Justice. They are referred to their relevant agency to undertake enquiries as to whether the alleged abuser is a current employee or a risk to children. I understand that the Secretary made a statement this afternoon and I'm advised that there are no staff working at Ashley Youth Detention Centre that have been identified as an alleged perpetrator of sexual abuse through the National Redress Scheme. Should any further allegations or relevant information concerning sexual abuse at Ashley Detention Centre come to light from Redress, or any other source, these will be immediately investigated.

Mr WILLIE - That's good to hear. Minister, what percentage of young offenders at Ashley go on to Risdon Prison? Later on in their lives? Does the government track that in terms of recidivism?

Ms COURTNEY - One of the things that - and I'll have Mandy speak to that specific question, but I mentioned earlier - I talked about the youth justice blueprint. This is around producing a more holistic and more comprehensive response to the breadth of youth justice. We know that young people who come into conflict with the law have a range of different diversionary measures that are available for them. A small number, and pleasing it is only a very small number, end up with a sentence from a court.

One of our key focuses is not just obviously trying to divert young people and support them prior to escalating to the youth justice that I mentioned earlier with regards to the planning that happens with young people that are leaving Ashley Youth Detention to make sure that they do have the support that they need. I'm not sure whether, Mandy, you're able to provide specific information.

Ms CLARK - No, in relation to trying to get to the heart of that question in terms of is what you're asking the number of young people that may have had a custodial sentence that then may, after their eighteenth birthday, have entered into Tas Prison.

Mr WILLIE - Yes. I'm interested in whether the government looks at that in terms of - I know we're talking about the very pointy end of the youth justice system and there are a number of challenges there, but also you would think some success would be that they don't end in the adult prison system down the track.

Ms COURTNEY - With regards to the cohort matters within Risdon and adult facilities, the detail of the circumstance of those people is perhaps better directed to the Attorney-General in terms of her responsibility. I have a responsibility for prisons. From our perspective, we want to ensure that we've got therapeutic models of care that do support young people when they leave. Obviously, the young people that come into contact with youth justice, there's a range of mechanisms that we try to implement earlier to support them. I outlined quite a few of those earlier in what we're seeking to do with the youth justice blueprint work. I'm not sure, Mandy, whether you had any further comments that could provide further to this.

Ms CLARK - No, my only comment would be to add that in the therapeutic response, with what we're trying to do in the frameworks themselves which goes to an earlier question today about strong family, safe kids, which would be children, young people in the statutory system, the blueprint, which could be children and young people that might be in statutory and non-statutory systems for young people in out of home care, and importantly, the blueprint.

They are all shaped on the youth - the child and youth wellbeing framework. I think our task in our division in the department and our job is to ensure we do everything we possibly can from a therapeutic response point of view to ensure that young people, if they do touch on the justice system do the very best as they enter early adulthood to ensure they don't enter the adult justice system.

Mr WILLIE - There's no data available about of tracking young offenders?

Ms COURTNEY - We obviously have awareness about young people that are engaged in the child safety system in some way, and that could be mean a range of spectrum of engagement with the child safety system. That doesn't extent once they are adults.

CHAIR - Thank you. Thank you.

Mr WILLIE - Just one last question on Ashley?

CHAIR - All right. While we're on Ashley.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, how many young people become of adult age out of Ashley Youth Detention Centre and transition to Risdon each year? I know that would fluctuate, but what supports are available to be the young person when that situation occurs? Where they may be serving a longer sentence and they become –

Ms CLARK - Different environment.

Ms COURTNEY - Firstly, we do see that a lot of the that. Ultimately, the sentence is up to the court. That's the first comment. We do see many of the sentences are not long sentences.

Mr WILLIE - No.

Ms COURTNEY - But I'll refer to Mandy who'll be able to provide a bit more –

Mr WILLIE - I think it's a maximum of four years, isn't it, under the youth justice system?

CHAIR - That microphone again, thank you. You have a very soft voice.

Ms CLARK - Yes. The maximum under the Youth Just Act is two years in terms of adult prescribing of maximum sentencing. However, in relation to a situation where a young person may on their eighteenth birthday, I think that there's a range of factors that come into play and particularly if it's a sentence. One of those is their level of vulnerability, depending on what might be left on the sentence. There may be decisions that it's in the best interests of the young person that they stay in the centre through until serving their sentence.

Mr WILLIE - And they can do that, obviously?

Ms CLARK - They can do that, and we assess that. It's subject to certain criteria. Often vulnerability is one of those. There are other matters where a young person might transfer. Again, it would be to do with length of sentence. What happens is there's actually a transfer panel between the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and Tas Prison. That panel actually discusses - and it would be a full assessment of need. That's where people's broader assessment needs would be picked up, particularly their health needs, broader sets of needs if they were being transferred to Tas Prison Service for the remainder of their sentence. It's rare. Most of the young people in Ashley are on remand or for short periods of time.

CHAIR - Thank you. Ms Armitage, it's your turn.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you.

CHAIR - I know it's taken a while to get to you.

Ms ARMITAGE - No, no, that's all right. My question really is, it's almost like along the line of - White Line. You remember White Line used to be there to advocate for young offenders. What do you do in the youth justice system? I do independent person with Tas Police and when I go and sit with young people that have committed crimes, and sometimes they're actually witnesses to crime, but often they're young offenders. I don't believe there's anywhere for them to go afterwards. I have asked police sometimes on occasion about who

they can actually see, and generally there's not anyone, that they then either head off to Ashley or they are just let out of the station, taken home, and there doesn't seem to be anyone that they can really go and see.

What is the situation, because next time I go there it would be really nice, because some of the young offenders just don't have don't seem to have a case worker? I guess, if it's their first time, or even if it's not, they don't seem to actually have someone to assist them.

Ms COURTNEY - We understand that young people who come into contact with the youth justice system and those that are under youth justice supervision often have multiple vulnerabilities. Some of them have some entrenched patterns of offending, and this goes back to the work that we're doing with the youth justice blueprint so that we do have I guess a more joined up response from different service providers. I recognise that for young people, they often find themselves in very difficult situations because if they're intersecting with the youth justice system and that is escalating, they may have at times - their relationships with family and support may not be as strong as –

Ms ARMITAGE - Often it's fractured. The reason I'm there as an independent person is because they don't have a family member or guardian who's prepared to come and sit with them.

Ms COURTNEY - In terms of supporting young people that are on bail and transitioning from detention, Save the Children deliver two programs under one grants funding agreement that contribute to children, youth, and families, young people at risk, intervention, and support capability. The grant funding was \$655 000 in 2020-21 and \$670 000 in 2021-22. Their programs were developed by Save the Children and have operating since 2011. This involves the Save the Children youth worker providing support to young people who are on bail or awaiting sentence to help them achieve their goals, and there is –

Ms ARMITAGE - How are they accessed, minister? It's just that, as I said, when I'm there I see them, I go with them while they get fingerprinted and photographed. Sometimes they're put on bail, sometimes they're not, and I have asked in the past, is there somewhere we can send them, and it's like, no, not really. Do you liaise with Tas Police to say, this young person, let's get someone to contact this young person to help them? Because some of them perhaps might not reoffend if they had a little bit of support.

Ms COURTNEY - I might go to Mandy to answer the details of the intersection, particularly with Tas Police.

Ms ARMITAGE - Because they don't all go off to Ashley. Some of them would probably come for conciliation.

Ms CLARK - Very small proportion.

Ms ARMITAGE - Yes.

Ms CLARK - Through you, minister. Yes, that's right, most young people unfortunately that come into contact with youth justice don't engage with the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, but we do have a youth justice team and often, under certain circumstances, those teams will be involved. Importantly I think, also, another bolstering of the service system, which we're

very pleased about, is the under-16 Lighthouse election will actually offer us increased capability into the regions in terms of the wellbeing officers, and that will provide us with some increased –

Ms ARMITAGE - But how do we find them? With respect, I'm hearing all these services are available, but having been there in the police station with these young people, no one seems to know that there are –

CHAIR - In the middle of the night.

Ms ARMITAGE - Sometimes in the middle of the night, sometimes during the day. I've asked the question and it doesn't seem to be widely known that there's somewhere, someone that these young people - and I had one young person, he was about 15, and he said to me, 'There's no hope for me.' I thought, how sad is this; a 15-year-old thought there was no hope for him. I asked him what school he'd been to. He'd never been to high school. He'd only been to primary school because no one wanted their children to associate with him because of the fact that he'd been in and out of Ashley. He was seen as someone not to associate with, and when I asked the police, well who can he actually see to help him. There didn't seem to be anyone really that they could refer him to and I just thought that was a terrible situation.

I'm hearing that there's all this money, but I want to know where these people are that the police can have a card or have something and actually get someone to contact these young people, and like that young boy - I hate think where he is now. He'd be about 20 now, so I've been doing this for over 20 years. I don't know where some of them are. I'm hearing there's money, but I'm not seeing where anyone can actually get help.

Ms CLARK - No, and they're very important issues that you raise. They are future focused services that I think can bolster the service system. I think the other important thing that we're doing that will go to addressing some of your issues is the under-16 taskforce - and we have a working group attached to implement those recommendations - it did identify some of the issues that you're talking about in relation to the need for out-of-hours support services.

Ms ARMITAGE - It's not even out-of-hours. It's sometimes in hours, and do you know, I'm hearing you but I'm still not hearing any answers. With respect, I'm really not. A working group. This has been going on for a good number of years and I would have thought that we would have had something to pick up the slack from a group like White Line.

Ms CLARK - I think what we can do in this interview today is make sure that the issues that you're raising are front and centre for us in our thinking. I acknowledge what you're saying about it's not just in out-of-hours. What you're pointing to is a service system response where we need our services to be well coordinated to provide a better support to young people, and we will take on board what you're saying in the sense of work with our colleagues and the Department of Police. Accident and emergency is another area, and so it's those sort of things that we are trying to actually connect the service system to, to ensure that young people, when they do find themselves in those circumstances, we provide them with the best support that we can.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you.

CHAIR - I think the member for Hobart had some more questions in this area?

Mr VALENTINE - No.

CHAIR - No.

Mr VALENTINE - I don't think I do.

CHAIR - Thank you. Moving on now to 2.1 which is the –

Ms SIEJKA - Can I have one last question in that section?

CHAIR - Yes. One less you get in the next section.

Ms SIEJKA - That's fine. I did want to ask about the transition to independence funding. I don't know very much about where that's at or how that will look. The one thing I did note was that there wasn't - I think it's the \$1.1 million in the Budget for that, and it just seems a very modest amount for the amount of work will need to happen.

CHAIR - Where's that? What line item?

Ms SIEJKA - I don't know. I can't bring - I know where it - I've seen it, I've checked it. Now I can't find it.

CHAIR - It's not Capital Investment? No.

Ms SIEJKA - No. I think it's late in the day and I'm struggling to remember that.

Mr WILLIE - You said that out loud.

Ms SIEJKA - I know I did, but it's true. So it's here, but then I can't -

UNKNOWN - Thank you.

Ms COURTNEY - Jo, it's under Election Commitments.

Ms SIEJKA - That's where it was.

Ms COURTNEY - Or Other Initiatives.

Ms SIEJKA - Other Initiatives. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms SIEJKA - I was trying not to turn my pages too loudly. It's just in this year of the Budget, we look beyond going - it's a big piece of work. Yes.

Ms COURTNEY - The transition to independence, this was a new policy that was adopted to ensure the provision of care to young people in foster or kinship care could be

extended from 18 to 20 years. Tasmania was the first state to make this policy change. The T21 program acknowledges that all young people continue to need support beyond the age of 18, including young people in out-of-home care.

The T21 program provides a range of additional supports to young people transitioning to adulthood in out-of-home care. This includes extending carer payments, to enable and support young people to remain with their carers until the age of 21. Regional aftercare support advisors to provide direct support to young people between 18 and 21; and a learning incentive allowance payable to carers and young people connected with the successful completion of their TCE or equivalent. We've seen some really positive outcomes from this, and we're going to continue to review it and look to further funding in future budget cycles, because -

Ms SIEJKA - Yes. Because the funding's only for this year, so -

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. What we need to do is, as part of the work for this to understand what commitment may be appropriate in the future. That work will be undertaken.

Ms SIEJKA - And you're confident the money will be there if it needs to continue?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, look, we've seen a lot of successful outcomes from this program. I'd like to see, once we review the outcomes of what has happened - I don't want to pre-empt what size that may or may not be, but I know that we've seen some positive outcomes from it.

Ms SIEJKA - All right. Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Moving now to 2.1, which is the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. Thank you, Ms Siejka.

2.1, Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People

Ms SIEJKA - Youth Change Makers and CREATE - I think that topic came up about how they interact, but I would like to know, in terms of the commissioner and the youth consultation work that they do, how do they interact with, say, the work of YNOT and TYF, because there is an overlap there. I just wondered. We need to get most value for the work that you do. You want to make sure that you're not being repetitious and getting to different groups of young people. It's probably of a personal background interest, but it's - yes.

Mr WILLIE - You have insider information?

Ms SIEJKA - No, no, no. It's just hard not to often consult with the same young people over and over when it's really important that we get different groups of young people all the time.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes.

Ms SIEJKA - And children.

Ms COURTNEY - I'll get Mandy to speak more broadly to the question, but making sure that we are engaging with young people is really critical. We saw that in the whole-of-government youth well-being strategy that we've just recently launched, and the recognition of making sure that we're hearing the voice of young people. It's making sure that we hear - I think it's around hearing the diversity of voices as well.

So, I mean, the fact that we have engagement with a range of organisations - and, you know, I've engaged with YNOT in the past on the forums that they have and the conferences they have around the state. I think that it's actually not so much as being duplication, but it actually recognises it's a diverse way of engaging with young people. I know the children and young persons commissioner has a lot of engagement, particularly in this space, and the Children and Young People's Commissioner got additional funding in the well-being strategy for engagement.

One of the things that I have had engagement with her about is ensuring that we're hearing the breadth of voices from young people. We also know, often, that young people that put their hands up and volunteer perhaps aren't the same students and young people that are experiencing significant challenges around disengagement. That's something that I'm very conscious about making sure that we're hearing from that breadth of children on these matters.

That's where being able to look at it in different ways and with different priorities, because the work that the children and young persons commissioner's done has been a lot about wellbeing. I know that a lot of the work that, particularly, YNOT has done has been around specific issues facing young people, around homelessness and transport.

Ms SIEJKA - And (indistinct words) the Premier's group as well. So yes.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. Those focuses have often been in that somewhat older - sort of, 16 to 21 cohort. Rather than being concerned about having a lot of mechanisms for feedback, I actually welcome the fact that we get it in different ways. I think that that's really useful for informing government policy in a range of different areas. Particularly because, as you would know, with some of the conferences for YNOT they do go to a specific policy area that might not be my area - a lot of them seem to fit under minister Ferguson's, but -

Ms SIEJKA - It did seem to often be the case, that they -

Ms COURTNEY - It does.

Ms SIEJKA - - were outside the funded body's area.

Ms COURTNEY - But, I mean, the important mechanism there is, for me, as a minister -

Ms SIEJKA - It's usually negotiated with the -

Ms COURTNEY - Yes. I think that they've been really constructive. They also show the diversity of youths from ages, from different backgrounds. The challenges that face young people. I'm not sure, Mandy, whether you had further to comment on that.

Ms CLARK - Only briefly. Of course, I wouldn't want to talk on behalf of the commissioner or any other organisation, but we all value their work collectively. We certainly

observed where the value of that is - they do coordinate their effort quite clearly. I think the most recent example of that is how they coordinated their efforts together for the voice of young people with the Child and Youth Well-being Strategy. But, of course, we're conscious of and work closely with all of those and do benefit from the work that they do.

Ms SIEJKA - Thank you.

CHAIR - I have a question in regard to the role of the ombudsman. I'm just interested in whether the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People has input into advocating for more resources for the ombudsman, given that they have that oversight of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, as the Custodial Inspector. It's not resourced well enough to carry out its job.

Ms COURTNEY - So the -

CHAIR - That's according to a report of the joint standing committee.

Ms COURTNEY - I can't speak for the ombudsman and the Custodial Inspector, I understand, sits under the minister for Justice, the Attorney-General.

CHAIR - I'm just interested in what advocacy this office would have in regard to the role that isn't being carried out because it's not resourced appropriately under the legislative requirements, given that it has a role in the oversight, as the Custodial Inspector for the Ashley Youth Detention Centre.

Ms COURTNEY - Well, I think that's perhaps fair to direct it to the Attorney-General. But there is additional funding, I understand, through her portfolio, in a range of areas with regard to these statutory offices. That question is better directed to her. I'm very pleased that we have seen some positive comments in the latest report that was tabled by the Custodial Inspector with regard to their engagement with Ashley and, particularly, the role they play, providing independent oversight.

In the report that I just mentioned which was tabled, I think, only last week, he said that, 'With respect to recommendations for Youth Custodial Services, progress has been consistent, with improvements made across a range of services. The department has been positive and proactive in addressing any concerns raised'. And, 'For the most part', he went on to say, 'I hold few concerns about the operation of Ashley Youth Detention Centre. If I do have queries, they're resolved properly through liaison between my office and the Director, Youth and Family Violence Services or the centre manager'.

CHAIR - Thank you. Any other questions on 2.1? We have 90.6 and I'm just interested, Mr Willie, if you have anything in regard to Child Safety System?

Output group 90
COVID-19 response and recovery

90.6 Child Safety System -

Mr WILLIE - It's a COVID-19 response and it's a small allocation of it. I'm making a guess here whether that's the grants for laptops and things for remote learning for kids in the Child Safety System or provisions during that time for lockdown.

CHAIR - \$361 000. Page 76.

Ms COURTNEY - I might get Mandy to talk to this funding because that was a provision that was provided as part of the COVID-19 provision.

CHAIR - It says that but -

Ms CLARK - Yes. What's showing across the next financial year is what was left over in terms of those funds. They're predominantly made up of - there was an initial package that was provided by the government to our division and it had a number of measures to it. Those measures were \$250 000 for Foster and Kinship Carers to assist with cleaning and hygiene. So that was fully expended of course. There was \$70 000 allocated to Foster and Kinship Carers Tasmania, that was fully expended in that period, the last financial year. \$130 000 which contributed to an informal kinship care liaison and support and the broader review. Then of course there was the technology fund that actually had - wasn't fully expended, so what's been carried forward is what's left over of that. There was some allocation, which were contingency funds, in the event that we experienced an increase in demand. That is what's showing really as the leftover of that balance. All other funds, the \$50 000 that went to Create, was obviously fully expended. We had a Flexible Active Families fund, again that was related to families that we were working with that might have needed access to technology as well. There're some leftover funds for that.

Mr WILLIE - We might need that depending on what happens.

Ms CLARK - Correct, and that's why those things have been sitting there, yes. Does that -

CHAIR - Thank you. The last line item in this area is the Capital Investment Program and it refers to the Ashley Youth Detention Centre redevelopment. Minister, there has been some continual calls from various quarters around repurposing the Ashley Youth Detention Centre, but given that there's a significant investment in Capital obviously for redevelopment, you and your government are directly focused on keeping the Ashley Youth Detention Centre as it is, where it is.

Ms COURTNEY - Our focus as a government is making sure that we are continuing to strive to ensure that we've got a therapeutic model of care. We've seen significant investment at Ashley, the \$7.3 million that you talked about, so this included softening of the entrance into the centre with a new gate house and visitor's reception and secure point with improved visitor and family spaces.

Entering a detention setting, you know, for the first time can be particularly distressing for young people and this new gate house will ensure that the experience provided is better for young people. We've got provision to step down semi-independent living units which will encourage and develop key life skills for the residents as they transition out of the centre, improvement of all accommodation areas including de-escalation, self-regulatory sensory spaces and acoustics.

New recreation yards off the main accommodation units which will also act as key de-escalation spaces for residents when required. Opportunities for young people to break out in their own areas. Own indoors and outdoor secure areas is essential with regard to helping young people learn to self-regulate with heightened emotions. We've also got new purpose-built professional visit, support video conferencing and counselling areas and a new creative arts and music room.

Having seen the investment that's happening there it's a positive step with regard to the therapeutic model of care and that's just one part of a range of different initiatives that we're doing to support young people.

CHAIR - I look forward to visiting again. Obviously last year I was unable to attend the Christmas event and the certificate and prize awards day, so I look forward to being able to do that this year, minister, as part of the electorate of McIntyre. Thank you very much. I'll now invite the minister to change your hat.

Ms COURTNEY - I've just had a response to an earlier question, I understand in terms of police referrals to the ARL there were 3321. That's a police referral, so I don't have advice on what the content of that referral was.

CHAIR - Thank you very much and we certainly appreciate the opportunity to explore that particular area today, Children and Youth, and again as I said we'll now move to your responsibility as the minister for Hospitality and Events. Anyone that's leaving us, thank you very much. Thank you very much and you did a great job in throwing over those papers, so well done. Are we off the air while we change.

The Committee suspended from 6.16 p.m.

The Committee recommenced at 6.20 p.m.

CHAIR - The time being 6.20 p.m. We have an hour and 10 minutes maximum and then we have expired our time for today, minister. Thank you. You obviously have some repeats and a new face at the table.

Ms COURTNEY - Kim Evans, the Secretary as you'll be aware, of Department State Growth as well as Jacqui Allen who's Deputy Secretary, Culture and Tourism Development.

CHAIR - Is someone retrieving their phone. Thank you. Do you have an overview for the committee?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, I do, thank you, Chair. Tasmania has a well-deserved reputation as a destination for an enviable lifestyle. We are supported by our excellent hospitality sector and complimented by an extensive range of well attended events. This reputation was developed over a long time and these industries became critical parts of the Tasmanian economy, with both supporting tens of thousands of jobs, small businesses, attracting thousands of visitors and inspiring Tasmanians to connect with their communities.

CHAIR - Just not at the moment.

Ms COURTNEY - These industries are often reliant on people being out and about. People interacting and gathering, spending money, and when COVID-19 hit Tasmania, our hospitality venues and events were hit hard. While the situation was not unique to Tasmania, through careful management, the tenacity of operators, government support, our vital industry has been able to be on the road to recovery, although I note it is a bumpy road. We have moved quickly to provide support in the previous budget, and this is continuing through the 2021-22 state budget. The hospitality sector will benefit from \$8 million to ensure that industry can recover as quickly as possible, and can continue to provide outstanding experiences for visitors and locals alike.

The allocation will see the continuation of programs, including the Great Customer Service program, and Clubs Tasmania program, delivered by the THA, as well as new industry initiatives including a leadership program for women, and the development of Hospitality 2030 which will be a bold plan to ensure our hospitality sector can flourish and meet the demands of industry now and into the future.

Of course, with ongoing border closures and the risk of COVID-19 in the community, our hospitality and events industries are still very vulnerable. Which is why it is important that Tasmanians continue to follow public health restrictions and comply with Check in TAS. On this note, I congratulate the hospitality providers for adopting this, and also thank Tasmanians that use it, and urge all those Tasmanians to make sure that you're always checking in. Tasmania's events have also had signs of recovery, with 2021 being a big year for both new and returning events. It was great to see some of our most well attended events take place in 2021, including Dark Mofo, and I announced a continuation of funding for Dark Mofo yesterday which is really positive. The Junction Arts Festival, again, I've also - I provided that announcement last week. Of course, we had our fair share of - more than our fair share perhaps, but hopefully that many in the future, AFL games in our state in recognition of our COVID-19 free status.

Through Events Tasmania we've continued to work closely with local, interstate, and where possible international event organisers, to support them through the uncertainty of the past 18 months. This is being done in line with our COVID-19 safe events and activities framework. Announced last year, this framework has facilitated the return of many key events while keeping performers, organisers, attendees, and the community safe, and ensuring events can happen - both happen and contribute to our economy. As part of the Tasmanian Government's ongoing commitment to events and interest in seeing the events effectively fully recover, we are providing \$21.5 million to secure iconic events, as well as \$8 million to establish a new event support and attraction fund.

I'd like the opportunity to thank the team from Events Tas for the work that they do, and particularly over the last 18 months. They've worked really closely with operators as well as the event sector through a really challenging times, and I acknowledge the fact that as we navigate the coming weeks, months, and longer term in our recovery from COVID-19 we'll continue to be responsive to industry and make sure that we're continuing to listen and respond.

CHAIR - Thank you, Ms Armitage.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you. Thank you, Minister. It's all right, I can cross off my first question because I think you've covered that in your overview. Can you elaborate a bit further on what the government's long-term plan for recovery and reinforcement as well as the

framework for the hospitality and events continuation and how the hospitality and event operators will be supported when the borders eventually open?

Ms COURTNEY - That's a very long question.

Ms ARMITAGE - Take it in two bits if you'd like.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, look, I might talk broadly about the pathway, I guess, and then look also at the support. From a federal government perspective and also through the work national cabinet is doing, Tasmania is participating in a body of work, particularly around what a vaccine passport may mean. So, we're awaiting that work, and ultimately the progression of that through national cabinet, and that will provide a really good basis for an understanding of how particularly an events framework will evolve.

We're in a very complex time at the moment with the fact that we have got both on one hand the optimism about the vaccination in the community, but that's offset against the fact that we have significant restrictions interstate because of the Delta variant. What we're continuing to do in the work that Jacky and her team do, and Adam and his team, is engaging to keep operators fully informed, and to be able to support them with their decision making. Ultimately, we acknowledge the fact there are still significant restrictions for events, and also for some hospitality operators, so what we do is work with them to be able to provide advice through the framework so that they can still operate, albeit in a modified way, and that particularly pertains to events.

We've also seen a significant amount of funding and support provided to both the events and hospitality sector more broadly. I might get perhaps Kim to outline some of the support that we're provided so far, and indeed the support that's imbedded in this budget. One of the things I'm saying more broadly when it comes to support, I recognise that there are a lot of businesses that are particularly impacted by the interstate border closures. I understand the Premier's made some comments around that earlier that week, and I am highly engaged with him as well as industry participants more broadly in terms of understanding how we may be able to respond.

We're awaiting, obviously, and I understand and I've been here all day so I can't provide a further update in terms of his engagement with the federal government, but ultimately, we've got a \$20 million fund co-funded at the moment with the federal government. We're working with the sector more broadly on what further demand there potentially is, and what the best mechanism is for us as a government to be able to support them. I really recognise the fact that we want to go through COVID-19, and maintain capacity. I know that once we are through COVID-19 we are going to see the industry back.

Ms ARMITAGE - You think we'll never be through COVID-19? Or learn to live with COVID-19?

Ms COURTNEY - You mean will we learn to live with COVID-19? Perhaps that's a more accurate statement.

Ms ARMITAGE - It'd be nice to be through COVID-19.

Ms COURTNEY - I'm really pleased that if we think more broadly about the Tasmania community, we've currently got the \$20 million partnership with the federal government. The Vouchers Program through the Premier's portfolio is out on the march at the moment. I know a lot of Tasmanians are taking up that opportunity, and I use this opportunity to word up Tasmanians, if you've got a voucher get out and about and use it. Supporting hospitality and tourism venues midweek is a really important part of that and we saw Tasmanians take that up last year. I might go perhaps to the Secretary to talk more broadly about some of those supports.

Ms ARMITAGE - Before the Secretary does, if we could - ask you in a moment about those. Could just go back to the vaccine passport, because I have had people concerned mainly about the vaccine passport that if there is a requirement for it, would they need to have had both their shots? Because they were saying if they were planning to come to Tasmania and they needed a vaccine passport, obviously they may not have time to actually have two shots.

Ms COURTNEY - So with regard to work around a vaccine passport, that term I guess is used relatively loosely. It can be a passport for travel or even entry into venues potentially. So that work is underway, it'd be good to be able to see a nationally consistent response stood up, and then effective in Tasmania -

Ms ARMITAGE - Because there is time. Quite an amount of time between some of the vaccinations, I think is it the AstraZeneca it's six or 10 weeks. Some of them have got a longer time between them than the others. Do you have any indication of what it would likely be? Because I have been asked that question, that if there was a vaccine passport does that mean people would have to wait until they've had both their vaccinations?

Ms COURTNEY - In terms of it, because the work is still underway, I don't want to pre-empt what the outcome of that is. I know that the Premier has commented on a number of occasions that we need to make sure that Tasmanians have had the opportunity to be vaccinated. It's probably a question best directed to the health minister. Exactly where we're up to with the blitz that's on at the moment we've seen a significant uptake. I have a really high degree of confidence that we'll get high levels of vaccination here in Tasmania. We have seen a really comprehensive response from Dale Webster and his team in rolling out vaccinations and looking at ways that we can make it as accessible as possible. I mean they've travelled multiple times to the Bass Strait Islands. They're doing pop up clinics. They're doing a lot of data analysis as well, to understand where we need to go. The criteria for a vaccine passport we have to think about things such as people that perhaps have a medical reason why they can't be vaccinated. So, this is the work that Tasmania is participating in.

I don't want to pre-empt what it may or may not look like, but I think it's a really an important step, because I think Tasmanians and event organisers are very keen. We've seen through the vaccination emergency operations centre, that they've actually had a focus on the hospitality industry. We've had them at a couple of hospitality sites in the south and the north, because we note the fact that hospitality workers interact with a lot of people, and it's great to see industry has been encouraging the take-up.

Ms ARMITAGE - So if I could ask, Mr Evans, firstly - and I'm assuming this -

CHAIR - Through the minister.

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Ms ARMITAGE - Through the minister, yes, but the minister has said that Mr Evans would be providing the information. Could you tell me the New Year's Eve funding for the Launceston event and the Hobart event, please? The New Year's Eve Beerfest event, and I believe the Taste of Summer in Hobart. If you could just give me the amounts for the two events, the funding. I'm assuming that comes through events.

CHAIR - What do they say? Never ask a question that you don't already know the answer to.

Mr EVANS - So, specifically with regard to -

Ms ARMITAGE - I appreciate one is several days, and one is one day.

Mr EVANS - What we did there, in response to the Hobart City Council's decision to not run the Taste this year, we very quickly worked with them to say, well, whilst -

Ms ARMITAGE - They're giving \$300 000, I believe, the Hobart City Council, towards it.

Mr EVANS - They're contributing \$300 000 in kind, largely in kind. I worked very quickly with them. We understood their decision. But it was important, whilst we planned what the future long term looks like for a future Taste, that we try and stand up for this summer an event, because I think that's really important for the Tasmanian community.

Ms ARMITAGE - No, that's fine. I'm just after the figure, that's all, because I know -

Mr EVANS - We agreed, then, to run a process by which we would call for expressions of interest from operators who were prepared to stand up a Taste-style event. Through a selection process that Jacquie in fact chaired, we settled on Pinpoint as the preferred tenderer. They're well-qualified to do it.

Ms ARMITAGE - No, that's fine. All I'm after is how much funding the New Year's Eve in Hobart is -

Mr EVANS - Through negotiations, we've agreed to provide I think, \$1.4m.

Ms ARMITAGE - Plus PW1.

Mr EVANS - Plus access to the facility. They wouldn't be able to do it, though, without the council's infrastructure and their support.

Ms ARMITAGE - No, that's fine. I'm just simply asking for a figure.

Mr EVANS - And so they're contributing quite significantly; \$300 000 worth - I don't know whether it's cash, but it's significant -

Ms ARMITAGE - No, that's fine. Through you, minister, all I'm asking is how much - so it's \$1.4m, plus the use of PW1 for the New Year's Eve Taste of Summer. I'm just simply asking, the Launceston event, the New Year's Eve Beerfest, just wondering, the funding for that.

Ms COURTNEY - My understanding is, Events Tasmania is engaged with the organisers at the moment - and I look behind me, and I'm getting a nod. They're engaged with the organiser of Beerfest. I think that they've put on a number of successful events. I'm not going to speculate what the -

Ms ARMITAGE - There is a figure. There is already a figure. I think it was \$46 000, I'm sure I've read.

Mr VALENTINE - So that's 20 000 people versus \$300 000.

Mr EVANS - I think there's a significant difference in the -

Ms ARMITAGE - There may be, and I was simply asking. I wasn't making any comment. I was simply asking for the figure.

Mr VALENTINE - No harm in asking.

Mr EVANS - Taste of Tasmania is a five-day event.

Ms ARMITAGE - I understand that, and I did point that out. That's the replacement event, is a five-day event.

CHAIR - I understand that.

Ms COURTNEY - Events Tasmania is currently engaged with Beerfest, and I think it's also - as a northern member, I think it's important to note that in terms of that \$21.5m, securing our iconic events, a number of those are the northern-based ones. We've got Junction, which we've already secured last week, Festival, as well as Mona Foma. The broader discussions are ongoing. I know that -

Ms ARMITAGE - We could do Dark Mofo, but I'm going to get into a north/south argument here. But if we start listing the northern ones, I think I could heavily weight the southern ones, but I'm not going there, if I add Dark Mofo and the others. But thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - We live on one island.

Ms ARMITAGE - The northern community have a very strong advocate, the member for Launceston, and I can assure them -

CHAIR - I'm just very pleased that, statewide, events and tourism are being supported. So that's fine.

Ms ARMITAGE - Thank you, Chair.

CHAIR - I'm interested in particular the reduced amount of \$22 million moving forward. Does this decrease in funding, is that anything related to the threat by the Premier not to fund AFL teams in the future?

Ms COURTNEY - I'll perhaps get Jacqui to talk through how we do the allocation of funding. Through the budget and through this election campaign, we've committed funding to some specific envelopes. With regard to funding things that have not been negotiated yet, they're not contained in the budget, except for those events that we've already flagged will be in that \$21.5m -

CHAIR - Like Junction Arts and Mona.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, Junction Arts and Wooden Boat Festival, Mona Foma, Dark Mofo. Events that are outside that scope, including AFL, which, I understand, negotiations with the Hawks are underway at the moment, through that negotiation, part of that will also be the provision of funding. The approval of that ultimately will be on the predication of being able to secure that funding through a Treasury process.

CHAIR - So that will be RAF to secure any other events.

Ms COURTNEY - It depends on the timing of it, and particularly the structure of the grant as well.

CHAIR - How difficult is that going to be for those larger events, given that they're not certain that they'll even secure any funding into the future?

Ms COURTNEY - Well, that's why we did the \$21.5m securing our iconic events, so that some of those key events that are around Tasmania did have that confidence. We also provided funding through another mechanism in the election campaign, for the Unconformity festival, so that they can do forward planning. That funding envelope is there, and those negotiations are continuing. Obviously from a perspective of negotiations, flagging how much we're prepared to spend on a negotiation before we enter the negotiation probably wouldn't be helpful.

It is the mechanism with which we can negotiate the best outcome for the state, because ultimately, this is taxpayer money. Also, there's a range of - because negotiations would be bespoke to individual events, whether events have a growth trajectory or not - some events have better mechanisms to get self-sustainability going forward. We've seen that with some of the previous grant rounds under then premier Mr Hodgman, that they were around actually almost declining support, because we were trying to boost capacity for people to actually have events that became sustainable by themselves.

CHAIR - For example?

Ms COURTNEY - I would have to go back to - they were a long -

CHAIR - I've never seen an event not put their hand out for some money from government in my time around this place.

Ms COURTNEY - At the moment we've also got funding, and I think it is \$100 000 grants that are available. There's a \$1.5million envelope particularly aimed at building community capacity in events. This is around - this is being worked through at the moment, that Events Tas opened a little while ago. This is ensuring that businesses can - sorry, so events can actually build capacity. We know that for community events, it's about ensuring that they

do have the expertise, that they can purchase expertise in to make them sustainable. That could be - that's a pretty broad range of criteria for that. One of the areas of expertise that we do have in Adam and his team in Events Tas is working closely with events organisers, not just for the provision of funding, but on the provision of advice.

CHAIR - For the COVID-19 requirements, that type of thing?

Ms COURTNEY - Not just for COVID-19. A good anecdote was I was at, and I don't think that they would mind me saying this, at Junction Arts Festival, and I was speaking to some of the board members and they proactively commented to me the positive engagement that they do have with Adam and his team. Clearly there's always the advice, in terms of how to look to sustainability, how to ensure that you've got the right governance mechanisms. We've seen as an event grows the governance in the event changes quite a lot and we've seen that particularly with things like the Wooden Boat Festival which has just seen extraordinary growth since its original inception. So we work hard to be able to - - -

Mr VALENTINE - It's a good southern event.

Ms COURTNEY - Sorry?

Mr VALENTINE - It's a good southern event.

Ms ARMITAGE - Particularly now that it's free though.

CHAIR - What about team Tasmania.

Ms ARMITAGE - But it is now that it's free, I can remember having to pay \$40 to get in there at one stage.

CHAIR - Why didn't you just sail in on your boat?

Ms ARMITAGE - Bruce sailed in, but I still had to pay.

Ms COURTNEY - With regard to being able to support events, and even things at the moment, we've got the event ready grants which are \$5000 to help events that are even very small be able to be COVID-19 safe.

CHAIR - Is that including agricultural shows?

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, my understanding is they can access that \$5000.

Ms SIEJKA - \$5 \000 may not go far for some shows.

CHAIR - They'll take it up in masks, because everyone's got to have a mask.

Ms COURTNEY - They're the types of things that we're trying to provide, hand sanitiser, signage. Particularly for small events being able to have that provision help lots, it means that they don't have to eat into their own resources. They can use that funding to be able to pay for those things just to ensure that they've got markings and things like that.

CHAIR - What about in relation to underwriting for events that may have to be cancelled at the last minute.

Ms COURTNEY - It's not in my portfolio in terms of the arts but my colleague -

CHAIR - No the events.

Ms COURTNEY - I'm saying we've got an underwriting program within the arts portfolio, we're working closely with event organisers as we're looking through this transition phase at the moment. One of things that we've done particularly with the events that we fund through Events Tasmania, when events have had to be cancelled, or changed, or postponed, we've worked to help reshape them and indeed utilise the grant funding that we already have committed in a very different way.

CHAIR - So you actually do underwrite them then.

Ms COURTNEY - Because they have a range of KPIs that they need to try and meet each year, when they haven't been met because of COVID-19 we haven't walked in and kind of clawed back significant funding, what we've done is work with them to ensure that they maintain their capacity within the event. Some of the events we saw last year and even this year did a smaller bespoke event. We clearly recognise that things and usual indicators such as interstate visitation and indeed numbers of attendees are significantly impacted at the moment. So we've got a pretty pragmatic view in the way that we deal with the events that we fund.

CHAIR - So effectively, the government is underwriting those events, and that includes agricultural shows.

Ms COURTNEY - With agricultural shows, I think that's probably better directed to the minister, Mr Rockcliffe. He and his community development portfolio take stewardship of the funding mechanisms, we have the event ready grant fund round but the funding provision that we've seen and the grant rounds they're not through my portfolio of Events Tasmania. What we do is we work with operators about how they can get to a model that is sustainable. We have a range of other events funding mechanisms, which I'm sure Jacqui will add and will be happy to talk through to be able to support events.

The thing that we're really focused on, and particularly the regional events recovery fund that I mentioned before, the \$100 000 is making sure that we're building that sustainability and that capacity within those events. We know that - I mean one off funding can often be welcome, actually providing funding so people can get on to a sustainable path way, and there might a way of building things that can be funded through that. It's a relatively broad range, and it can go to marketing advice, how they do governance within the organisation, how they can build up their systems that they have, or capacity that they have with their staff. We've tried to support them so they can have a sustainable trajectory, particularly before as you'd be aware, a lot of those smaller community and regional events are more often than not supported by our volunteers.

CHAIR - Absolutely. I know that the Longford Show has its COVID-19 plan approved at this point in time, so I'll be able to direct them that they'll be able to access \$5000 through

this area to support them for whatever they need for extra support in this COVID-19 world. The Westbury Show will be looking for the same, so thank you very much minister.

Mr WILLIE - Thanks Chair. Minister I asked some questions of the sports minister that said they were better off directed to you because they were funded under Events Tasmania, but the AFL games, I'm interested in the additional games this year, and what they cost per game. I'm interested in - I went to the St Kilda game as a St Kilda supporter, and I appreciate that.

CHAIR - He's declared that four times already this week.

Mr WILLIE - I was just interested in what that cost the state, given it was part of the regular season fixture, the AFL was struggling to find somewhere to play that game, and obviously it's an event strategy and you're trying to create economic stimulus. I did go to one of the games in Launceston, the finals, and I could see the activity that was happening around that game, but just interested in the value for money and in particular the St Kilda game.

CHAIR - Didn't the AFL just cover all the costs?

Ms COURTNEY - This was discussed in yesterday's hearing as well, with your leader, and I undertook at that time to take some advice on notice. I just had some information passed to me, but I just want to have a chat with the Secretary about it, because it's just been given to me, so I just want to check.

CHAIR - It's hot.

Mr WILLIE - Feel free to read it out.

Ms COURTNEY - More broadly, we've got the contract negotiations for the existing ones, in terms of the additional games I committed yesterday to provide that on notice to the leader of the opposition. I'd like to take that on notice again for this committee as well and provide that as soon as possible. I've had some data provided and I've not had the opportunity to review that, nor has the Secretary, so I'd like to understand what it is before we provide data in a forum like this.

Mr WILLIE - When you provide that on notice will you be able to provide the rationale around that game that I'm talking about? I can completely understand the finals, they sold out in no time at all, and you could see people travelling from around the state to go to those games, given it's an event strategy - I mean you can change the content for anything, but it's a sport.

Ms COURTNEY - We do through those, particularly for the content via Hawthorn, but look, I'll take that on notice, and we'll provide an answer so that we can ensure it's a consistent answer with the information we provide to the other house so that we don't create any confusion.

Mr EVANS - Because the circumstances for each of those games was different, so some additional Hawthorn games and additional north Melbourne games would have been extensions of their existing contracts, I know in the case of Hawthorn there is capacity for us to buy additional games. The ad hoc, opportunistic games that came forward vary depending on the circumstances, and often those decisions were made in a very tight time frame, and so I'm not entirely privy to all of the details of all of those discussions. Which is why it would be good

for us to have the opportunity to consolidate an answer for you around the costs of all of the games that we've played here, and I did reflect yesterday or the other day that in total we had 14 games in Tasmania, which is absolutely amazing.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, it's great.

Mr VALENTINE - It is amazing.

Mr WILLIE - Yes, I mean I've heard the minister Mr Ferguson say on TV it's \$500 000 per game too so I'm particularly interested in that game in the south, given its event strategy and the economic stimulus strategy. The state was in a good negotiating position to potentially get that game for free, given the circumstances on the mainland and the AFL's position at the time.

Mr EVAN - So it's not just in every case part of the event strategy. There might be other strategic reasons why we'd want to purchase a game.

Mr WILLIE - But you'll give those reasons on notice?

Ms COURTNEY - We'll provide that, yes. I'll provide a comprehensive answer. The other thing I'll just say and I'd have to seek advice because we also know that there was a - particularly for the teams that stayed there was a public health response around that and I know obviously the AFL had a responsibility around large components of the funding. What we can do is make sure that we've got a comprehensive answer for you.

CHAIR - They paid for the accommodation at the Country Club Casino at Barnbougle. We know that. They sent people home. They got people different rosters, you know, just the dry cleaning and cleaning alone would have cost a small fortune.

Mr WILLIE - Imagine trying to run the AFL in this environment across jurisdictions as a business, it would be a nightmare.

CHAIR - Yes. Moving on from AFL - Mr Valentine, an AFL question.

Mr VALENTINE - No, it's not an AFL question, in particular. It's about events. I'm interested to know and you may have covered it but I don't think you have. I'm interested to know how many approaches you had for people wanting to run events but in the end just simply couldn't because of the complexity of the issue with COVID-19.

Ms COURTNEY - In terms of the process that we have and I'll perhaps go to Jacqui to talk in more detail about the guidelines for the process we have. We've got the levels one, two and three events and there's different thresholds for being able to be given the green light to go ahead and for some of it it's more the advisory thing. We've also got different levels which Jacqui will go to in terms of where that decision is made within government. There are some events that look to go ahead and then decide not to for a range of reasons. Some of those are around the fact that particularly with interstate borders, things can change in the lead up and so ultimately that decision is up to an events organiser, but I'll go to Jacqui to provide some more detail about the process in particular.

Ms ALLEN - In the case of the events framework, the process we adopt, there's guidance around level three, level two and level one events. Which require the organisers to develop an event plan, which is then approved. I guess the process undertaken, particularly for the level three events, there's quite extensive consultation between public health and the event organisers around what is possible. How the greatest number of people can be effectively managed at the event. I think we would acknowledge that in some instances though it is a commercial decision for event organisers whether they can run a viable event under the restrictions that we have in place.

It's difficult to put a figure, I guess, on the number of people that decided not to proceed on the basis of the COVID-19 restrictions but I can tell you that it's generally an incredibly intensive process working through the event organisers. We take the approach that we want to give them the advice to ensure that they can do the event and that the guidance is as clear as possible, recognising that we are still in an environment where some of those health settings change and is unpredictable. At the end of the day, that's a decision that the event organisers have to make around their appetite for that risk.

Ms SIEJKA - Can I ask a supplementary on that?

Mr VALENTINE - Then regionally, have you got any idea of the number of events that were not going to go ahead because of COVID-19?

CHAIR - Launceston Show, Scottsdale Show.

Mr VALENTINE - No, I'm just wondering whether you kept a track of them or not?

Ms ALLEN - We don't collect those statistics. We can provide you with advice around events, you know, the distribution of events that are registered under the framework. We've had over 220 events come to us to work on their event plans and we keep a register of where all those are -

Mr VALENTINE - There's plenty of activity then?

Ms ALLEN - There is.

CHAIR - People are desperate to get out and do something.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. Supplementary, Ms Siejka.

Ms SIEJKA - Just on the events, the plans that you were talking about. I just wondered if there'd been any fines issued to event organisers for not adhering to COVID-19 safety plans?

CHAIR - I hope not.

Ms SIEJKA - I hope not too but it's, you know, quite possible that people are breaching them.

Ms COURTNEY - There's a public health direction ultimately and then WorkSafe plays a compliance role in that. Many events actually have, and some of the bigger events have WorkSafe go and visit. A lot of the time they try to play more of an educative role so they try not to just be a policeman- and that's a big part of it, particularly at the beginning and we had challenges at the beginning around queuing and things like that. But I think Tasmanians now are kind of used to how to do things in a COVID-19 safe way. They've become used to the fact that there's an arrow on the ground and you've got to try and comply with it.

Ms SIEJKA - It does seem to crop up every now and then. I've seen in the media, you know, examples of events or -

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, and I think I mean we do get them from time to time but I have to say broadly we have seen high levels of compliance. I think there's a lot of good will from operators trying and I think Tasmanians when they go along are good at self-regulating and regulating each other. With regards to fines, you probably have to ask if they're through WorkSafe, I would imagine, because they actually provide the infringement notices.

Ms SIEJKA - I think that's tomorrow.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, and I expect they might have data on that. I know that they do play - they do an educative role, they do attend events. I know they attended one, the NTFA games I understand recently and that's just to encourage the things that have been agreed to in the COVID-19 safe plan, so maybe mask wearing and other aspects like that.

CHAIR - And the TV add, "I've got this, Graham", I just love it. "I've got this, Graham".

Ms ARMITAGE - I don't think I've ever seen it.

CHAIR - You need to watch -

Ms ARMITAGE - I don't watch TV.

Ms SIEJKA - I haven't seen it either.

CHAIR - "I've got this, Graham".

Mr VALENTINE - I haven't seen it either.

CHAIR - Haven't you seen the COVID-19 ad? Thank you, people nodding in the back have seen the TV ad.

Ms ARMITAGE - I don't know how you have time to watch TV.

CHAIR - When you're down here by yourself you have a lot of time. Thank you. Ms Siejka.

Ms SIEJKA - My other question that I had was looking at the papers in 5.4 Events and Hospitality, the -

Ms COURTNEY - Which page are you on just so it's -

Ms SIEJKA - Pave 363.

Ms COURTNEY - Easy to get there.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes, no problem. It does drop off there in outer years. The footnote in this range of programs, that won't be continued because they're finishing up I presume, but I just wondered at this stage, based on the conversation we've been having it's a time when events and hospitality need a lot of investment and a lot of support. Is it intended that other programs will replace that and that perhaps in the outer year that budget amount will go up? Because it just seems a bad time -

CHAIR - Going to get it all out of the Treasurer's reserve.

Ms COURTNEY - Perhaps Kim or Jacqui can comment more broadly. Earlier on we talked about particularly with events funding that ultimately, they're reflected in the budget or future budgets and particularly once a deed has been negotiated and the parameters for that.

Ms SIEJKA - But you're confident that money's set aside if more is needed, because it is quite a lot lower in, say, 2024-25 at the moment.

CHAIR - \$22 million less.

Ms SIEJKA - Yes.

Ms COURTNEY - There's an amount set aside, the \$21.5 million which we have earmarked for those iconic events and then more broadly, such as things like entering into new deals with Hawthorn, for example. Part of that negotiation and indeed part of the ultimate execution of the deed would require obviously an agreement of provision of funding from the government. With regards to the quantum that that will be, this is the - as a portfolio it's somewhat unusual in that way. We don't just provide a large bucket and fill it up. We work very hard on negotiating around outcomes. Jacqui perhaps can talk to some of the things that we look to in Events Tasmania on how we actually drive that decision making around things like visitation in particular but looking at how we actually get good outcomes and assess different events. These events are vastly different, like the Wooden Boat Festival is very, very different to Junction Arts and Dark Mofo, so there has to be a mechanism for evaluating what value is for the state. I might get Kim to comment more fully.

Ms SIEJKA - Certainly, I appreciate the need to evaluate, but it does just drop off a lot.

Mr EVANS - I will just comment on the budget and if you go back in time the events budget is always very lumpy. The reason it's very lumpy is because we contract with, particularly the major events, event for a period of time, and it varies between events. Sometimes we contract for two years, sometimes for four.

CHAIR - Like the supercars and the like.

Mr EVANS - But once a contracted event has been contracted the money will be appropriated in the forward Estimates, so it changes.

Ms SIEJKA - I do appreciate that, and I know that we're here for events, but it seems to have come up a lot but in the outer years there seems to be a lot of things that are in negotiation or are going to be worked out across portfolios, I take your explanation.

Ms COURTNEY - I guess with this portfolio area, it's kind of the nature of the beast maybe not the quantum but the profile you would see, the profile wouldn't be unusual to previous years, and then sometimes it would move around a bit depending on where you're up to in a stage of negotiation. Ultimately, that is part of the negotiating process and indeed prior to a deed being signed off, the contract is being negotiated. It is the policy intent of government, and the alignment of that.

Ms SIEJKA - I absolutely accept that, it's just that there's a pattern that seems both Monday and Tuesday have also come up as a way that's been structured in the budget but thank you.

CHAIR - Thank you. If there are no further questions in this area, we'll move to 90.6, which is another COVID-19 response and recovery, Mr Valentine, thank you very much.

Mr VALENTINE - Thank you for that.

CHAIR - It's not a huge amount of money, but obviously important.

Mr VALENTINE - No, it's \$100 000 in 2021 to basically continue the provision of business continuity, and cash flow advice, and online coaching to tourism and hospitality businesses. Obviously to help maximise profitability in response to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Can you tell us, minister, how many businesses were provided with support under this output group in 2021?

Ms COURTNEY - Jacqui can go to the detail of this one, so this was a partnership we did, I think it was with SBA Collins through the THA to provide the support, so Jacqui will provide the information on that.

Ms ALLEN - This funding was supplemented by some other funding that we provided from within our programs as well. There were three phases of the program and in total it dealt with 875 participants. There were 222 one-to-one business continuity phone calls that were conducted with businesses; 171 businesses who participated in a webinar session, there were 169 rebuild, recover, rethink, so helping businesses adjust to a COVID-19 model registration. There were 80 group coaching registrations, and 233 registrations for regional workshop sessions.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay, that's very good. Do we have any understanding of the size of the businesses involved? Have you done any split up in that regard, or would that be impossible?

Ms ALLEN - I don't have that information.

Mr VALENTINE - Like the number of employees, you don't have that detail?

Ms ALLEN - I don't know if we collected that information.

Mr VALENTINE - Or regional, just to give us a feel for that across the state?

Ms ALLEN - I can only really speak to the specific regional sessions, of which there were 233. There were 61 in Launceston, 27 in the north-west, 24 on the west coast, and 13 on the east coast. That's the level of detail that I have available here.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay. And the south you didn't have one?

Ms ALLEN - There were 88 in Hobart over two sessions.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. Okay. That's good, it gives us some idea as to (a), what the money's used for, but I suppose (b), the sort of pain that might be out there. I mean can you share any learnings as they call it, some people hate that term, but from those sessions?

Ms ALLEN - Yes, I think the sessions were run fairly early in the COVID-19 journey. I think it gave us a very good picture of the level of stress that was experienced through the businesses. We also got some pretty direct feedback around the various programs of assistance that were available. We got exceptionally good feedback from businesses about their ability to access the support, both I guess for the financial advice that was provided, and their ability to give feedback to us around our programs. I guess the psychological support of being able to sit down with a financial planner and an accountant and work through that.

Mr VALENTINE - I suppose you wouldn't probably have a handle on how many businesses just simply decided not to continue? That wouldn't be expressed in those sorts of events.

Ms ALLEN - No, I don't have access to that.

Mr VALENTINE - That's okay, I didn't expect you to, I just thought I'd ask the question just in case it was available.

Ms COURTNEY - Mr Valentine, I just might add, more broadly, and this crosses over with the minister Ms Howlett's portfolio area, but at the time when I was Minister for Small Business, a lot of the grants that we stood up last year, some of them around hardship, but we also had a significant number of business continuity style grant rounds that we continued to effectively reboot throughout the year so that people could get specific advice that they needed. That may have been around accounting, it could have been around other professional advice, and we also saw through the grant rounds, and I don't have the data about this, sorry, but we saw a significant uptake by hospitality and tourism businesses. Particularly towards the earlier parts of the year that was around advice around perhaps more acute need, because of the shutdown.

Later on in the year as we continue to roll out programs, we really wanted businesses to be able to access it so that they could ensure their business was structured as most effectively as possible and other mechanisms, so we've worked hard on that. We've also seen the great customer experience program that we do through the THA. We provide support for contractors to engage with businesses, and a lot of that's around staffing and skills but also broader business support. The THAs been a really critical partner in providing that information to government about where there is need and how we can assist. One of the things I think I can say around the past year and a half is our ability to be more responsive and more nuanced around how we

respond to need. It's been a challenging time and I'm very conscious that when we do respond to need in businesses that it is taxpayer money, and so we need to make sure that we're trying to target those that really need it.

Mr VALENTINE - With the border closures that we've got, and I won't make any comment as to how long it's going to go on for in the future, but are we looking at extending this sort of support into the future?

Ms COURTNEY - We've got in the market at the moment, through the minister Ms Howlett there's the \$20 million funding available, that's co-funded with the federal government. I outlined earlier on some of the initiatives we've got about the regional hospitality revival fund.

Mr VALENTINE - But the counselling service I'm talking about.

Ms COURTNEY - The financial counselling?

Mr VALENTINE - Yes.

CHAIR - This initiative that we're talking about.

Ms COURTNEY - Sorry, that one specifically.

CHAIR - Going forward, if things don't change the members want to know if we can duplicate the \$100 000 to continue the support.

Mr VALENTINE - Are you planning on delivering this again into the future?

Ms ALLEN - So we're working closely with THA, and as the minister said they have a number of consultants who participate in the great customer experience program who go out and work on the ground with businesses. We will obviously have a look at what support and needs to be provided through that program, but as the minister said also through the Department of State Growth there's a range of support packages being looked at. There will be a discussion, I assume, around business continuity support again.

Mr VALENTINE - Okay. Thanks for the that, because obviously there are a lot of people out there that are running businesses who must despair, I think, at night, as to how they're going to keep going. We've heard some in the media, and you know, your heart goes out to them.

Ms COURTNEY - Also through the COVID-19 provisions last year we provided significant funding to a range of organisations around mental health support, and we've partnered with a number of NGOs to be able to provide that specifically for small businesses. We have had really good feedback from small chambers of commerce around Tasmania on the need for that. Indeed, during the year last year when I was the minister we conducted a number of roundtables around Tasmania and it was clearly demonstrated there was significant need for mental health support. So, we responded at the time.

In this year's budget we also have funding through the THA for mental health. I can find the figure for that. It just appeared. We've committed \$600 000 over two years from 2021-22

to 2022-23 for the THA to provide mental health support and assistance. Some of the funding that we provided previously to the THA as well as a number of other industries and specific organisations because we were conscious that particularly for small business operators in regional areas were seeking and needed support for their own mental health or for their staff, for the first time. We're really cognisant of knowing that it wasn't kind of a one size fits all, and this is why we partnered with a range of different organisations to be able to provide it so that we could increase that access for mental health support. The funding we have in this budget is a clear recognition of the fact we need to continue to be focused on the space.

Mr VALENTINE - There are people that probably don't like to admit failure because they're businesspeople who go out and they're self-starters, and you've just got to really feel for them.

Ms COURTNEY - Yes, and to that end, it was also supporting operators to support their staff. This was also a significant challenge on a range of operators, and it is broader than hospitality, their staff members had experienced mental health challenges for the first time, and we know that often small businesses have a pretty tightly knit group of staff. That was a challenge for some, and so this is part of the support we're providing, not just for themselves, but how they could support their team members more broadly.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. Okay, thank you.

CHAIR - They're often like family, minister. People who work in small businesses become a family.

Mr VALENTINE - Yes. Thank you.

CHAIR - One thing that I have taken away from today is the number of roundtables which have been conducted - whatever you do at a roundtable - has been significant right across your portfolios. I think I lost count at about eight roundtables, so you've got a lot of sitting to do, minister, by the sound of it, if everyone's -

Ms COURTNEY - A lot of listening.

CHAIR - A lot of listening. On behalf of the committee we sincerely thank you for your efforts and contribution today.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you.

CHAIR - We acknowledge the support that you receive from everybody in and out all day through this area. We take our work very seriously, but we know that you do as well, so we'd like to sincerely thank you.

Ms COURTNEY - Chair, to that end, before we close I'd like to pass on my thanks to the departmental representatives, not only the ones that are just here now that have been here with me for the past two days. I acknowledge there is a lot of work which goes on to prepare us so we are able to provide you with advice. I can assure you those questions taken on notice that you've provided, will be diligently provided as quickly as possible. I do want to thank the team; they've worked very hard and it's still a very dynamic time across my portfolios.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms COURTNEY - I should probably acknowledge Christopher as well on the record so that -

CHAIR - So, you did promise.

Ms COURTNEY - I did promise.

CHAIR - So that's why I've reminded you.

Ms COURTNEY - Thank you; I appreciate that on behalf of the committee.

CHAIR - So, thank you, and we will conclude the broadcast. Thank you, Shae.

The Committee adjourned at 7.14 p.m.

xxx