



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

#### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B**

Hon. Nick Duigan MP

**Monday 1 June 2026**

#### **MEMBERS**

Rob Fairs MP (Chair)

Hon Josh Willie MP

Vica Bayley MP

George Razay MP

#### **OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS**

Ms Finlay

Mr Winter

Mr Shelton

Ms Burnet

Ms Badger

## **IN ATTENDANCE**

**HON NICK DUIGAN MLC**

Minister for Energy and Renewables, Minister for Sport, Minister for Parks

### **Energy and Renewables**

**Shane Gregory**

A/Secretary, Department of State Growth

**Vanessa Pinto**

Deputy Secretary, ReCFIT and Resources

**Andrew Johnson**

Director Office of the Secretary

**Sean Terry**

Executive Director Energy

**Stewart Sharples**

Director, Major Energy Projects

**Matt Bowditch**

A/Director, energy Policy

**Danielle Harris**

A/Deputy Secretary, Business Services

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### **Sport**

**Shane Gregory**

Associate Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet

**Brett Stewart**

Deputy Secretary, Creative Industries, Sport and Visitor Economy

**Anthony Johnson**

Director, Office of the Secretary

**Jamie Synnott**

A/Director, Active Tasmania

**Sean Terry**

Executive Director Energy

**Anthony Reid**

Acting Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Housing, Infrastructure and Planning

**James Avery**  
Chief Executive Officer - Stadiums Tasmania

**Alex Barber**  
Director, Major Infrastructure Projects

**Danielle Harris**  
A/Deputy Secretary, Business Services

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**Parks**

**Jason Jacobi**  
Secretary

**Sophie Muller**  
Deputy Secretary, Parks and Wildlife Service

**Julian Gill**  
General Manager (Operations)

**Danielle Poirier**  
Director (Major Projects and Infrastructure)

**Tory Ross**  
Director (Tourism, Experience and Visitor Services)

**Andrew Harvey**  
General Manager (Landscape Programs)

**Keith Ryan**  
Project Director

**Louise Wilson**  
Deputy Secretary, Environment, Heritage, and Land

**Stuart Fletcher**  
General Manager (Land Tasmania)

**Yann Gagnon**  
Director, Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens

**Amy Russell**  
General Manager, Wellington Park Management Trust

**Adrian Pearce**  
Manager (Finance)

**Josh Brown**  
Manager (Budget Services)

**Sofia Pashev**  
Senior Finance Analyst (Budget Services)

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## Energy and Renewables

### The committee met at 9.00 a.m.

**CHAIR** - The time now being 9.00 a.m. the scrutiny of the Energy and Renewables portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table names and positions for the benefit of Hansard.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you very much, Chair, and nice to be with you all this morning. At the table with me we have Shane Gregory, who is the acting secretary, Department of State Growth. Next to him is Vanessa Pinto, acting deputy secretary, Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT) and Resources. To my left is my Chief of Staff, Amanda Lovell, and to her left is Sean Terry, Executive Director of Energy.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Energy and Renewables is three hours. We will take a short break for morning tea at 10.30 a.m. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary before the end of portfolio's examination, so it can be included in correspondence to the minister for answer.

I remind you that the microphones are sensitive, so I ask you to be mindful of Hansard and be careful when moving your folders, documents and water glasses around the table. Also, it is difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other, so I ask the members to speak one at a time to assist with this, please. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks very much, Chair, and can I say what a pleasure it is to be here today to talk through the government's renewable energy agenda. Our government remains deeply committed to the agenda and through this year's Budget we are continuing our focus on growing our economy through renewable energy projects, supporting regional communities through job creation and community benefits, and securing our long-term energy future, so that Tasmanians continue to benefit from our renewable advantage.

At the centre of this agenda, of course, is Project Marinus. Project Marinus is the most significant energy infrastructure investment in Tasmania's history, supporting jobs, energy security, delivering long-term economic opportunities. Following the positive financial investment decision last year and with the North West Transmission Developments now achieving financial close, Project Marinus is moving from planning into construction. As we've always said, Tasmanians should only pay their fair share for this project, which is what has been achieved. This includes reduced cost impacts for customers through concessional financing and grant arrangements and a cap on Tasmania's equity exposure on Marinus Link. This Budget also provides provisions for our commitment to shield major transmission connected customers.

Project Marinus and renewable energy more broadly is good for all of Tasmania, but I recognise that some communities have a bigger role to play in hosting this renewable infrastructure. This is why we're progressing work on a framework for renewable energy

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community benefit schemes, updating our community engagement and local procurement guidelines and supporting initiatives like TasNetwork's Bright Futures Fund.

Alongside delivering long-term energy transition, the Tasmanian government has also remained firmly focused on energy and fuel security. Recent global events have reinforced just how important resilient energy systems and secure fuel supply chains are for island states like Tasmania. And, while Tasmania's fuel supply remains secure and stable, the government has taken proactive and precautionary approach in response to global market pressures and fuel price volatility. We activated a whole-of-government incident management team, strengthened coordination with the industry and the Australian Government and enhanced real-time monitoring arrangements. This work is about ensuring we remain prepared, informed and resilient in an increasingly uncertain global environment. I recognise that these global events are having real impacts on cost of living for our Tasmanian communities and we have some of the most generous energy concessions in Australia with \$234 million invested over the next four years for energy concessions.

Tasmania is demonstrating national leadership in energy security, renewable energy and clean industry development. We're managing immediate challenges, including fuel supply pressures, while delivering long-term structural growth through renewable energy investment. I welcome questions on the Energy and Renewables portfolio.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, morning. Welcome to Estimates week. You would be well aware, more so than any others, of the importance of telling the truth through Estimates and not being tricky with the truth. My first question is: when did you first become aware that former minister Ms Ogilvie was a party to a Supreme Court matter?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think it has been well canvassed and I answered questions on this yesterday. This is a complex matter, it's a legal matter. There are proceedings ongoing and I won't be making any further comments.

**Ms FINLAY** - But it's a simple question: when did you first become aware that former minister Ogilvie was party to a Supreme Court matter?

**Mr DUIGAN** - As I have said: this is a complex matter, it is a legal matter -

**Ms FINLAY** - Simple question, minister: when did you first become aware?

**Mr DUIGAN** - and is ongoing, and my answer is that I will be making no further statements.

**Ms FINLAY** - Were you aware before -

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay, this is not really relevant to the Energy portfolio.

**Ms FINLAY** - Ministerial integrity not relevant? Ministers telling the truth in simple questions in Estimates?

**CHAIR** - But the minister has answered it. Has he got anything -

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**Ms FINLAY** - He does have an answer. He knows when he first became aware. All ministers will be aware -

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay.

**Ms FINLAY** - because you will have been well briefed on it.

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay.

**Ms FINLAY** - So, on what date did you first become aware that -

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay.

**Ms FINLAY** - former minister Ogilvie was party to a Supreme Court matter?

**CHAIR** - We're not going down this line.

**Ms FINLAY** - Why, Chair?

**CHAIR** - Because the minister - it has nothing to do with the Energy and Renewables

**Ms FINLAY** - Have you been instructed not to go down this line?

**CHAIR** - Sorry?

**Ms FINLAY** - It's a simple question to the minister.

**CHAIR** - The minister has answered it.

**Mr DUGAN** - As I say, complex matter. There are confidentiality issues at play -

**Ms FINLAY** - The answer would be a date. The answer would be a date.

**Mr DUGAN** - and I won't be making any further statements.

**CHAIR** - I'd just like to remind members, all members, that questions must be relevant to the portfolio and outputs of a particular session. Ministers must also be relevant to the question asked. At the discretion of the Chair, the committee may move to a new question if the minister is not deemed to be relevant to the question asked. Whether the question is counted towards the rotation of questions will also be at the discretion of the Chair. I am counting that as your first question.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, Chair. My second question, minister, you're a member of Cabinet, therefore this is very relevant: as a member of Cabinet, when did you first become aware that former minister Ogilvie was party to a Supreme Court matter?

**Mr DUGAN** - As I've said, this is an ongoing matter. It's a complex matter. There are confidential -

**Ms FINLAY** - Simple question, minister.

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**Mr DUGAN** - there are confidentiality requirements and I won't be making any further comment.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, you know that being honest and not being tricky with the truth is really important. So, I will ask a different question, knowing that -

**Mr SHELTON** - Chair, if there are no Energy questions, I have one. So, if the opposition hasn't got any Energy questions.

**Ms FINLAY** - knowing that the former minister was misleading parliament, when did you advise her that she should tell the truth?

**Mr DUGAN** - Thanks, I appreciate your question and your line of questioning but, as I've said, I will be making no further statement.

**Ms FINLAY** - But you did know that she was party to a Supreme -

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay, sorry, we're moving on.

**Mr BAYLEY** - It's now been confirmed that Ms Ogilvie misled parliament and she has subsequently resigned. It's on the record that there was over \$120,000 worth of taxpayers' money spent on her legal fees. As Minister for Energy and Renewables, were you party to the conversations about those legal fees and party to the decision to approve the expenditure of taxpayer money on those legal fees?

**Mr DUGAN** - Thank you, Mr Bayley, I appreciate your question and my answer will be the same, as it will be to any other member asking a question around that: this is a complex matter. There are confidentiality requirements in place and I will not be making a further comment.

**Mr BAYLEY** - But this is \$120,000 worth of taxpayers' fees -

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley, as I've said before, this has nothing to do with the Energy and Renewables portfolio.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Chair, as Minister for Energy and Renewables, the minister - I'm asking the minister whether he was party to the conversations about the approval of those taxpayer funds - \$120,000 worth of taxpayers' funds. Can you confirm you were a party to those and when was that conversation had?

**Mr DUGAN** - So, my answer hasn't changed and it won't change. It's a complex matter. There are confidentiality arrangements that need to be acknowledged and I won't be making any further statements.

**Members** interjecting.

**CHAIR** - Moving on. Professor Razay.

**Prof RAZAY** - Thank you very much, honourable minister. In my electorate of Bass, there are two major wind farm projects there. The ACEN, the Australian North East Wind

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project is one of the largest, with 210 turbines in the Tomahawk region which generates 1260 megawatts; the second project is between Bellbuoy Beach and Beechford, with 28 wind turbines, generating 224 megawatts. But there are major concerns by the community about lack of engagement, lack of transparency, and what are we doing about that? Is there any engagement with them, because it's impacting, actually, about their mental health and stress and anxiety? My second question will be: is the government giving any subsidies to these foreign companies?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Prof Razay, for the question, and you know, would note the really substantial - you have mentioned a couple of prospective wind farms in the north and north-east of the state there. There is a very great interest from wind developers in Tasmania because of our relative abundance of wind. The capacity factor for a wind development in Tasmania is approaching 50 per cent, which is very high in an Australian, and indeed, a global sense. So, Tasmania is a really good place to build wind farms and wind generation. Obviously we have expectations of proponents who come to Tasmania and the way that they operate, there are a great number of statutory approvals processed through which these projects must progress. You know there are federal and state approvals processes which need to be met at various stages, along that approvals process way there are opportunities for the public to engage with the companies.

My expectation as minister is that the companies actively engage with those processes and, should that not be occurring, then we would have something to say, but you know wherever I speak to proponents who are looking to deliver these things, they are very genuine and sincere, I think, in terms of addressing community concerns as closely as they possibly can. To take your point of the Bell Bay Wind Farm, you know, I understand there's been, and continues to be, ongoing dialogue about the placement of turbines in that development and trying to get the best outcome for members of the community there and the best alignment of the wind farm to continue to deliver renewable energy. You know, we know we want that, we've got a legislated target of doubling our generation capacity by 2040. So, we want wind development, but we want it to be done in the most sensitive way possible. Happy for - if that answers your question, or I can pass to departmental officials to give you more detail about the process that needs to be adhered.

**Prof RAZAY** - Do we have like just some details about the time of engagement with the community?

**Ms PINTO** - Through you, minister, to the member: what will normally happen is there will be consultation periods that are provided. So in the case of the proponents that you referred to, the Tasmania Planning Commission (TPC) provides opportunity for community engagement through that process. So there's quite - there's normally very structured consultation periods that are required and those proponents and those developments will be subjected to those same levels of engagement.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks, Vanessa. And I'd also point to -

**CHAIR** - Sorry, minister, time has expired on that question. Because Prof Razay asked two, I will come to you the next time, Mr Garland, with the rotation. Mr Shelton.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, we all recognise the need for more energy and wind energy, of course, through wind farms - are going to be a major part of the development going forward,

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as well as solar, but you did mention in your opening statement that some communities out there have more responsibility and so forth as far as hosting some of this infrastructure. So, minister, what's the government doing to ensure that those who host renewable energy infrastructure are adequately recognised?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Shelton, appreciate the question. It is an important aspect of all of this because as you say, there are some communities, some people, who feel the impact of this much more greatly than others, and it's essential, as we look at the delivery of our renewable agenda, to deliver for Tasmanians and for those communities. Community benefit-sharing approaches are key enablers for renewable energy social licence, and community benefit sharing is not a new expectation in Tasmania, but we're always looking for ways to ensure communities are appropriately recognised.

The Tasmanian government remains strongly committed to this space and is progressing work on a community benefits scheme framework, ensuring new projects share benefits with host communities, and this will build on our existing guidelines for community engagement, benefit sharing, local procurement, which sets clear standards for best practice in the space, and the framework for the scheme will set a consistent, clear path forward for delivering outcomes on issues that locals care about. On March 6 we released an initial discussion paper for our new framework, with consultation having closed on 20 April, and I'm informed we've had excellent level of engagement and received over 20 submissions. It was pleasing to see a strong level of feedback and I look forward to sharing more details on these soon, once feedback has been considered. Of course, delivering tangible community benefits is an essential requirement for Project Marinus and it's important to note that \$16 million will be provided to local north-west communities through both Marinus Link and TasNetworks complementary funds, delivering lasting and meaningful benefits, and a legacy to the communities hosting Project Marinus in the north-west. Across both companies, there are arrangements in place to ensure local communities are involved with determining where those funds will flow. We've also introduced our strategic benefits payment for landowners, noting the role that they play in actually hosting transmission on their properties.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, minister. After almost 13 years in government and talking a big game, but not really being able to deliver much benefit in terms of new generation into Tasmania, we find ourselves in a situation where we've got critical Tasmanian employers fighting for available energy. We find ourselves where households are struggling to pay power bills. What is the publicly available decision-making framework that the government uses to consider things like jobs per megawatt hour, emissions reduction, sovereign capability? How is it that you make decisions across entities and across departments to determine where our precious energy's allocated?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, and to your question, I would point to the fact that Tasmania has and continues to have the lowest regulated power prices in the country, which is very important and is a key pillar of what we've asked of our energy businesses. So, it's a key thing to recognise and in real terms, power prices in Tasmania have fallen over the past 10 years.

**Ms FINLAY** - There's tension between the availability of the power - how do you make those decisions?

**Mr DUIGAN** - But, to your question where you have leant into the fact that Tasmanians are struggling, it is a very important thing that we recognise in Tasmania over the last 10 years -

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**Ms FINLAY** - So your job's done?

**Mr DUIGAN** - in real terms power prices have fallen. Now it's very difficult to find another sector of the economy where that is true. So I would say to our energy businesses, thank you for the work that you continue to do, you are delivering a great outcome for Tasmania.

In terms of energy priority, you know, we've said that we back in our existing large-scale energy consumers, our major industrials, obviously, we continue to supply energy to those businesses and work with them very consistently and regularly to meet their needs going forward and we'll continue to do that.

**Ms FINLAY** - Do you have a formal process of how you allocate the power across competing needs?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Hydro Tasmania. We have an expectation of how Hydro Tasmania will behave and how we would expect Hydro Tasmania to act commercially to deliver value to its owners, who are of course the people of Tasmania, and there is a wholesale energy contracting framework that sits at the centre of how Hydro would seek to distribute its energy.

But, as we're seeing, you know in recent times with new large-scale loads, we are seeing new businesses start here in Tasmania and investment being attracted to the state on the basis of our green grid and available energy. So, you know, I'm very comfortable that we have available energy to meet our existing needs, but also, importantly, to meet growing needs as current, you know, legacy businesses look to electrify, and new businesses look to establish here in the state.

**Ms FINLAY** - There's a range of things that Tasmanian businesses can provide into the Tasmanian economy other than receiving the energy, there are benefits to the community in terms of jobs, there are benefits in terms of emissions reductions. My question is how do you make the decision about where you allocate energy into Tasmania and do you have an agreed framework - it's not just Hydro that actually deliver the energy in Tasmania, Aurora provide contracts as well - how do you make decisions between industrial users and households where we get the best outcome for Tasmania?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think, and it is a good question because I think we need to be doing that via a strategic lens, and you know the government is currently developing a diversification strategy.

**Ms FINLAY** - After 13 years?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, to be fair, the level of interest, I think is likely, particularly post-Marinus, as we will see, you know a range -

**Ms FINLAY** - There's already tension in the system, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, of course there is, as you would expect there to be and that's what you want. We'll see - Project Marinus has provided certainty for generation developers and we're also seeing an increase interest in people seeking large-scale load.

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**Ms FINLAY** - I suppose that's the question, what is the modelling? So, clearly there hasn't been any, you're about to start that process you've said. I'm interested in the impact of the State Service Management Office's managing positions framework direction that came out in 2026. How many roles, as a result of that, that would be doing this modelling and making sure that Tasmanians have the best allocation of power for the best outcomes for the state, not just the commercial outcomes that you indicated for Hydro, because, of course, that's been amended to best interests of Tasmania, not just a commercial outcome. How many roles around policy, energy modelling, projects, consideration of industrial energy have been abolished, held vacant or reprofiled as a result of that framework?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. Appreciate the question. What I would say, at a high level, is obviously we are seeking to make some efficiencies across the public service. The Department of State Growth is subject to machinery of government changes. We have the secretary at the table - or the acting secretary at the table - and I would be happy to throw that question, noting it has a bit of detail in it, to Shane.

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister. Obviously, with the machinery of government changed, there's a significant piece of work to be done over, really, the next 12 months to work through the machinery of government change. We have started looking at that, at the moment. We've had an expression of interest out for voluntary redundancies. We received 148 applications for those. We haven't worked through all of those yet, but certainly as we work through the whole change, and there's a significant change, that includes the transfer of some significant functions out of the current Department of State Growth to other agencies. There'll be -

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm particularly laser-focused on energy.

**Mr GREGORY** - Well, right at the moment, we haven't drilled down to the level of detail of where the voluntary redundancies would be accepted. There's quite a bit of -

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm not just talking about voluntary redundancies.

**Mr GREGORY** - No, I understand that you're not just talking about that, but we're at the beginning of a machinery of government change. We're at the beginning of a process and we have a substantial amount of work to do. If you want to know, is it 10, 11, 12, 13 positions in ReCFIT, the answer is, right at this moment, I don't know.

**Ms FINLAY** - Do you think there's capacity within ReCFIT, given the future works?

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay, sorry. Ms Finlay, I think you've had your allocation of questions.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Minister, we all know that climate change is real and that's going to deliver a raft of different impacts to Tasmania - more extreme weather events, including droughts. Hydro Tasmania has modelled an annual average reduction to the system yield of 21 gigawatt hours per year going forward, through to 2050. So, there is going to be reduced capacity in that context. At the same time, there's potential for Hydro to have to subsidise power-purchase agreements for renewable energy developments, allocate energy to AI centres and data centres, offer bulk discounts to the major industrials and continue that and, of course, it's got an ageing asset system. On that basis, when you go to the dividends that the Budget shows would be derived from Hydro Tasmania, they move from a \$4.7 million expected

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outcome this year up to \$173.8 million in 2029-30. Obviously, all of that's ahead of Marinus and any of the proclaimed benefits that you will talk about. How on earth can you budget for this level of dividend from Hydro Tasmania when the climate is drying, the inflows are reducing, they've got significant pressures upon them already and they've consistently failed to deliver over recent years?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks, Mr Bayley, appreciate the question. I would point to a couple of very salient reasons around Hydro Tasmania's current profit status. Those are the fact that we have just had the two driest years on record for Hydro Tasmania, so inflows have been very much reduced and, obviously, as a business that generates the majority of its energy via rainfall, that has a very, very substantial impact. The second -

**Mr BAYLEY** - That's modelled to reduce going forward according to - 21 gigawatt hours a year.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, my memory - if my memory serves that represents a 2 per cent - long-term average 2 per cent downturn out to 2050.

**Mr BAYLEY** - We have a far more than 2 per cent increase in profitability and dividend return.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, but to put it into context, what you're saying is, my memory says, that the modelled downturn in inflows is 2 per cent out to 2050. So while it is there, it's not a catastrophic downturn. The other point around Hydro profitability that needs to be acknowledged is Hydro's ability to trade, and this year we have seen Basslink operate as a merchant link, and flows across Basslink have been very, very substantially curtailed. So, Hydro relies on inflows, and it relies on trading to make money, and in the period of time that we're talking about, both of those have been under serious pressure. So, as of July 1 this year, we will see Basslink revert to a regulated asset where there will be free flow across the link; that will be very, very helpful to Hydro. We've seen through the course of this year good rainfall, particularly on the west coast. It's been a bit dry in the east, but obviously the catchments are on the west, and our catchment levels are at good, solid levels. So while Hydro hasn't been able to trade necessarily, that has been beneficial for our storages.

**Mr BAYLEY** - These are some pretty remarkable upticks in dividend payments, though, to the budget; is there anything else that you can put that down to? Are you seriously just putting it down to trading, because I don't know that the rainfall actually comes into it.

**Mr DUIGAN** - It absolutely does. That's the fuel. That's fuel.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Of course it is; but it's projected to decrease over time.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes. A little bit.

**Mr BAYLEY** - You've had a one-off hit. How can you project that in four years' time the rainfall is going to be a bumper year, for example, and deliver \$173.8 million?

**Mr DUIGAN** - What I would do is to tell you to look back a bit, and again I'm relying on my memory, so forgive me, but I believe Hydro Tas recorded a profit in excess of \$100 million for the four years previous to 2023-24.

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**Mr BAYLEY** - So, are these dividend figures coming directly from Hydro Tasmania? Are they providing that advice to you, and then you will just translate that into the budget, or are you asking - are you putting additional pressure on Hydro to sort of pump them up and pad them out?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No.

**Mr BAYLEY** - They're purely from Hydro Tas?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Are you able to table that advice from Hydro Tasmania in terms of their returns?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think it's probably in the annual report.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Going forward?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Their forecast? I believe it is, yes.

**Mr GARLAND** - Federal Liberal leader Angus Taylor in his recent address on Saturday to the 65th Federal Council in Melbourne said:

We've seen the shutdown of always-on power like coal and gas, and the unbalanced scale up of expensive, weather-dependent, industrial-scale renewables and transmission lines.

Which he labelled a few seconds later as: 'a desecration of our most magnificent agricultural land.' Yes or no, minister, do you support Angus Taylor's comments that industrial-scale renewables and transmission lines are a desecration of our most magnificent agricultural land?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No. I wouldn't say that, but I would make the point that, you know, I think what mainland Australia is dealing with is very, very different to what Tasmania is dealing with. We are so very fortunate here, and it gets said a lot in this place, that our forebears had the foresight and the bravery to install our hydro-generating capacity, and the reality is if we were on the mainland where they're shutting down coal, it would be similar to us having to shut down our hydro, and that would be a very, very challenging circumstance for Tasmania, to use a rough comparison. So, renewable energy is our opportunity. It absolutely is. We've got, you know, we've got great resource. We have to go and get it. We have to build wind farms; but in doing so, we have to be really, I think, careful and considered and responsible in the way that we do it, so we do it at the least cost, we do it at the most benefit in terms of, you know, maximising areas of the network where it is strong, you know, building things so we don't need to endlessly build transmission, but you know, this is our opportunity and there is a balance in all things.

**Mr GARLAND** - You'd have to agree that we're going through the same thing here with compulsory acquisition of farmland, transmission lines going through prime agricultural land, so it's no different to the mainland, minister.

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**Mr DUIGAN** - I expect you're talking about the North West Transmission Developments, which is the most current case in point where there is an augmentation of that line, noting that 94 per cent of that transmission line is already there. So, it's not a new thing. It's not greenfield development. We are reducing the number of towers.

**Mr GARLAND** - But it's a new thing to the farmers that are having their land compulsorily acquired.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, and again I would point to the fact that there are 260 landholders or thereabouts on that line, and compulsory acquisition of an easement - noting you're still able to graze or run your farming operation, you know - was required for four. So, I would say the system is working okay.

**Mr GARLAND** - Okay. On Saturday Angus Taylor also said:

We're also going to scrap Labor's Net Zero. Labor's powerlines to nowhere, gone.

If the federal Liberals are able to form government after the next Australian election and follow through with their plan to scrap the power lines to nowhere, will your decade of planning for Project Marinus have been one giant waste of Tasmania's finances? Will you pause the North West Transmission Developments to ensure that Tasmania does not risk billions of dollars, and will you at least shift project responsibility and risk onto the federal and Victorian governments?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No, won't be doing that. You know, I have spoken to the opposition energy spokesperson, Dan Tehan, and he is a supporter of Project Marinus. It is a project that was born of a federal Liberal government some many moons ago. So no, you know, I have no doubt in the course that Tasmania is taking and the opportunity that lays before Tasmania in leveraging our excellent resource; a resource, like any other resource, whether it's a mining resource or whatever it might be, it is there, but we have to go and harness it to derive a yield from it, and that's, you know, what we what we are setting ourselves up to do.

**Mr SHELTON** - Obviously there are different opinions around the table, but I'm very excited, minister, about Project Marinus and where it can take the state. Our economy, it's been based on hydroelectricity for the last 50-odd years or more, and I see it as a significant step forward, and talking about step forwards, I saw there was an announcement last month regarding TasNetworks reaching financial closure on the North West Transmission Developments; with another Project Marinus milestone successfully reached, can you outline what remaining steps exist before construction begins on this exciting project?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Shelton, and yes, I agree there is plenty to get excited about. I think importantly, there's been so much talk about Project Marinus for years, you know, particularly in this place. In 2026, we will see construction commence. So that's great. So, following positive FID and financial close for Project Marinus, the project team's been finalising the necessary activities needed ahead of construction, and that's obviously around regulatory planning and environmental approvals. Full construction of Project Marinus is planned to commence later in 2026, once all of those approvals are in place.

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Interim activities are underway, and this includes getting the community benefits frameworks right. Both TasNetworks and Marinus have released their community benefits schemes, as I said earlier, \$16 million into the local community. It also includes workforce and accommodation strategies to ensure the best project and community outcomes, and just last week, Marinus released its workforce and accommodation strategy for public consultation, and that includes approvals and regulatory requirements for the project.

There are some physical activities also underway for TasNetworks, including pre-clearance surveys, installation of signage and temporary fencing, amongst other works. Obviously the current works to progress Project Marinus is already employing Tasmanian businesses and workforces, and there's plenty more to come. I think that's, you know, something that we all need to recognise: this is a massive project and it will have huge flow-on benefits for local workforces. Full construction of Project Marinus will provide significant benefits to Tasmania, including 2000 jobs at peak construction and \$4.4 billion in economic activity, and it's not just a temporary boost, through the construction phase it will have long and ongoing implications for our state. It is absolutely an enabler.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, there'd be a couple of reasons why having an inflated dividend in the books would be advantageous to the government. One is that it makes a terrible budget look better, and the other is that it would heighten expectation in the community that might be ongoing renewable energy dividend relief. We know that Hydro advised their concern with being able to deliver dividends based on the critically behind asset maintenance and capital program, because they've been required to pull out dividends for so long. What changed, and when, that caused Hydro to reflect positive dividends in this budget?

**Mr DUIGAN** - So, to the question around Hydro's asset maintenance piece: Hydro's spending around I think \$220 million every year bringing its fleet up to, you know, maintaining its fleet, and that is -

**Ms FINLAY** - Up to? Was behind?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, what is really important is that we have all of our Hydro fleet in the best condition possible when Marinus does come online, that is a really important thing we do. So you know, on the west coast, for example, \$1.6 billion over 10 years will be spent on the Hydro fleet.

**Ms FINLAY** - Regular. You make that sound massive to Tasmanians but that's regular work, and we know that they are far behind because you've been pulling them out as a cash cow.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well it is - I think that's a ridiculous statement -

**Ms FINLAY** - The question is, what changed and when that Hydro indicated that it couldn't provide dividends, that it's now showing inflated dividends in the Budget?

**Mr DUIGAN** - \$220 million every year, and if you would go back and look at Hydro's capital program over time, you will see that there is always a very substantial capital spend on Hydro assets. But as we're moving into the Marinus phase of things, that is ramping up because we are getting our Hydro assets fit and ready to go.

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**Ms FINLAY** - We are getting them ready, I like that. So, my question was: from the point where Hydro indicated it was going to be uncertain about providing dividends, to it providing these dividends in this budget, what changed and when?

**Mr DUIGAN** - So, there would be a number of things. Hydro's ability to trade across Basslink as a regulated interconnector; Hydro no longer having to pay the services fee for Basslink solo. So, you know, now the costs of that will be shared between Victoria and Tasmania, with most of the costs, thankfully, going to Victoria. So there are a number of things that Hydro would see in its future that that would be increasing its profitability.

**Ms FINLAY** - So, you agree that there was a change and that Hydro had previously indicated that it was going to struggle to actually provide dividends based on its financial position?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No. What I would say, and what I would continue to say, is that there are two key requirements for Hydro to deliver profitability, and that is: inflows - rain - and the ability to trade. Those are the two. Those are the key metrics.

**Ms FINLAY** - On the revenue side, but there's also the expenses side, Minister, and that actually impacts their ability to create a profit and therefore return dividends, particularly the renewable energy dividends to Tasmanians. In the event that this budget isn't realised, because that often is the case: Big game, no delivery for the government. What guarantees will you provide Tasmanians that there will be a renewable energy dividend?

**Mr DUIGAN** - When Hydro Tasmania makes a profit in excess of \$90 million, or returns a dividend in excess of \$90 million, there is a renewable energy dividend to Tasmania.

**Ms FINLAY** - And if that doesn't happen?

**Mr DUIGAN** - There isn't one.

**Ms FINLAY** - Therefore, to Tasmanians who are struggling under the pressure of power bills, what happens when Hydro doesn't return a \$90 million profit and the renewable energy dividend isn't provided, how will you support Tasmanians under energy pressure?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, I think, if you look at this budget, you'll see some \$236 million of energy concession payments for Tasmanian energy consumers, you know 70,000 Tasmanians every year are the benefit of energy concessions. This year alone \$56 million.

**Ms FINLAY** - When you're not in a position to supply those renewable energy dividends because those profits are inflated -

**CHAIR** - We'll move on. Mr Bayley.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Chair, thank you. Look, I do want to continue with this theme because I'm not persuaded by your answer to my previous questions around the Hydro annual report and it having an explanation of this level of profits, particularly out to the 2029-30 year. I'll ask again, can you table, will you provide the committee with the basis upon which Hydro Tasmania have provided advice about these dividend payments going forward?

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**Mr DUIGAN** - I believe it's publicly available in the Hydro Tasmania Corporate Plan.

**Mr BAYLEY** - If that is the case, are you able to take on notice then and just simply provide for the committee the basis upon which the projections go out, including to 2029-30? So, to the very out-years of this budget, because that's the most remarkable, Minister, \$173.8 million dividend being paid to Tasmania. And let's be clear, it's up from \$4.7 million this year. As Ms Finlay has said, there are significant burdens upon Hydro Tasmania, not only in terms of some of its contracts with major industrials and others, but its asset maintenance program. You know, it's a significant spend and you've got projections out to \$173.8 million in the out-years. So, are you able to provide that so that this committee has absolute clarity on the basis upon which those projections are made?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I'm advised that it's not publicly available, but it is in the Hydro Tasmania Corporate Plan. I'd need to seek advice as to whether it would be something we'd be prepared to table.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Were you prepared to take that on notice?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yep, take on notice.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Thank you. When it comes to Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation, obviously it was launched, as you mentioned by prime minister, Turnbull, going way back, in terms of Tasmania being Battery of the Nation. Nine years on, the Budget has a significant chapter in relation to the financial risk associated with Marinus Link, including the fact that there are still enabling decisions that need to be made. There is a risk that it does not proceed. Of course some of the significant Battery of the Nation projects, such as Cethana, have effectively been delinked from Marinus. It's unfunded in the budget, you've identified \$500 million worth of forward borrowings that don't need to be made because it is seemingly on the back burner.

Do you agree, and will you concur, that the notion of Battery of the Nation is dead? And particularly given the rise of battery storage on the mainland, the incredible growth and the technology and the capacity of batteries on the mainland, and indeed reduction in the price of them, do you acknowledge that the notion of Battery of the Nation, without Cethana and with batteries on the mainland, that that concept is dead for us?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Absolutely and categorically not. The value of all of this is the existing Hydro fleet. In terms of Battery of the Nation, if you look at the largest battery in Australia, which I think is some sort of 1600 megawatt hours, that's the largest battery in Australia, the Hydro fleet in Tasmania, I think, represents about 800,000 or 900,000 of them.

**Mr BAYLEY** - You do acknowledge that battery technology on the mainland is going ahead in leaps and bounds?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, that's a lot of the largest batteries. So just in what is already built, what is already paid for, that's our opportunity. Long-term storage -

**Mr BAYLEY** - A lot of Hydro storage is needed for Tasmania.

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**Mr DUIGAN** - Well and that's why we need new renewables, that's why we have instructed Hydro Tasmania to partner with further 500 megawatts before 2030, because we need the new renewables to better utilise that massive battery, that long, deep storage. And that's what none of the other batteries have. They give you a couple of hours; what happens after that?

**Mr BAYLEY** - They get charged the next day.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Do they, though? Well, when the lights go out at 9:30 p.m., that's when the Hydro comes in.

**Prof RAZAY** - Honourable minister, Tasmania has been fortunate in that 95 per cent of energy comes from renewable and that's because of the Hydro. We still have less investment in solar energy, which is really surprising, and I would like to be updated about what the current, you know, the proportion of energy, solar, I think the last figure was up between 3 to 4 per cent. We have the lowest investment in solar energy compared to Victoria and New South Wales, even to England. I feel we have more investment in wind farm energy, we get more concern from the community about that, but we have less investment in solar, and I feel we need to invest more in solar as you have suggested. We need to have more investment and renewal and that's the way forward.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you Prof Razay. I take your point and you are well informed; I think you know solar input into the Tasmanian grid is around 3 - 4 per cent. Of course our Energy Saver Loan Scheme, which was a three-year timed investment by the government, yielded or provided \$67 million, in interest free loans for Tasmanians. Principally those were loans used to install solar. We saw not only a great increase in domestic solar being installed in Tasmanian homes, but we also saw really importantly a great growth and expansion of the solar installation industry. This has given that industry much more strength and resilience, and it's a much more robust industry now. We are still seeing very high levels of solar installation in the state. That's been a really good thing. We are doing some work on what might follow that program, but in the interim, the federal government is running its battery subsidisation scheme, the name of which escapes me - the home battery something-or-other. That's been another really good infill. People now, whether they have solar, or doing a solar and a battery install, again we're seeing cheaper home batteries program and that's also been really quite profound. We are seeing a massive uptick in the uptake of batteries in Tassie in concert with people putting solar on their roof. There is a good opportunity there.

**Prof RAZAY** - To follow on from that. Why like we have we invested more on wind energy than the solar because, probably four to five times, you know, the rate of the solar investment. Any reason?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I probably comes, in terms of industrial scale solar, the capacity factor of which in Tasmania I think is around 24 per cent or thereabouts, whereas wind capacity factor is closer to 50 per cent, sort of high 40s. In terms of megawatt per dollar invested, but noting there is a good reason to have an amount of solar in Tasmania. That's why really pleased to see Hydro who have struck a power purchase agreement with the Northern Midlands Solar Farm. In the most recent round of the Commonwealth's Capacity Investment Scheme there is support for the Weasel Solar Farm in the Highlands. Those are two really large scale 200 plus megawatt solar farms being contemplated in the state.

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**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, you just mentioned the capacity investment schemes that are out there. I was pleased to hear the announcement on 23 May about two Tasmanian projects which have been successful in the latest round of the Federal Government's Capacity Investment scheme. Can you please provide an update to the committee on the two projects, and outline what this announcement means for their development? Can you explain how the government's been successful in getting the support from the federal government for these projects?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, thanks Mr Shelton, I too was very pleased to see support from CIS. Tasmania didn't have a great deal of success early, but in subsequent rounds we're seeing more projects be supported through that program, which is really good, and underscores the value of Marinus.

Delivering variable renewable energy is a key government commitment and these Cellars Hill Wind Farm and Weasel Solar Farm project have the capacity to generate over 500 megawatts of clean, reliable energy, which is enough power to fulfil the needs of 160,000 homes, and together represent \$1.5 billion in private investment into our economy. That follows the success of the Bell Bay Wind Farm which was recognised in an earlier CIS round. We've negotiated with the Commonwealth to secure up to four terawatt hours of support through CIS under our State and Commonwealth Renewable Energy Transformation Agreement, which equates to around 1200 megawatts of new VRE. Up to date, we have secured 765 megawatts of new VRE supported by the CIS, which is 60 per cent of that agreement already delivered. It's important to recognise there are more CIS tenders underway. The CIS provides revenue underwriting support, essentially a floor and a ceiling-type support scheme. As you know, the wind doesn't always blow and the sun doesn't always shine and, as a result, the revenue generated can be variable or uncertain and the CIS goes some ways to supporting that risk.

I would also point to our renewable energy approvals pathway team in ReCFIT who provide one-on-one services to our proponents and have been very instrumental in helping them with their CIS applications. That's why we're seeing a greater level of success due to work that the government is doing with our proponents to help them.

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm curious with the Dixier answer that all accolades to the government mention of the proponent, but no accolades to the hard work that proponents across Tasmania do because if not for great proponents, this government would make it very hard for anything to happen. I acknowledge the great work that the proponent has done and how hard it has been for them.

There's no doubt the decisions that the government make impact people. My question before about how you determine to allocate our energy is important and I'm going to prosecute that a little more. But also, the decisions that you make about expecting and requiring dividends over the priority of maintenance and other things, I would contest that perhaps actually your maintenance schedule is compromised because of your expectation of dividends and the need to support the budget. When you are considering maintenance and the schedule of maintenance, there are always people that are impacted. I would like to know how far in advance you inform people. For instance at Poatina, there is a significant decade-long program there to upgrade the turbines, but there will be other users of the water impacted by that. When did you first identify the impact on downstream water users from the Poatina upgrades and then when did you inform downstream users of those impacts?

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**Mr DUGAN** - Thank you for the question, and up at Poatina the other day, having a look at the upgrades there. I appreciate you would assert that I make the Hydro maintenance schedule, but that's not necessarily the case. Hydro is a pretty mature business and does look after its own requirements in terms of what it does and what it deems necessary in terms of maintenance. I'm advised Hydro Tasmania has an essential maintenance work schedule at Poatina Power Station through two outages in 2026 and 2027 and the work is critical to maintain the safety and integrity of the Poatina Penstock and it's important to recognise for Poatina there is only one penstock and that's why the outage is required. There's only one pipe from Great Lake down to the Poatina Power Station and this is about painting the inside and indeed the outside of the penstock.

There will be two outages and there will be impacts to irrigators from an outage of this site, including Northern Midlands. Hydro Tasmania consulted with the Tasmanian irrigation and other water users on scheduling and preparation for the 2026 outage, which is scheduled for July, September 2026. I'm pleased to see the collaboration between Hydro Tasmania and the other water users impacted in seeking a workable outcome.

**Ms FINLAY** - The question is were you aware of the impacts and when did you advise the other water users?

**Mr DUGAN** - I don't know that I have advised any water users. I have seen correspondence between Hydro Tasmania and other water users going back some period of time, but I don't have that information in front of me.

**Ms FINLAY** - Is that something you're happy to take on notice?

**Mr DUGAN** - As I understand it, I think Hydro has been talking to Tasmanian Irrigation (TI) amongst others for a long period of time. I don't think it's a surprise.

**Ms FINLAY** - Critical economic impact by those outages on a number of significant Tasmanian businesses -

**Mr DUGAN** - Would you propose we don't do the outages?

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, my question is when you were you aware? I love when you get narky because it actually says you're onto something. So, my question was specifically when were these impacts on critical Tasmanian people that significantly contribute to the Tasmanian economy, when would those impacts have been aware and when did you advise those water users? Simple question. No need to get narky.

**Mr DUGAN** - Thank you. I understand that those conversations have been happening for a period of time between Hydro and TI -

**Ms FINLAY** - And you're satisfied? Not just TI.

**Mr DUGAN** - I have seen those conversations, and yes, I'm satisfied.

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm interested in how maintenance is prioritised, and the reporting of backlogs in maintenance to Hydro. Given the scale of the works, and not only at Poatina, but across the whole \$1.6 billion program -

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**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, that's just the west coast upgrades, but yep.

**Ms FINLAY** - Can you outline for the committee the status of maintenance backlogs at Hydro, the number of major assets that are behind in their maintenance schedules, the impact that will have on generation and importantly, the impact that will have on dividends, and whether in your mind, dividends have been prioritised over maintenance planning?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I'm not aware of any backlogs, as you would call them, in maintenance in the Hydro fleet.

**Ms FINLAY** - So there is no delay in the delivery of maintenance across Hydro? Every asset in the Hydro suite is fully updated to its maintenance schedule. Is that what you're saying, minister?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I'm not aware of any backlogs, as you call them, in terms of the Hydro maintenance.

**Ms FINLAY** - Are you happy to take those questions on notice to be clear and sure of your answer?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No, I mean those are questions potentially you could ask to Hydro -

**Ms FINLAY** - But as minister you would be concerned?

**Mr DUIGAN** - But as minister, I'm not concerned. I have seen with my own eyes a number of maintenance projects that are being undertaken by Hydro Tasmania. I have never once had anyone raise this idea of a backlog. There is, you know, there are upgrades -

**Ms FINLAY** - So you're not concerned about the risk of delays?

**Mr DUIGAN** - There are upgrade works happening. They will continue to happen.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, we are in a cost-of-living crisis, as you know, and people in Tasmania are doing it ever tougher, whether it be rents, or fuel, or indeed electricity prices. One of the schemes that you have championed, and you have said has been so very successful, has been the Energy Saver Loan Scheme, which assists people with a range of upgrades and, you know, solar access and the like. Just in March this year you put out a release that talked of the 6100 loans and talked it up as being really successful. We haven't been able to find it in the budget papers going forward. Can you confirm that it is still in there? It's still a scheme?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No.

**Mr BAYLEY** - You've closed it?

**Mr DUIGAN** - It was always a three-year time-limited program, and it has time-expired.

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**Mr BAYLEY** - Why is that? Is that because the cost-of-living crisis has expired, or you don't see a need for this kind of initiative to assist Tasmanians any longer?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No, as I say this was a three-year program. We followed the program through. Initially it was designed to underwrite or provide interest-free loans for \$50 million worth of loans. Ultimately it provided \$67 million worth of loans, and I think by any measure was a very successful program. We're looking at the results of the program, ReCFIT has prepared a report for me, and then what subsequently we might do as a state government, in response to the sort of learnings and the gaps that that review has identified, would be happy for the department. I think the other point that I would make is that the federal government's Cheaper Home Batteries Program, is to a large extent, filling the gap that the Energy Saver Loans Scheme was providing.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Bit like the Health funding, is it? Filling the gap for cuts? You know this, I mean things are getting ever tougher for Tasmanians, and this is a scheme that, by your own media release, has claimed and has talked up the success of. We know that solar energy is up 12.7 per cent in Tasmania in the last OTTER report. So you know some of these reforms are really successful, and they are making a tangible difference for people. I mean, why is it that it is being cut? Why didn't you review it during the scheme?

**Mr DUIGAN** - It hasn't been cut. It was a time-limited program, it was a three-year program. It has come to the end.

**Mr BAYLEY** - And it hasn't been renewed. So why didn't you renew it during the program so that you could make a decision to extend it or to terminate it, full-stop? It seems a little bit counterproductive to terminate the program.

**Mr DUIGAN** - It has been terminated, full-stop. It has reached the end of its life.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Right, despite the fact that the need for Tasmanians is ever great.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, but I think what would have been a criticism of the Energy Saver Loan Scheme, that it wasn't necessarily available to perhaps those Tasmanians that you would be pointing to - those Tasmanians that are doing it very tough - like it taking out any loan for \$10,000, there was a bar you had to meet and some people weren't able to meet that bar. So perhaps it wasn't necessarily targeting exactly the right segment of the community that we would seek to perhaps support further.

**Mr BAYLEY** - So for those people who do need that targeted help, they noticed that the - and I'm sure you've read it - Energy Committee Report has handed down its interim report and there's some significant findings and recommendations that they are around energy efficiency, solar uptake. What are you looking at doing then in relation to stimulating improvements in those areas in line with that committee recommendation?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Noting the committee's interim report came out a couple of weeks ago and we are considering the learnings out of the Energy Saver Loan Scheme, we are doing a job of work to understand what is an appropriate scheme going forward.

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**Mr GARLAND** - The federal Liberal Party has not changed their plan for affordable energy and lower emissions since making it public in November last year and underpinned Angus Taylor's speech on Saturday to scrap net zero. Yes or no? Have you read the policy?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I am certainly aware of the major planks of the policy. I have discussed the policy, as I say, with the opposition shadow minister for Energy, but I would make the point again that I don't think the policy is particularly relevant to Tasmania. I think it is dealing with a different set of circumstances, broadly, that is the retirement of coal in mainland Australia, which is not something that Tasmania is dealing with.

**Mr GARLAND** - So you don't agree with their policy?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Look, I think that's fine for them to have a policy that talks to mainland Australia. There is a very different context here in Tasmania.

**Mr GARLAND** - What don't you agree with?

**Mr DUIGAN** - We don't need to pursue our TRET and neither does the shadow opposition energy spokesman. We would seek to continue on the path that we are on.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, I know the government's negotiated strong outcomes for Project Marinus to greatly reduce the cost to Tasmania consumers and, as discussed, the consumer and the cost-of-living issues around. Can you please outline these concession arrangements and what is in the Budget to implement the government's commitment?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Protecting Tasmanian customers is at the core of what we do in this portfolio.

**Mr BAYLEY** - We're all interested in a concession arrangement. It was a great question.

**Mr DUIGAN** - In the lead-up to the financial investment decision, we negotiated strong terms with the Commonwealth including deeply concessional finance from the Clean Energy Finance Corporation with those benefits flowing through to customers. We negotiated a \$346 million Network Cost Reduction Grant from the Commonwealth, which is estimated to reduce customer costs by \$15 million per annum. The favourable cost allocation for Marinus Link, which sees Victorian customers picking up most of the project's costs - 72.4 per cent as opposed to Tasmania's 27.6 per cent - and maintaining a seat at the table, so a board position while capping our equity exposure in Marinus Link to the funding already made \$103 million and you would remember that Project Marinus was initially a TasNetworks wholly owned project. The concessional arrangements for Project Marinus reduce the cost to Tasmanian customers by 70 per cent and deliver cost-reduction benefits to Tasmanian consumers of many hundreds of millions of dollars and, of course, that's leaving aside all the project benefits, not least of which is the reduction in wholesale electricity prices compared to no project. I would also point to a couple of policy announcements in terms of shielding our direct-transmission-connected customers from the impacts of Project Marinus, and also Treasury undertaking an electricity pricing review prior to Marinus coming online, to make sure we get the pricing frameworks right and proper for all of Tasmanians.

**Ms FINLAY** - On my previous question, there's no doubt that every decision this government makes has an impact on someone, and there are down-water users that will be

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impacted by that maintenance program by hundreds of thousands of dollars directly and potentially millions of dollars into the local economy. I would trust that communications with downstream users are done well in advance so they can prepare for such significant economic impacts in the same way that I would expect that, as an example, at Boyer the government take a deep understanding when making decisions about where they allocate their power, not just simplistic decisions on price. So my question is: before deciding not to provide energy to Boyer, did the government undertake deep, complex - using your own words - analysis of the benefits of allocating that power to things like emissions reduction, jobs value, return to the regional economy and to the energy transition, did the government do any modelling on those benefits to the community before making a decision on not allocating energy to Boyer?

**Mr DUIGAN** - So, the government has made no such decision. There is no government decision that precludes more energy to Boyer: none.

**Ms FINLAY** - So a reverse question then: when you consider a decision like allocating money to a major industrial, do you take on board modelling of other impacts and benefits to the community as those that I've outlined?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Absolutely we do. Of course we do.

**Ms FINLAY** - What's that formal process? What do you call that modelling? What is that process that you undertake, and is it consistent across all allocations of energy, not specific to this site?

**Mr DUIGAN** - As you would expect, the government has been working very closely with Boyer, particularly under new management and new ownership of the site, to understand what it sees as its opportunity going forward. We were up in New Norfolk the other day. as a Cabinet, to fully understand the employment profile and the importance of that business to that community. So there are a range of things that we would consider. It's important to recognise that over time, the reason that a lot of these businesses are here in Tasmania is the fact that they have been and continue to be supplied with concessional electricity which adds to their profitability and their sustainability going forward.

**Ms FINLAY** - You said there is a process that you apply when considering these allocations. What is that process called? What is it that you do?

**Mr DUIGAN** - There is a deep amount of work that happens within the Business and Industry portfolio to understand the value, and the ongoing value, and there are multiple deep dives into these businesses. Shane, you can probably talk to the level of detail, but I would say there are very, very few stones that are left unturned in terms of knowing and understanding the value of these businesses and how we should and can support them.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, minister. In handing it over, I'm interested in whether there's a consistent framework of consideration across all entities when they receive power, so if there is modelling that's done, is it a consistent process across all allocations of energy or was this unique for Boyer?

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister: when we are considering support to major industrials, and I will use that terminology, considering support, it is not just a question of power and the pricing of power. Hydro negotiates power-pricing arrangements with the major

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industrials, but through our major industrials group, we do a range of modelling and considerations about direct employment, flow-on employment, broader economic considerations, and that's applied consistently across all major industrials.

**Ms FINLAY** - I appreciate the answer, thank you. Minister, just for clarification, I am deeply interested in our major industrials, but not only interested in our major industrials. So when allocations are made across any entity that's looking for energy contracts or energy to be used, is the same process that you use then with the major industrials used for other entities that are seeking to secure energy in Tasmania?

**Mr GREGORY** - Through the minister: the question of negotiating power agreements is one between Hydro - where they are direct arrangements with Hydro, they're between Hydro and the major power user, if we can put it that way, or they are negotiations that would occur with Aurora. So, we wouldn't sit down - every discussion that Hydro is having with a power user, we wouldn't be sitting down and doing a broad analysis. Hydro analyses their markets and they consider where they - at what price they make power available. So there's a broader consideration that we take into account.

**Ms FINLAY** - And how does that conversation happen between your broader consideration and Hydro, who are considering price?

**Mr GREGORY** - We just liaise with Hydro to understand what they're thinking and what they're talking about. The conversations we have through our major industrials group have power as a consideration, but we model a whole range of issues.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Minister, I'm interested in the question that Mr Shelton asked, and obviously it was a Dorothy Dixier, and you touched on the deeply concessional finance that's been offered in terms of Marinus Link. Now let's be really clear: Marinus Link is a publicly owned company, owned by the Tasmanian, the Victorian and the federal governments; these are deeply concessional finances using taxpayers' money. Can you outline and/or table for the committee the terms upon which that concessional finance has been delivered?

**Mr DUGAN** - No. I don't believe I can. I think it is very much still in the realms of commercial-in-confidence.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Why is that? It's taxpayer money for a publicly funded, publicly owned company. Why is this not in the public interest? It's a monopoly. There's no competitors in this space. Why is it not able to be put on the public record?

**Mr DUGAN** - My understanding of that is that, you know, it has always been asked that it be withheld, particularly around the North West Transmission Developments, which we describe as deeply concessional finance. So, there are two financing packages provided by the CEFC, one for Marinus Link, to MLPL, and one to TasNetworks for the North West Transmission Developments. On the TasNetworks side of things, that's described as deeply concessional finance. We've never disclosed the details around that finance, other than to say that the benefits of that finance and the concessionality of that finance must be passed through to customers.

So, my understanding is that that position hasn't changed, that that would still be considered a - the details of that finance will be kept -

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**Mr BAYLEY** - The costs are obviously still passed on to our finances. Are you saying that the deeply concessional - the concessional financing for TasNetworks for the North West Transmission Developments is finalised and landed?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would think that's a reasonable thing to say, yes.

**Mr BAYLEY** - The Budget here says:

At the time of finalisation of the budget papers, TasNetworks was in the final stages of securing environmental approvals, land access arrangements, supply contracts and concessional financing arrangements.

So, are you contradicting the budget papers with your answer?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Look, my understanding is that 84 per cent of the North West Transmission Developments will be funded by the CEFC at a deeply concessional rate.

**Mr BAYLEY** - What do you mean by 84 per cent of it?

**CHAIR** - Sorry, Mr Bayley, we will move on. Professor Razay.

**Prof RAZAY** - Back on our wind energy, there will be nearly 240 turbines in the north and north-east. The lifespan of these, I gather, are they up around 20 to 30 years, will be over. When they come to the end of their life, who's responsible for the decommissioning and cleaning up of these infrastructures, and who will carry the cost of these? Is it the company, is it the farmers or is it - thanks.

**Mr DUIGAN** - My understanding is that any decommissioning, removal or site reparation would be the responsibility of the owner of the company.

**Prof RAZAY** - Some of these turbines are 270 metres high, so how are we going to recycle them? Do they have plans to recycle all this infrastructure?

**Mr DUIGAN** - It's probably a question that our renewable energy proponents would be best placed to answer, but the expectation would be yes. I don't see them going into landfills. I would expect that what is able to be recycled be recycled. I would expect that there would be - I know it's one of the sort of common memes you might see on the internet of, you know, windmills drooping away out there somewhere in America that are end of life. It's not been something that I have seen in my experience of wind farms. Where they are decommissioned they are taken down and recycled. The blades are fibreglass and EMC have agreed to the Infrastructure Commissioner - so there's an Infrastructure Commissioner doing a report on this. I guess, potentially, it is an issue we'll be seeing more of as wind turbines get to end of life. You know, Tasmania is a pretty early adopter. Our west coast Hydro part-owned wind farms at Studland Bay and Bluff Point are getting to the end of life, so it will be interesting to see what happens there.

**Mr SHELTON** - I was just going to say the towers will make a fantastic culvert for a farmer out there one day. A very large culvert, mind you, but a very strong one.

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Minister, I mentioned the cost of living last time. Everybody's concerned about the cost of living, particularly, of course, those people out there that have energy bills, where the energy bill makes up a very large part of their expenses. In that context, what is the government doing to support our communities in this space?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Shelton. I appreciate the question. I think we all recognise the impacts of cost of living, particularly in recent times, with the Middle East, which hasn't helped. The government's continuing to provide energy bill support to those who need it most and, as I've said earlier in this session, Tasmania's regulated prices remain the lowest in the nation. And thanks to our action, Tasmania has the lowest average residential energy debt and was the only jurisdiction to see a decrease in average debt level over the last year - down 7 per cent, according to the 2025 Australian Energy Regulator (AER) annual market report.

Thanks to Aurora, Tasmanians have access to one of the nation's best energy hardship programs, which has waived more than \$1.3 million in energy debt since May 2024 for customers facing significant bill payment difficulties. I'm advised that Aurora Energy has increased proactive case management for vulnerable customers, encouraging those at risk to make use of hardship and payment support options. This will increase numbers of hardship customers in the short term but delivers better outcomes over the longer term, and is a great example of our GBE proactively supporting our community.

Through this year's Budget, we're continuing to support No Interest Loans - NILS Tasmania - with funding for the Energy Saver Subsidy. The State Government is supporting NILS Tasmania with \$2 million over four years toward NILS Energy Saver Subsidy. That provides a 50 per cent subsidy on the cost of installed heat pumps capped at \$1000, while energy-efficient fridges, freezers and washing machines are also subsidised at 50 per cent up to a cap of \$500.

NILS estimates that every dollar of energy subsidy has saved clients the equivalent of \$4.66 in reduced energy bills. And through Treasury we are providing \$234 million over the next four years for electricity concessions. So, plenty to do, but I would commend the work of Aurora in that space.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, there's nothing more important in the economy than certainty, and the uncertainty around Boyer for years. I think it was way back in 2023 when they first made their request for the 45 or 50 megawatts of power at that time. It's great to hear that finally Cabinet are out there and taking an interest in understanding how you can deliver that for the transition that's needed there.

Uncertainty plays not only on the employees at a place, but also in the supply chains, in the same way that it does at Bell Bay Aluminium. Government couldn't get it together to negotiate a clear power agreement for Bell Bay. You were given a 12-month extension, as I understand it. There's nothing publicly been said about that extension now, whether you're able to deliver that with this 12-month extension. Can you please give an update on where that's at? Can you provide certainty to the committee that you will be able to bring together a power deal, not only for the workers on the site, but for the significant supply chain that rely on the operations at Bell Bay Aluminium?

**Mr DUIGAN** - We weren't given a 12-month extension. We negotiated a 12-month period -

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**Ms FINLAY** - Because you couldn't bring it together to get the deal done in the first -

**Mr DUIGAN** - If you want to take one of your pieces of paper and pass over what you think the price should be, that would be good.

**Ms FINLAY** - You had years, minister. Again, being flippant doesn't help your case. There are people relying on your capacity to get this done.

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay, please let the minister answer.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I appreciate that. I know that very, very well. We are currently working well with Bell Bay Aluminium, with Rio Tinto, with Hydro Tasmania.

**Ms FINLAY** - What does 'working well' mean?

**Mr DUIGAN** - You know, there are a lot of things that need to be considered in a deal such as this, price being one of them.

**Ms FINLAY** - The question is: do you feel confident that you'll be able to bring a deal together?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes. What I would say, though, is that this will be, in my view, a three-way conversation, as we have seen with Rio Tinto's smelters in New South Wales and Queensland. There has been a very, very substantial level of Commonwealth government involvement in putting together deals for those smelters, noting that the Boyne smelter deal has been, as I understand it, accepted, but the Tomago smelter deal has not. There is a large ask of the New South Wales state government there. These are big, very large deals that require and will require, I think, the Commonwealth government to play an increasing role. As has been discussed, we would see the Commonwealth government's green energy credit scheme being a very important pathway by which it could support Australia's only green energy aluminium smelter.

**Ms FINLAY** - Specifically about the power deal, can you provide certainty to the committee that you'll be able to transact a power deal with Bell Bay Aluminium within the period that you've been provided?

**Mr DUIGAN** - That is certainly my expectation.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Minister, you mentioned that there's concessional finance for the North West Transmission Developments of 84 per cent. Just quickly, is that in terms of the total cost? The \$1.3 billion cost? So, 84 per cent of that is covered by concessional finance, but you confirm again, just to check, you're not prepared to put on the record and table the terms of that concessional finance?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No.

**Mr BAYLEY** - When it comes to the North West Transmission Developments, I'm very interested in the Hampshire to Burnie line. The Budget identifies, in the Risks section, that there's a potential \$50 million contingency needed to deliver that. Yet that is a development that purely benefits private renewable energy generators, particularly Robbins Island and Jim's

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Plain. Why is it that the government would be prepared - when it was originally announced that that transmission line would be part of stage 2, so parked for a significant amount of time, why is it that the government's prepared to underwrite a transmission network that's purely for the benefit of private electricity generators?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks for the question. I appreciate that. It's important to recognise in the most recent Integrated System Plan (ISP) from AEMO, the Burnie-Hampshire Hills line has now formed part of the ISP, which would enable TasNetworks, as I understand it, to approach the regulator to see whether that could become a regulated asset. In terms of further detail on Burnie-Hampshire -

**Mr BAYLEY** - Which means the cost of it would then get passed on to us as customers.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Only if it passes a RIT-T. That's a pretty standard test. So if there is a net benefit for the community to have that piece of infrastructure built, then it would proceed.

When it's required for connection for Robbins Island, potentially -

**Mr BAYLEY** - So why don't they pay for it? They're already building a transmission line.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, and that's the way it would work, ultimately, if it was built as an unregulated asset for them. But the government has said, as a policy position, that it would provide underwriting if required, if there were a need.

**Mr BAYLEY** - You've said that - so the Budget here says the government is committed to underwriting the transmission line under certain conditions. You just said you would; the government has said that as a policy position. What are those conditions?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think - and I would need to be double-checked by you, Sean, but if there was insufficient -

**Mr BAYLEY** - I'm happy for you to take that on notice. This sounds pretty vague.

**Mr DUIGAN** - insufficient private interest. Well, no, we can give you an answer here. Sean, are you across that one?

**Mr TERRY** - Yes. At the time of that commitment, we had a number of proponents in the area, a couple of wind farms and a load in HIF. We were looking to progress that - sorry, or TasNetworks were considering to progress that as what's called a dedicated network asset. I can't recall the trigger but I think basically we would invite, you know, essentially an expression of interest and subscriptions -

**Mr BAYLEY** - Which you've been through. There's been an expression of interest process.

**Mr TERRY** - to that line. And depending on the take-up, the government would then, if the take-up was low, the government would step in with that underwriting provision. I just can't recall what that trigger - I think, I'm just looking. Is it 25 per cent or something like that? I'll have to take that on notice.

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**Mr BAYLEY** - Yes, if you could take that on notice it would be good.

**Mr TERRY** - But to the minister's other point, yes, the ISP (Integrated System Plan) has not been released yet, but we're aware, through the draft ISP, that this has been considering what's called an actionable project that would now trigger the RIT-T (regulatory investment test for transmission) process. But to the minister said, that still has to pass the net market benefit test or allow the cost of that line to be recovered from customers. So, there's a couple of pathways for that line. One is an unregulated pathway through the DNA (designated network asset) mechanism. The other one's the RIT-T process.

**Mr BAYLEY** - You've already published in March 2024 the expression of interest process for this. Can you confirm what the response was to that expression of interest process? I can't find anything online or anything publicly that you've said. Have there been expressions of interest? Have there been requests to connect?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would need to - I think -

**Mr TERRY** - I'd have to take that again on notice, but it's probably fair to say we're just working with one proponent now in terms of progressing -

**Mr BAYLEY** - That'd be ACEN and Robbins Island?

**Mr TERRY** - That would be ACEN and Robbins Island. And I'd have to check the status of the other wind farms that were looking at considering it.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Just one more on this, if I might, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Next round. Mr Garland.

**Mr GARLAND** - In response to my question about an alternate Marinus Link route to reduce the debt costs arising from the North West Transmission Developments, the Treasurer stated:

Anything that can make a project cheaper, believe it or not, I'm all ears.

Minister, are you as open-minded as the Treasurer, and will you put Tasmanians first by pushing the entire responsibility of connection of Marinus Link to the Sheffield substation at Nook to the federal government to reduce the risk and cost for TasNetworks and Tasmania?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think probably the short answer is no. I think we are a long way down the road. We are, you know, we are out of the planning phase, the route has been chosen. I understand the route was chosen for a number of reasons. And realigning Marinus Link at this stage is not something that I would be considering. I understand it has been chosen for, as I say, a number of reasons, cost-effectiveness being one of those. So no, we are in the business now of delivering Marinus Link, and look forward to that occurring and it then delivering for the state of Tasmania for many decades to come.

**Mr GARLAND** - Will you concede that a direct route from Waratah Bay, Victoria, through to the Sheffield substation via the Don Heads or Lillico, with an underground cable at Nook, all paid for by the federal government, would result in a substantial reduction in the debt

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burden worn by TasNetworks in new transmission costs and compensation payments to land owners?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Apparently I have something on this. Look, this pretty much just reiterates what I said previously. Any changes to the Marinus route at this late stage ahead of construction would lead to substantial project cost increases. And, you know, I can only imagine what the response would be. This is a very large, complicated beast of a thing, and I think we are, as I say, we are a long way down the track. TasNetworks advises the location of the Marinus Link connection at Heybridge was based on a set of selection criteria including cost, constructability, and network security and capacity. The route selection has been subject to considerable assessment by multiple independent regulators over many years. All regulators have agreed that the project can proceed with appropriate conditions. And again, I would offer to the House that Project Marinus is one of the most heavily scrutinised projects in the state's history.

**CHAIR** - We'll now take a short break. As time taken for breaks must be made up, can I encourage members to be as quick as they can? Stop the broadcast.

**The committee suspended from 10.30 a.m. to 10.39 a.m.**

**Mr DUIGAN** - great opportunities for us is the government's position that substantial new load brings with it substantial new generation and I think that's a key piece of how this all will work. We want more generation; we know more generation delivers more opportunity for investment here in the state and whether it be clean fuels or whether it be data or whether it be Bell Bay aluminium or Boyer wanting more energy or Liberty wanting more energy, hopefully.

We see the value in our economy that energy provides and, as I say, substantial new loads. We talk about being a pull-through mechanism for new renewables, Hydro being essentially affirming provider and that works well across the energy landscape.

**Ms FINLAY** - With all of the targets that you have established and projects that are already well understood and well underway in Tasmania, is it your expectation that new loads will bring new projects, new projects to the Tasmanian landscape?

**Mr DUIGAN** - In terms of projects that are not currently in the state, yes.

**Ms FINLAY** - If there have been projects that are well-understood and advanced in terms of coming online in Tasmania, if a new load comes on, do you expect it to bring a new project, a project that is not here already?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No, but we would expect that they would enter into some sort of agreement or power-purchase agreement or otherwise and that helps support those projects that are here get to market.

**Ms FINLAY** - Previous - and this part of the reason why I was interested in the answer before - you talked about the major industrials working group and how you consider the allocation of energy to the major industrials. When there is other new load and, say, an agreement with Aurora, what expectations are there that Aurora would consider things other than price in terms of what we talked about before with major industrials, so whether it be regional economic development, whether it be the supply chain, whether it be emissions

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reduction. What are the requirements or expectations of Aurora when entering into a deal that they consider things other than price?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Those would be broader government considerations. We would look at, I assume, a range of things in terms of data which would seem to be the rapidly emerging large load. There is work that's happening here at a state level, there's work that's happening at a national level about expectations on data centres and what their responsibilities to jurisdictions will be and are and certainly, for us, we would have a list of requirements that any data centre loads would need to fulfil.

**Mr BAYLEY** - What are those requirements?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Those requirements are essentially that they partner with new generation to bring on new generation into a jurisdiction; that they located advantageously in terms of the current network; that any augmentation that's required for transmission is paid for by the data centre.

Non-genuine data centre proposals that congest approval pathways are not welcome. To ensure focus on well-developed proposals, we're working with industry and networks on improving connection approvals.

The Australian Government has recently released an AI plan which makes sure everyone in Australia benefits from AI opportunities across all regions, industries and communities. This plan includes an expectation of how this opportunity can also support energy transition. This includes:

- working in coordination with energy regulators and suppliers to secure new and additional clean energy generation or storage to offset demand;
- cover their share of transmission and distribution infrastructure costs;
- minimise their energy demand and emissions by adopting industry-leading efficiency measures and technologies;
- improve the overall security and stability of the energy grid, including by enhancing demand flexibility and opportunities for peak load management; and,
- appropriate sharing of consumption data.

I was recently at a ministerial council meeting on energy where jurisdictions agreed data centres should invest in additional renewable generation and

**Mr SHELTON** - Before the break, minister, you were talking about Marinus Link and how large and important a project it is. With that comes complexity, therefore, getting it right is really important and with any of these complex projects you need significant amount and the right governance frameworks in place before you even get started. Can you outline the governance arrangements that are in place for Project Marinus?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, thank you. I imagine there will be plenty of interest in Marinus delivery and governance because getting it right is crucial. The government, shareholders and the boards of TasNetworks and Marinus Link have put a lot of consideration into this. We've published the independently reviewed Project Marinus Governance Framework on the Department of State Growth ReCFIT website.

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The framework promotes transparency and understanding of how accountability, risk escalation, reporting and assurance are structured for this major project. It also provides for coordination of inter-agency and intergovernmental policy advice on the project. This is crucial given the joint ownership of Marinus Link and its interconnection with the North West Transmission Developments project. You simply cannot have one project without the other, so effective oversight and governance is not only a prudent outcome for an investment of this scale, but an essential requirement for project success.

The governance framework supports three key objectives. One, managing shareholder risks and protecting state interests. Two, providing project assurance across Marinus Link, North West Transmission Developments and Hydro Tasmania projects. Three, coordinating inter-agency and intergovernmental policy advice. We've worked hard to get the right governance framework in place before we turn a sod for the project. We've had Wise Lord & Ferguson examine inter-agency roles and responsibilities, escalation protocols and integration between Marinus Link and NWTG.

The framework will enable government to maintain visibility of emerging risks and issues as they arise and ensure a coordinated approach to mitigation and the energy committee of Cabinet advised by the secretary level energy executive steering committee will continue to oversee Project Marinus on behalf of Tasmania with the boards of MLPL and TasNetworks accountable for delivery of projects and ensuring integration between them. This framework gives us the best chance for project success, ensures the state's interests are protected, and manages risks.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, Tasmania doesn't necessarily have a whole lot of spare energy capacity sitting around. We've had some really positive announcements recently around exclusive negotiations for Liberty Bell Bay for that to get back up and running. You've committed that there should be a power deal for Bell Bay Aluminium soon. You've commented positively about Boyer. There's been a really positive announcement about Grange and their transformation. We are a net importer, capacity is constrained, and there are seriously competing demands for our energy. How confident are you that there is available power to provide the megawatts required at Boyer?

**Mr DUGAN** - Very confident. Hydro advises me they can provide the megawatts required at Boyer and are in discussions to do so.

**Ms FINLAY** - In the way that you considered the positive impact of the megawatts at Boyer. When I asked that previous question about MIs, it's not just MIs that are seeking large amounts of power at the moment, but with data centres, data factories, the capacity for Tasmania to deliver the power secured through Aurora for Firmus in the north of the state, one of a number of projects there. How confident, in the near term, are you about Tasmania's capacity to deliver those megawatts, and what type of assessment was done about the benefit of applying those megawatts to that project compared to other local manufacturing projects?

**Mr DUGAN** - So, what I would say is, we remain confident in terms of supplying energy contracts for those people who have energy contracts. There is no level of risk being escalated to me. What I think is important to recognise, and one of the great opportunities for us is the government's position that substantial new load brings with it substantial new generation and I think that's a key piece of how this all will work. We want more generation; we know more generation delivers more opportunity for investment here in the state and

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whether it be clean fuels or whether it be data or whether it be Bell Bay aluminium or Boyer wanting more energy or Liberty wanting more energy, hopefully.

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**Mr DUIGAN** - Those would be broader government considerations. We would look at, I assume, a range of things in terms of data which would seem to be the rapidly emerging large load. There is work that's happening here at a state level, there's work that's happening at a national level about expectations on data centres and what their responsibilities to jurisdictions will be and are and certainly, for us, we would have a list of requirements that any data centre loads would need to fulfil.

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- improve the overall security and stability of the energy grid, including by enhancing demand flexibility and opportunities for peak load management; and,
- appropriate sharing of consumption data.

I was recently at a ministerial council meeting on energy where jurisdictions agreed data centres should invest in additional renewable generation and firming in their state of operation to fully offset their electricity demand, and provide flexibility demand services to avoid additional costs.

So we would see those large loads being ultimately beneficial to the grid.

**Mr BAYLEY** - When it comes to Firmus and their data centre, what conversations have you had regarding their expansion beyond just St Leonards, into the other sites across the state?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Certainly aware of stage 2 which is at Bell Bay, which is a substantially, as I understand it, larger development, which would have an energy demand of close to 300 megawatts, as I understand it, again relying on my memory. And then subsequently, Wesley Vale, I think there's stage 3, which is somewhat -

**Mr BAYLEY** - Have you made commitments around power capacity, or the ability to supply power? Have you given encouraging statements?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Certainly there have been conversations between Firmus and Hydro Tasmania and obviously Aurora. I've had the opportunity to chat to Firmus, and understand their approach as it relates to power, and where they see their position in the grid. They're developing their policy. I would say that it broadly is in alignment with what we would see as their place in the infrastructure.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Would you see it appropriate for Hydro? You know, Hydro have said there's more than enough to power multiple AI centres, data facilities, et cetera. Would you see it appropriate for Hydro to go into a power provision agreement with very favourable terms, you know, akin to the major industrials, for those data centres? Is that something from a policy perspective you would be supportive of? Or should it always be at market price?

**Mr DUIGAN** - It's certainly not something that is on my desk at the moment. An ask of that nature is not something that I have seen to this point.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Is it something that you've considered though?

**CHAIR** - Professor Razay.

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**Prof RAZAY** - Thank you very much. I probably will follow on the Firmus AI factories in St Leonards. One of the major concerns is the high consumption of energy, and also water, but the energy required. You've just mentioned about the stage 2, probably 300 MW. Correct me if I'm wrong. Like 100 MW: that means it's like the energy used by thousands of households, or major industry. So there is a like a major demand on Hydro. And that is always a concern with the expansion in the future, about whether they are confident enough to provide a supply of energy today?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Professor Razay. You know, as I am aware, Aurora and Firmus have struck a limited-time supply contract for St Leonards. And that is being backed as again, as I'm advised, by a load-following contract from Hydro Tasmania. There is no concerns being raised to me by either party that they have no capacity to meet the contractual obligations. The total load that Firmus brings to the state is something that will need to be backed by the support of new renewable energy generation in the state.

**Prof RAZAY** - They state, as well, that all the energy, 100 per cent, will be clean energy. So my question: some time, if there is an outage of energy, what's the backup for them? Would they have a backup like other sources of energy? Just in case if there is more demand for energy?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Typically you would see in all data centres, a very high proportion of backup on site. They install lots of, as I understand it, diesel generation and battery storage, I think. So, they do have backup. Obviously, that that's not their preference to run it. It's much more expensive to run that, but typically they would have some level of backup generation.

**Prof RAZAY** - Are you concerned - you just mentioned about diesel energy - whether it will have impact on air quality of the local community?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Look, as I would say, diesel, if they were to use that - and if that is their plan, and I should say that I'm not actually aware of what the backup generation proposed by Firmus is, I must admit, off the top of my head.

**Ms FINLAY** - Sounds like it's diesel.

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister: I don't think we're aware of those details. I would expect that in the first instance there would be some substantial capacity for uninterruptible power supply; that would generally be batteries, but that would be really an issue for Firmus with their design and how they would operate. If they are selling it as green-powered, then I would suggest that they'd be working on batteries, but that would certainly be - it's not a design issue that we would be across, that level of detail.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, along that line, all these - the industry - the AI industry is talking about renewable energy, and therefore a substantial amount of renewable energy is needed going forward and we know that that's the future of Tasmania with our hydro, of course, backing it up. I understand that the energy projects, they have to go through stringent regulatory and environmental approvals, which occurs both from the state's perspective and from the federal perspective, but it's important, of course - and my question is: what's the government doing to support projects through these processes and what steps will be taken to ensure that these processes are streamlined as much as possible so that they're not caught up in too much red tape, as we call it?

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**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, indeed, thank you, Mr Shelton. I recognise the extensive approvals processes for new renewable energy projects and they can add a great deal of complexity for developers. While it's essential that we have robust and independent regulatory processes, it's also important that we're making sure that the current processes are not chilling investment in our state. We want to see more generation here on-island to meet our renewable energy goals and to deliver the energy we need for our growing economy. That's why we're taking action on providing better coordination and clearer pathways for investors so we can help companies more easily navigate Tasmania's strong planning and environmental approvals processes.

A key part of this is the Renewable Energy Approval Pathway, which provides tailored support to proponents throughout their development journey. We've established a dedicated case-management service for proponents with government, boosted regulatory capacity across key approvals agencies, and facilitated strong engagement between agencies, regulators, and with the Australian Government. All renewable projects in Tasmania automatically qualify for the major projects pathway, streamlining assessment for these projects. An interagency group has been established to resolve cross-agency issues and manage timeframes, and case-management services are available to all major transmission and generation projects. The service is highly valued by proponents and delivering results, as evidenced by recent successes in the capital investment scheme. This program is a great example of how we're delivering our renewable energy agenda and delivering for Tasmania.

**Ms FINLAY** - My committee colleague asked a question around a contract, and you said that hasn't come to my desk. My question is: with energy agreements, whether it be with data factories, whether it be our major industrials, do elements of those decisions come to you as minister?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Not typically.

**Ms FINLAY** - No. So, it seems weird that you made that comment about it not coming to your desk. If Aurora Energy have entered into an energy contract with Firmus - and previously we talked about the process that you undertake with assessment, modelling around MI power deals - what is the connection between Aurora's decision-making solely on price - when asked about the requirements that you've developed here locally, all you spoke about was cost contract price, very sort of management topics; you didn't talk about return to community. What is the connection between Aurora's decision on price and government expectation about how our valuable megawatts are used, and the returns of those megawatts to Tasmanians?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think that is an important question and one that we - as I say, and as I have outlined, putting framework around, you know -

**Ms FINLAY** - Isn't it a bit late that you would put a framework around a significant question when there's already been a contract entered into; 104 of our precious megawatts have already been transacted with an entity without, as you have now said, an understanding of the benefits to the community. We know that a megawatt-hour invested in a major industrial provides certain number of jobs and supply-chain benefits to Tasmania. We don't know the same thing about this agreement. How is it that you would allow a government entity to enter into a contract without that work being done?

**Mr DUIGAN** - So as I say, it is, as I understand it, a time-limited contract for a relatively short period of time for Firmus.

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**Ms FINLAY** - So that means it's okay to have entered into that without doing the work first, minister?

**Mr DUIGAN** - And as I say, there are a range of things that we will expect any people building data here in the state to comply with, and Firmus will be no different.

**Ms FINLAY** - So to be clear: this is not about compliance, it's not about management, it's not about contract. We're talking about precious and valuable and scarce resources of our megawatt-hours in Tasmania. Where they are used in other sites, manufacturing, there are local jobs, there are local supply chains, there's local investment and benefit from that. So, you could, for instance, call that a return per megawatt-hour to Tasmania. My question is: at what point was Aurora required to consider that when entering into a contract simply on price, or are you confirming today that that work hasn't happened and there has been no consideration of a return to Tasmania per megawatt-hour?

**Mr DUIGAN** - So you know, I would think if you happen to head up to St Leonards Road and have a look at Firmus and the building that is going on there and the very large workforce that is on site there from Gradco, and understand that this is a multibillion-dollar investment into, you know, part of the state that you represent and the many, many jobs that are going to be there, and there will be a short-term -

**Ms FINLAY** - So let's not be condescending, minister. There's a difference between construction benefit and ongoing benefit. The power contract is post-construction. What is the benefit to Tasmanians and what expectation was there that Aurora consider that when determining a price? Don't be condescending.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. There is a very real benefit to Aurora contracting to Firmus.

**Ms FINLAY** - Could you please outline that?

**Mr DUIGAN** - There is a multibillion-dollar investment into a Firmus Southgate stage 1 at St Leonards.

**Ms FINLAY** - What are the megawatt-hour returns to the community on that energy that's been provided?

**Mr BAYLEY** - Thank you, Chair. I want to continue with this line of questioning in relation to the connection of Firmus to the grid and this contract. A Greens motion in the House of Assembly passed and we had a range of information tabled in the Chamber, and one of those was a letter from the Treasurer that seemingly indicated that a business case had not been worked up and presented for Firmus for their development, and it went on to say that in some cases if a project is exempted, that's okay for some reason. Can you confirm whether a business case actually was presented to the government in relation to this power contract to, you know, I guess to underpin these claims you have of multibillion-dollar contracts and benefits; and if not, was an exemption granted, and why?

**Mr DUIGAN** - My understanding is a business case was provided to the government, to Treasury, and no exemption has been provided.

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**Mr BAYLEY** - The Treasurer's letter seems to indicate very clearly that it wasn't. So, I just want to, I guess, test you again and make sure that you're comfortable with that answer. The Treasurer's letter, in this bulk of documents that was tabled in parliament, seems to indicate that there was not a business case and that that may be acceptable if an exemption is applied for and, of course, later granted. So, can I just test again that you're comfortable with that answer, that a fully worked-up business case was handed down? And, I guess, if so, are you able to table it, understanding, of course, there would possibly be elements that need to be redacted?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. I will just seek some advice on the basis that I may not have actually been here at the time that all that was happening, but - so there was a letter provided to Treasury and then subsequently a -

**Ms FINLAY** - Business cases are simple these days.

**Mr DUIGAN** - So, TasNetworks had to provide some network upgrades; perhaps, Sean, you could [inaudible] translation.

**Mr TERRY** - Yes. Through you, minister, if I understand, when you refer to the business case, I'm aware that under the capital investment guidelines, which Treasury manages, the GBEs have to submit a capital investment proposal. So, I think it's above \$10 million, the threshold. So, that was submitted through that normal process. Treasury did the assessment in accordance with its capital investment guidelines and that was considered to meet the guidelines. That's a pretty regular standard process for any capital investment from our GBEs. It's not in relation to the contract with Aurora; it's in relation to that capital investment.

**Mr BAYLEY** - How much is that capital investment?

**Mr TERRY** - I don't know.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Would you take that on notice?

**Mr TERRY** - I am happy to, through the minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - The capital investment via TasNetworks?

**Mr BAYLEY** - TasNetworks capital investment to connect Firmus - this is, obviously. Are you saying, Mr Terry, that a business case was provided by TasNetworks in relation to that capital investment?

**Mr TERRY** - If I understand, yes, that's the normal process. They must submit a proposal and that needs to be assessed by Treasury. We don't do this. This is a Treasury responsibility, but that is my understanding through that capital investment process, yes.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Understanding there may be elements of it that need to be redacted, is it something, minister, that you're prepared to table for the committee's benefit?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, Treasurer's responsibility, so I'd need to seek some advice on that one.

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**Mr BAYLEY** - You're happy to take that on notice?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I'm happy to seek some advice.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Well, just before you go on Chair, I mean, how does that advice come back to me? You either take it on notice, and then you have got advice and you can't table it.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Potentially, you could ask the Treasurer?

**Mr BAYLEY** - I'm sure we can do that, but I'm asking you as energy minister, you're responsible for TasNetworks.

**Mr DUIGAN** - But I'm not responsible for -

**Mr BAYLEY** - But it is a TasNetworks document, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I take your point, but it's somewhat peripheral to me. You will be in front of the Treasurer?

**Mr BAYLEY** - We will be in front of the Treasurer, of course, but I'm asking you as the responsible minister for TasNetworks.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley, we will move on; it's asked and answered.

**Mr GARLAND** - Minister, you've stated that any changes to the Marinus route would lead to substantial cost increases, but Project Marinus has been nothing but a series of cost increases which could lead to TasNetworks exceeding \$4 billion in peak debt. Has your office, TasNetworks, Hydro Tasmania or State Growth undertaken a cost comparison of the preferred Burnie to Hazelwood Marinus route, and the Sheffield to Hazelwood route, and can you provide a table with up-to-date costs comparing the construction of the western end of the North West Transmission Developments between Burnie and Nook versus undergrounding Marinus Link straight to Sheffield substation at Dalwood Road, Nook - a viable alternate route that was included in the original Marinus Link selection report in 2021?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, I appreciate the question. What I would say is that in all of my time with this portfolio the work around site selection, and routing, has been done and I have not had an involvement with alternate routes or the original route selection. What I would say is that, and as I've said previously, I think any changes to route or either end of the project now would be a substantial delay. That would run us into converter station delays, and cable delays, which essentially would see the project end. We are building it in its current setup, along its current route, and that's where we are at.

In terms of, risk to government, it's really important we all recognise that Tasmania's equity position in terms of Marinus Link, the undersea cable part, which I think most people would agree is where most of the cost-risk of the entire project sits. Our equity position is capped. Our \$103 million that we have spent previously when this was a TasNetworks project is our equity. We will not be contributing further equity to Marinus Link, the undersea cable, that will be at the risk of the Australian and Victorian governments.

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**Mr GARLAND** - I have got one further question. If Marinus Link or MLPL, which is majority-owned by the federal and Victorian government, can pay for the 90 kilometres of cable undergrounding in Victoria, why can't they pay for 20 kilometres of cable undergrounding in Tasmania? Why should Tasmanians pay hundreds of millions for 50 kilometres of new overhead transmission line for the western half of stage 1 of the North West Transmission Developments?

**Mr DUIGAN** - There are a couple of things. The undergrounding in Victoria is basically, as I understand it, on the basis that is the DC portion of Marinus Link, going underground, and that is a fairly standard procedure for DC high-voltage connectors. They, you know, you'll run them underground for as long as you can. It should be noted that there are substantial impacts on landowners for having the undergrounding of a big DC connector running through their properties. You can't graze on top of them or run pivots on top of them. As I understand it, it is a fenced off easement. And the other aspect of your question was: and why shouldn't Victorians and Australian government pay? It's basically because the North West Transmission Developments is an augmentation of our on-island transmission network which serves Tasmania. You know, it gives us the ability to support industry, to support, you know, jobs and investment, to support more renewable energy in the state, and it has great benefit for the state of Tasmania.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, just to change direction a little bit: the recent fuel crisis has raised real concerns within our community and with the global conflict, with the conflict in the Middle East still ongoing, it has really highlighted the importance of energy security, and of course, sovereignty. So, minister, what are you doing to ensure Tasmania has energy sovereignty now? And into the future.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks for the question, Mr Shelton. Yes, recent global events have highlighted just how important energy sovereignty is, not just to Tasmania, but to Australia as a whole. On the electricity side, I'm really pleased to be able to say that Tasmania is in a great space when compared to many jurisdictions. We have incredible energy sovereignty thanks to our hydro system and already we have a reliable and diverse generation system with no major plant closures ahead of us, as we've discussed, like other jurisdictions. I'm also pleased to confirm our water storages are currently in a strong position for this time of year with 40.3 per cent total energy and storage as of today, which is 11.9 per cent above the prudent storage level. But, as you know, we need to be looking toward the future and this is why we continue to progress Marinus Link and other generation projects. Clean fuels like green hydrogen and methanol produced on-island will further reduce resilience on imported fuels, and, of course, further uptake of electric vehicles will support individual household's energy sovereignty. We're laying the groundwork of all these through the development of a clean-fuels strategy and our existing renewable hydrogen action plan, our transport emissions reduction and resilience plan, and that takes our system to a more robust circumstance going forward.

**Ms FINLAY** - Fascinated, minister, in your response to previous questions around Firmus, and perhaps a naive comment that you know the benefit to Tasmania is that it's a billions of dollars worth of investment. I mean you understand that just because someone's project is worth billions of dollars doesn't mean that's the return to Tasmania. My particular line of questioning is to understand whether you have given any consideration or are across the relevant benefit to Tasmanians about the use of our megawatts. So for instance, the jobs and supply chains at Boyer or Bell Bay Aluminium or Liberty compared to the jobs and supply-chain benefits into Tasmania at, say, the Firmus site in St Leonards. Once fully

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commissioned, can you share with the committee the number of jobs that will be onsite and the dollars invested into the Tasmanian economy through local supply chains?

**Mr DUGAN** - Thank you, and that's probably a question best put to Minister for Business and Industries, however, noting we have Shane in the room who sits across a number of those committees, you may have something to say, Shane, in that regard?

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister, just in a broad sense the different types of industries have different levels of different types of economic benefit back into the community, whether they are direct jobs, indirect jobs, supply chains, and the pricing of power to a more traditional major industrial reflects that. They are, that's quite different to the pricing to industry generally and without going into specifics that the pricing of power into data centres is a different pricing structure.

**Ms FINLAY** - And a net outcome to Tasmania, there is a benefit - from what I'm hearing you say is that the government might take a benefit in terms of a price in a contract that might support the Budget, or the community might take a benefit in terms of the investments in the community through jobs and supply chains. Can you explain relatively the net outcome of benefits to Tasmanians from megawatt hours being used for instance at Bell Bay Aluminium versus megawatt hours that might be used at this data factory?

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister, I wouldn't attempt to reflect the differences between not only Bell Bay Aluminium and Firmus, but also across the major industrials. They are all very different and complex - just to say that they are all different in what they return and how they return that. I think it would be very challenging to, in this committee as we sit here now, compare two vastly different types of industry.

**Ms FINLAY** - I will take that question differently then because I appreciate what you're saying, and I understand that it is complex. However, you said that there's a different benefit to Tasmania through the price of a data factory and implied that that was a positive thing for Tasmania. What I'm trying to understand without any opportunity to interrogate the price there, do you see that there is an equivalent benefit to Tasmanians and the Tasmanian economy on the price contract at a data factory compared to a price at manufacturing, it might not be just our major industrials, but generally across our manufacturing suite of businesses in Tasmania to Tasmanians.

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister. In a general sense that the way you prefaced your question is exactly right: that there is a different kind of benefit, and I would suggest that they would all be roughly equivalent.

**Mr DUGAN** - Even in the major industrials, there is a great variance in terms of megawatt hours per FTE and supply chain.

I think the other interesting thing about data and the AI opportunity that lays before us is what will be the flow-on benefits into the state and what are the supply chain opportunities and what are the allied business opportunities that will come from these investments. I think there are opportunities for the state.

**Ms FINLAY** - That's the question, minister. Could you outline some of those jobs and opportunities please?

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**Mr DUIGAN** - There are obviously opportunities that come with investment.

**Ms FINLAY** - But making sweeping statements doesn't give specifics to Tasmanians. Where you say that there will be benefits. Could you please outline what some of those are?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I'm sure there will be benefits.

**Ms FINLAY** - You cannot at this committee making sweeping statements of benefits and then not back it up with fact. You just said that there will be supply-chain benefits to Tasmania.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I note your lack of support -

**Ms FINLAY** - Here he comes again.

**Mr DUIGAN** - - for Firmus and for the data centre opportunity in Tasmania.

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm not against.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Clearly, you're on the record as being against this.

**Ms FINLAY** - You know that that's not true because I went into the Chamber and corrected the record because I misheard Mr Ellis.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I note your lack of support for these investments.

**Ms FINLAY** - Don't mislead the committee, minister. My question is clear. You have made a sweeping statement about the benefits. I would like you to give specifics.

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay, please let the minister answer.

**Ms FINLAY** - Could he give specifics to his comment please, Chair?

**CHAIR** - I can't order the minister; I can't put words in his mouth.

**Mr DUIGAN** - As Shane has mentioned, there are jobs per megawatt hour, that's a metric. There are a number of metrics that we would look at. I think we are all very early into this data centre AI piece.

**Ms FINLAY** - So, you don't know what sweeping benefits there will be? You either know or you don't, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - We will continue to look at the load opportunities here in the state.

**Ms FINLAY** - What are the benefits to Tasmanians?

**Mr DUIGAN** - We will continue to resource them appropriately.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley.

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**Mr BAYLEY** - Thank you, Chair. I let that go because that is a fascinating conversation and I do note that you're refusal to answer the fact and put on the record your view on the benefits. I would have thought that wouldn't be too hard.

I'll leave that there because I actually want to go back to the Hampshire to Burnie transmission line. When it was split off the rest of the North West Transmission Developments, TasNetworks said that it was in stage 2, but if there was a go decision on the second Marinus, which obviously hasn't happened, if there was a connection application or if there was an increase in energy demand, it could be brought forward. Obviously, the Budget has identified a significant risk, a \$50 million risk with the government having to underwrite this particular transmission loan.

I've heard from, I think, Mr Terry in that previous exchange that there's only one interested party left being Robbins Island and ACEN with their Robbins Island Jim's Plain Development. Can I just ask again really clearly: has there been a connection application received in relation to connect to the Hampshire substation, or has there been an application for additional demand? Is there an increased demand?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, there's certainly been, you know, conversations about -

**Mr BAYLEY** - The question wasn't about conversations. I know you have lots of conversations, minister. I've asked you whether there's a connection application.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Connection application, and we need to, you know, that's a question for TasNetworks, as to whether there has been, you know, because the connection application is a quite a specific instrument.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Are you happy to take that on notice? Noting you're the minister for TasNetworks.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yeah, I'm aware of that.

**Ms PINTO** - Through you, minister. I've been advised there's been a connection inquiry.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Okay, can you confirm that's not a connection application?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I can confirm that's not a connection application.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Right. Can I ask, so there's a \$50 million risk identified in the Budget. That's for the Hampshire to Burnie transmission line. There's also a substation that would need to be built at Hampshire to enable all of this, \$50 million. Can I ask what is the most recent cost estimate for this part of the project, Burnie to Hampshire transmission line plus Hampshire substation? Is it \$50 million or is it more than that?

**Mr DUIGAN** - My understanding is it's more than that.

**Mr BAYLEY** - How much more than that?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I don't have an up to date, maybe I do. Around \$200 million, I'm advised.

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**Mr BAYLEY** - If the government's going to underwrite it to the extent of \$50 million, where would TasNetworks get the balance of the \$150 million to upgrade that line, should we receive a connection application or any increase in energy demand?

**Mr DUIGAN** - So in the case that you are talking about which would be the line being sponsored by private developers, it would come from private developers, proponents.

**Mr BAYLEY** - But you're saying you can underwrite it to the tune of \$50 million. You're saying that the balance of the \$150 million would only come from the proponent.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yeah.

**Mr BAYLEY** - You would rule out -

**Mr DUIGAN** - And again, as Mr Terry mentioned, there's a threshold that, you know, the private development of that line would need to reach before the government underwriting position was actioned.

**Mr BAYLEY** - And that's the threshold that Mr Terry - you've taken on notice and you'll provide us with?

**Mr TERRY** - Sorry, just through you, minister. Just with transmission, it depends if the lines progressed as an unregulated line or a regulated line. So, unregulated, yes, it's the proponents or the beneficiaries of that line who pay for that cost. If it's a regulated network, just like any kind of part of the regulated network, that cost is recovered from customers subject to the net market benefit.

**Mr BAYLEY** - But you've identified that this was proposed to be a designated network asset.

**Mr TERRY** - That was one of the pathways? Yes, that's right.

**Mr BAYLEY** - One of the pathways. So, is there a confirmed pathway for this, whether it's a designated network asset or whether it's a regulated asset?

**Mr TERRY** - No.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Can you confirm, if it was a regulated asset and we contributed \$50 million, would that mean that the government contributes \$50 million upfront to build this transmission line?

**Mr DUIGAN** - If it were a regulated asset.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Well, it would be built as a designated network asset in the first place and then it could be applied to be regulated asset as part of TasNetworks. So is there a situation, and perhaps this is for Mr Terry, minister, is there a situation where we build this - well, is there a situation where we build this and contribute \$50 million to a \$200 million transmission line, and then it becomes a regulated asset and the cost of that transmission line is then passed on to Tasmanian customers, because that's what a regulated asset does?

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**Mr DUIGAN** - I think the regulations do contemplate a circumstance like that.

**Mr TERRY** - Yeah, through you, Minister. Yep, that's entirely possible. Any transmission asset can start off as an unregulated asset and then be included in the network's regulated asset base subject to a conversion process. Pretty similar to what we've done with Basslink in recent terms, but if there was a capital contribution up initially that would be offset against the RAB, so you can't recover that cost twice. You can't recover it off through the government as a capital contribution and then put that cost onto customers. So, the AER would offset that initial capital contribution.

**Mr BAYLEY** - And the balance of the \$150 million, that's not from the private network, is that from the private generator, that's what you're saying, there's a \$50 million government contribution. I guess the balance of a \$200 million investment would come from the proponent. Does that get recovered via the asset being designated as a regulated asset?

**Mr TERRY** - The 150: it'll be up to the AER. They would actually work out the regulated asset base at the time of conversion. Once again, you know, similar to what we've done with Basslink, they look at, once that asset's been operating for a while, they'll look at, in terms of, what do you need to recover that cost over the longer term, and then you'll probably get a reset regulated asset base. So, it it's not a simple answer. It'll be up to the AER at the time of the conversion.

**Mr BAYLEY** - And, minister, \$150 million dollars of -

**CHAIR** - Sorry, Mr Bayley. Professor Razay.

**Prof RAZAY** - Honourable minister, one of the major concerns, when we embarked on large projects like the Firmus AI factory in St Leonards, its impact on the local environment, and the health of the community. Some of the concerns, for example, might be noise impact, because there is a continuous low-frequency humming from industrial air conditioning and server fans. We know that can have an impact on their health: stress and anxiety, headache, sleep disturbance, et cetera. Use of the factory can generate a lot of heat, and that's why it uses a lot of water to cool it down. So, as always, the community might be concerned about the impact on that temperature of the area. And the third one, as it was already mentioned: air pollution. If there is an outage of the energy, then it might use these generators. All these are really - it does concern the community. My question is, have we conducted communication with the community for reassurance? Because that's quite important for a large project like this.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks, Professor Razay. I will certainly. My expectation is that this development, like any large development in Tasmania, would be subject to all of the regulatory approvals that would be required. So you know, council will have what it needs to provide, and in terms of noise pollution, and other aspects, all of those things: it would be my expectation, is that they would be taken into consideration.

Firmus is interesting from the perspective of water, in that it's not a particularly heavy water user. It uses a different cooling method, as I'm advised. But, Shane, if you've got anything more to add to that answer, in terms of how this would be assessed?

**Mr GREGORY** - Through you, minister, only that, I think, professor, all the issues you've raised are all things that would be considered through a normal planning process on any

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development. They wouldn't be things that we would, the government, I would think, would seek to pull out of that process into a different consideration. But, they would certainly be all of the issues that council as the planning authority would be looking into and putting conditions on.

**Prof RAZAY** - Just like to confirm that there will be thorough community engagement, if to address any concern.

**Mr TERRY** - Well again, it would be a council planning piece of work, and perhaps not necessarily in the realm of government.

**CHAIR** - Mr Shelton.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thanks, Chair. Minister, Basslink and Basslink regulations have been mentioned a few times this morning, in the discussions, and the Tasmanian government has advocated for years regarding the regulation of the Basslink interconnector. And I, like many others, were pleased to see when the Australian Energy Regulator made the decision to support the conversion, earlier this year. Could you please outline what the timeframe is for regulation and what this means, functionally, for Tasmania's energy users.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, thank you, Mr Shelton. The Australian Energy Regulator's decision to approve the conversion of Basslink to a regulated asset was a welcome outcome. Following the final review determination in February this year, APA announced Basslink will convert to become a regulated interconnector, effective 1 July 2026, which is fast approaching. Functionally, what this means, is that from next month, Basslink will return to having open flows of energy, which has not been occurring this year. Historically, Basslink and Hydro have had an agreement, whereby, in exchange for a services fee paid for by Hydro, Basslink would ensure the full capacity of the link is available at all times. This agreement expired last July. And since then the link has been operating under a merchant model. This is an analogous to a toll road and has overall reduced the flows of energy across the link in the past year. However, under the regulated model, this open flow is guaranteed at all times without the need for a contractual agreement with the market participant like Hydro. Instead, costs of the interconnector will be split between Victoria and Tasmania, and this means for the first time Victoria will pay for its share of the interconnector it benefits from: 75 per cent of Victorian customers, Tasmanian customers 25 per cent.

With Victoria paying its share, the cost borne by Tasmania will be less. This is a positive outcome for Tasmanian customers and regulation ensures a transparent, reliable and efficiently utilised interconnector that supports market stability, energy security and places downward pressure on wholesale energy prices.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, in an answer to a previous question, you said that I was against data factories and/or Firmus. That's not true, and I ask you to withdraw that, please. Just on the record, on *Hansard*, that it's not true. Could you please withdraw those statements from the committee?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I haven't seen those statements, have I? Alright, I'll withdraw.

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**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you. Minister, I'm interested in understanding the energy needs down at Macquarie Point precinct of the entirety of the precinct. I'm just wondering what the current total forecast is for the energy demand at Macquarie Point.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you and, yes, aware, I think TasNetworks was recently in receipt of a connection application for Macquarie Point. TasNetworks continues to work with Macquarie Point Development Corporation on the stadium project, just as it does for all its connections. There is a clear process in place to work through what's needed in terms of electricity infrastructure to support the development.

To deliver the stadium, a connection will likely be made from the North Hobart substation using capacity in the existing network, and TasNetworks, as I mentioned, has received an application for the stadium connection. Previous work considered one feed from the network to power the whole MPDC precinct. The new application is now several connection points, which provides greater flexibility for supply from the network.

Since the new application, TasNetworks and MPDC have agreed on functional scope of works and the next steps are a connection report eight to 10 weeks from engagement that will provide a potential solution and, once agreed on the potential solution, it will move to a detailed design, which is a three- to six-month process and, at that point, when we have the detailed design, costs will be apparent.

**Ms FINLAY** - You were particular there. You've said that they've broken down the project into multiple pieces and that there is, in your words, capacity in North Hobart. I know that there's not capacity localised for the entire precinct. I'm interested that they've broken it down. My question, though, was what's the current total forecast of energy demand for the entire precinct. I'm interested in the stadium, but also the car parking and the actual energy plant itself, housing, commercial users, TasPorts, TasWater. What's the overall energy demand for the entire precinct?

**Mr DUIGAN** - That's not information I have with me.

**Ms FINLAY** - Does anybody know the answer?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Presumably the connection application would be looking at those kinds of things.

**Ms FINLAY** - As you indicated to me, they're breaking down the connection application. There would be a curious request, you've said that it was broken down into [inaudible] parts.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think originally considered as a single path from North Hobart, now considered as multiple connection points.

**Ms FINLAY** - Can you tell me in that original application what the overall demand is for Macquarie Point precinct.

**Mr DUIGAN** - No.

**Ms FINLAY** - As energy minister does it worry you whether we have enough or not enough connections to be able to provide for the entire precinct.

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**Mr DUIGAN** - I am very happy that TasNetworks and Macquarie Point will be able to sort energy into the precinct.

**Ms FINLAY** - Who pays for the costs of delivering the energy into the precinct?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would imagine that will be the developer of the site.

**Ms FINLAY** - It's not just a stadium. There's multiple users and there will be multiple needs for power at the end, including TasWater, TasPorts, the actual energy infrastructure itself. So, who pays for the initial - to ensure there is enough energy for the entire precinct?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I've detailed what's happening in terms of -

**Ms FINLAY** - It doesn't give any answers, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think it probably does. It describes how a connection application has been received, how that connection application is being looked at, and what are the next steps -

**Ms FINLAY** - But you can't tell me for how much energy?

**Mr DUIGAN** - in terms of the project and the design to understand the answers to those questions which you asked.

**Ms FINLAY** - Do you have any concerns about the capacity to deliver energy to the entire precinct?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No.

**Ms FINLAY** - And are you expecting there to be costs to Tasmanians for the delivery of that energy to the entire precinct?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Chair, thank you. I'll just continue on that because I'm very interested in this line of inquiry. You said there that a connection report and a functional design and costs will be developed. Can you tell me how long each one of those reports will take to commission and complete? I understand there are significant amounts of work there.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think we talked about three to six months, did we not for the -

**Mr BAYLEY** - For the connection report?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, is that what I - I'm vaguely loath to open the folder again that far back, but let me have a look. So, the connection report, eight to 10 weeks from engagement that will provide a potential solution.

**Mr BAYLEY** - They've been engaged?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes. Once agreed on a potential solution, it will move to detailed design, a three- to six-month process and only then do costs become apparent.

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**Mr BAYLEY** - So, only then do costs become apparent. Can you confirm whether the cost of connecting the stadium to the network is part of the \$1.13 billion?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would say that those would be matters best examined with the minister for Macquarie Point.

**Mr BAYLEY** - No, no, I'm asking you minister because you're in charge of TasNetworks. If it's not borne by the proponent, it would be borne by TasNetworks and potentially us as a regulated asset. It's very pertinent to you as the Minister for Energy and Renewables. Is the cost of connecting the Macquarie Point stadium to the grid via TasNetworks part of the \$1.13 billion? You've said that the costs have not yet been estimated. That's another three to six months away. I would assume that it's not part of the \$1.13 billion because it's still three to six months away before we know how much it will cost. But can you confirm whether it is accounted for in the \$1.13 billion?

**Mr DUIGAN** - That would be a question for the minister for Macquarie Point.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Are you prepared to take it on notice, minister?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No.

**Mr BAYLEY** - You're obviously unprepared to take it on the record here.

**Mr DUIGAN** - It's not in my portfolio responsibility, so, I won't take that -

**Mr BAYLEY** - It is minister.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley, it's been asked and answered.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I've outlined what the energy businesses will do in terms of the Macquarie Point stadium. That's what I've outlined and that's appropriate for me. In terms of the Macquarie Point side of things, that's a question for the appropriate minister.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Can you outline then whether the energy business is responsible for this cost of connecting the stadium to the grid?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I've said what I've got in terms of the process from here. What you're putting forward would be unusual, but -

**Mr BAYLEY** - As minister, what's your position? What would you advocate for in Cabinet? Would you advocate for -

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would advocate for doing the work in line with any other connection that you would be doing for a large complex development.

**Mr BAYLEY** - In any other connection for a large complex development, who would pay for that connection?

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister for sport, minister for energy, no idea.

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**Mr BAYLEY** - You don't want to answer it.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley, Ms Finlay. Mr Garland has the call.

**Mr GARLAND** - In April 2016, the Australian and Tasmanian governments commissioned a report into the feasibility of a second electricity interconnector between Tasmania and Victoria, undertaken by John Tamblyn. In May 2016, the Robbins Island wind farm was publicly announced. In April 2017, the Tamblyn report was released, recommending Smithton at the Tasmanian end of the interconnector. In November 2017, TasNetworks began work on the second interconnector business case. In the Tamblyn report, it was stated that Smithton has large wind power generation potential with a relatively high-capacity factor compared to wind power generation from other locations. Was the initial reason for a second interconnector between Tasmania and Victoria just to facilitate the Robbins Island wind farm project?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Again, I am not familiar with the reports which you're quoting. I don't know that anybody at the table has corporate knowledge going back that far; Sean you may have, but the Robbins Island wind farm is some distance from where Marinus comes ashore. I would have thought if the premise of your question were correct, that you might make it a little further down the coast. But, Sean, anything that you're able to add to that question?

**Mr TERRY** - Through you, minister. Yes, I'm aware of the report but I haven't looked at it for quite a while, so I can't comment on the conclusions it draws. But basically, where we are today has gone through a whole range of network planning, route selection, power system modelling, to get to the outcome about where we're progressing - both Marinus and the NWTD. So that work has gone through a whole lot of analysis, and I believe, consideration of a number of potential routes to develop the optimal pathway.

**Mr GARLAND** - Could we have a look at that report, take it on notice, and come back to me with that.

**Mr DUIGAN** - What's the actual?

**Mr GARLAND** - For the reason for the second interconnector. Was it to facilitate the Robbins Island wind farm project, and if you haven't read the report, maybe there'll be something in there?

**Ms PINTO** - Through you, minister. The Australian Energy Market Operator releases an integrated system plan, and I think it was referenced a little bit earlier during the session. The AEMO as a part of formulating that integrated system plan determines what they deem to be actionable projects that are important to the future of the National Electricity Market to ensure that efficient and benefits-deriving-to-consumers infrastructure is invested in. So, Marinus Link and the associated interconnectors on-island - so, both Marinus Link stage 1 and Marinus Link stage 2 and the associated interconnectors for that on-island - have been deemed by the Australian Energy Market Operator as what's called actionable projects that are really important for the future of the operation of the National Electricity Market. What that's recognising is that Tasmania has strategic value, it's of great benefit to the National Electricity Market. The minister referred earlier in the session to the value of long-duration storage that Tasmania delivers through its hydroelectric schemes. So that's probably the most pertinent document to refer to.

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**Mr DUIGAN** - Sorry, Vanessa, I'll just interrupt you there. The original Marinus business case, which dealt with a lot of those issues that you're talking about, you know site select and routing, and those sorts of things.

**Mr GARLAND** - One more question.

**Mr TERRY** - Sorry, can I just supplement that? That report is publicly available. So that was the original business case funded by ARENA and TasNetworks, which looked into the technical and economic feasibility of Marinus, so that's certainly available here.

**Mr GARLAND** - In Sandoval-Diez et al's February 2026 paper titled, 'Long-term Residential Magnetic Field Exposure and Neurodegenerative Disease Mortality', which was an 18-year nationwide cohort study in Switzerland, published in volume 208 of Environmental International, researchers followed more than 3.5 million adults for over 18 years, found that long-term residential exposure to extremely low frequency magnetic fields from high-voltage power lines was associated with higher dementia mortality risk in the general population. This peer-reviewed study has an important implication for public health, indicating guidelines that TasNetworks are relying on for its North West Transmission Developments need urgent review. In regards to the long-term study in Switzerland I refer to, will you direct TasNetworks to alter the North West Transmission Developments project route to bypass the Burnie suburbs of Downlands, Romaine and Havenview, to avoid all residents by at least 50 metres to minimise the risk of negative public health impacts.

**Mr DUIGAN** - No, I won't.

**Mr GARLAND** - You won't?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you Chair, and we've already mentioned the Middle East conflict, minister, and the global uncertainty around the situation of fuel supply. What action is the Tasmanian government taking to ensure Tasmanian communities continue to get the fuel that they actually need?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Shelton. Yeah, it's been, you know, front-of-mind for all of us, I suspect for a period of time and certainly here in the department. I'd like to take the opportunity to reassure the committee that Tasmania fuel supply remains secure and stable with no change to the overall position, and no statewide shortages. We have strong fuel reserves currently with around 104 days of petrol and 66 days of diesel as at the latest data, 26 May. However, I do recognise that global events are continuing to place pressure on fuel supply chains across the world and while Tasmania remains in a secure position, we're also taking a prudent and proactive approach to planning for all scenarios, with contingency planning underway.

The Tasmanian government took swift action in the beginning and we continue to remain focused on sensible, proactive and precautionary measures. This includes the passing of legislation in March to strengthen our existing fuel security framework, activating an incident management team, stepping up engagement with industry and the broader community, exploring options for a strategic fuel reserve and updating our Tasmanian Fuel Security Plan.

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The passage of the legislation has helped ensure a cooperative approach from the fuel companies on getting the data we need to plan for the pressures on the supply chain. We've continued to work closely with the Australian Government since the beginning and welcome the recent \$14.8 billion national Fuel Security and Resilience Package. Under the National Strategic Reserve powers over 650 megalitres of diesel has been procured, and we're seeking further details on the operational elements of the scheme as well as advocating for appropriate allocation for Tasmania, noting our position as an island off an island. This is a national issue, and it is having real impact on our communities, and we will continue to support Tasmanians and advocate for our state at the national level.

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm sure my colleague is going to follow up on those questions about your expectations of ministers, aware the costs will be covered for from those connections. I'm interested that it's almost without exception the people that I talk to who deal with TasNetworks about connections and energy infrastructure that they need for their investments, that there is always delays, there's reclassifications, there's all sorts of unexplained extra costs that go through the process. As minister, how confident are you that TasNetworks can deliver what is required for the precinct for the developments by their due dates?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Look, I would say I'm very confident. You know, there is engagement at this stage. There is, as I've outlined, you know, the timeframe by which the connection application will be processed and detailed design will be progressed, and that then puts us in a position to know and understand what it's going to cost and how it's going to be delivered. We have a runway, there are a number of years in terms of the stadium build. It is a very complex undertaking, there's no doubt about that, and energy supply is one of the complications. But you know TasNetworks, I have every confidence, will be able to deliver appropriate amount of energy to the site.

**Ms FINLAY** - Do you not have concerns raised by proponents in Tasmania about these challenges with TasNetworks? And if you do, do you raise those with TasNetworks?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I certainly do.

**Ms FINLAY** - You have. So people do explain to you that they have unknown extra costs, that they have delays, that they have reclassifications that impact their investment and delay, and sometimes stop their investment altogether? Are they things that are raised with you as a minister?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Oh, look, certainly from time to time I hear you know, as you would probably expect from a public-facing company like TasNetworks, there are a range of issues that people raise with me on occasions. We're able to provide help to those people and ask TasNetworks to take, you know, more of a look at something potentially. I would use the underground power situation which came to our attention a year or two ago in which TasNetworks were really proactive in helping us, along with the department, finding a solution for. Is it perfect? Probably not, but you know, that's what we seek.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, I'm really interested in the overall efficiencies that are being required across the entire state operations, particular to your portfolio areas. Can you please outline the saving targets that have been identified for your outputs, for your divisions, and business units? Can you outline any saving measures that have already been identified,

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particularly the grants programs and contracts that might be under review? Any election commitments, capital projects or service expansions that have been delayed, reduced or cancelled as a result of the operational efficiencies? And any briefings or correspondence or advice you've had about how these savings will be delivered?

**Mr DUIGAN** - So, as the budget papers say in relation to the Department of State Growth, significant machinery-of-government changes have been announced to better align the Tasmanian State Service with emerging service demands and, you know, central to those changes is the transformation of State Growth and the establishment of Building Tasmania and the realignment of economic development and destination economy functions.

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm interested in your particular business units.

**Mr DUIGAN** - The detailed design and final responsibilities and full financial impacts of restructured agencies are still being developed and that's particularly the case for the application of operational efficiencies from 27-28. The portfolio has been meeting prior years efficiency targets and putting in place workforce management principles following the 2024 hiring freeze. Shane, obviously is an area of great interest and work that you have been doing and perhaps for a greater level of detail to the question?

**Mr GREGORY** - Yes, minister, through you. Obviously the machinery-of-government change is a significant piece of work we're undertaking. There'll be a number of functions. The government's been very clear about moving out of the department as Building Tasmania is created. We will look at all the opportunities, particularly around centralisation of services, automation of services.

There'll be a number of things we'll be looking at there, some of those things we would be looking at regardless anyway, just as a business-as-usual approach. We'll be looking at our accommodation footprint and we'll just be looking for a whole range of things as we work our way through. We haven't cut any services or functions.

We're very much thinking through the operational efficiencies that need to be found and they will be found over a period of time, and a lot of those will evolve as we work through the machinery-of-government changes, but there are some things already there that we're looking at and the department had already been looking at, say, the accommodation footprint just, you know, consumables, general day-to-day running a business, how we can use technology more efficiently to provide some better outcomes as well. So, they're the sort of things we'll be working our way through.

**Ms FINLAY** - The efficiencies that are being expected are significant in number, I would suspect beyond what you've just listed there in terms of those things that you would consider, you know, usual course of business in terms of doing things well. I'm interested in the briefings that you've either received or that you've delivered either verbally or in writing around these operational efficiencies, conversations that you've had with the Premier, the Treasurer around this. What are the expectations that you have set? What are the expectations that have been set for you about your business units?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, you know, I think as Shane has mentioned, if you look at Department of State Growth as an example, I think there has been the request or EOI for

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voluntary redundancies, I think a target number of 250 positions was made and significant inroads into that have already been made.

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm asking specifically about your conversations, minister, and your expectations in this process.

**Mr DUIGAN** - You know, my expectation is that we do deliver good value for money for the Tasmanian taxpayer and, I think we need to look at our areas of priority and look at areas of spending and cut our cloth appropriately.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley.

**Ms FINLAY** - Will you table any of the correspondence, briefings or expectations that you've been given about operational efficiency?

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley

**Mr BAYLEY** - Chair.

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Thank you, Chair. I'm interested in going back to the Macquarie Point stadium. In August last year there was already a connections options report. In August 2025 there was a connections options report and indeed a functional scope document. So, are you saying that a functional design is still three to six months away, so we're talking well beyond August, that the whole electrification project of the Macquarie Point stadium site is at least a year behind what it otherwise would have been because there's been a change of approach? And what is the new electrification date for the Macquarie Point Stadium site?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think, I'm not sure a year ago, whether we had, you know, parliamentary approval for the Macquarie Point site. Noting, that I'm not trying to avoid your question in any way, shape or form, I can tell you previously there was a plan to consider feed from the network to power the whole MPDC precinct, so one feed-in line. That has now changed. The new application is now several connection points.

**Mr BAYLEY** - How many?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Several.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Is that two or three or?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Look again, it's not the level of detail, it's in fairness a fairly operational level of detail that you seek.

**Mr BAYLEY** - The previous functional options report had two particular new lines onto the site or into a substation at the site.

**Mr DUIGAN** - In terms of this level of detail, we'd need to ask TasNetworks or MPDC about their connection application. I'm sure you're able to do that. I don't think there would be anything particularly contentious about that. The next steps-

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**Mr BAYLEY** - Have you got advice there about the electrification date?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Let me see. The work includes considering when a capacity increase will be required to support additional needs for the CBD for the Wharf upgrades at Hobart, Port of Hobart and future activation of the Macquarie Point Precinct, EG car park, residential monitoring and planning for the changes needed across our electricity businesses as usual for Tasmania networks.

Look, I don't. I'm sure the Macquarie Point Development Corporation would have an understanding of when they would need to see various levels of electrification on site.

**Mr BAYLEY** - It sounds like we're talking two new lines from the North Hobart, at least two new, several, but at least two new lines from the North Hobart substation, the previous function -

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would take it to mean that it's not necessarily all coming from the North Hobart substation. I would say that probably taking it elsewhere -

**Mr BAYLEY** - Then there are new feeds. Previously there were two new feeds coming from the North Hobart substation. One went through the Glebe; one came down Campbell Street. I mean this is expensive business. You said before that for any large complex development this is pretty normal and, I would have thought, and is it your view that ordinarily these kind of connections are paid for by the proponent of those large complex developments, is that your understanding?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Certainly, I cannot only point to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and the minister who has responsibility for that would have a better level of understanding.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Would you as minister then, would you support TasNetworks having to pay for the connection - the two new or the several new feeders from whichever substations they may come from and a new substation if it's required. Would you as minister support TasNetworks paying for those and therefore it being a cost outside of the claimed \$1.13 billion for the stadium, would you consider them part of the stadium build or ancillary too?

**Mr DUIGAN** - TasNetworks is a highly regulated business, and its costs, as I say, overseen at a great level of detail by the regulator and it's only able to progress those types of things, assuming they fit within the scope of the regulations.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Would you support them being paid for? Would they be a regulated asset?

**Prof RAZAY** - How many jobs are going to be created by the Firmus AI factory around Launceston?

**Ms FINLAY** - Once it's operational.

**Prof RAZAY** - Once it's operational. It has been stated like for every 50 megawatts of capacity, it will generate 50 to 100 jobs. Now, if we by the end of stage 2, you stated today,

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there will be like a creation, well it will create 300 megawatts, are we expecting 150 to 300 jobs?

**Mr DUIGAN** -Alright, so stage 1, that's the St Leonards build with approximately 104 megawatts represents \$680 million in construction investment and is expected to generate around 50 ongoing direct jobs with broader supply-chain benefits. Additional future stages have been proposed and will be subject to approvals and infrastructure requirements; the company estimates stage 2 would involve approximately \$1.86 billion in construction investment and support, around 115 direct jobs and 280 for indirect operational jobs. And the project is expected to generate substantial construction activity and broader economic benefits for northern Tasmania over coming years. And I think that is very much in the absence of potential development of that particular supply chain in high-level tech.

**CHAIR** - Mr Garland, do you have a question?

**Mr GARLAND** - Oh, no.

**CHAIR** - Prof Razay, do you have another one?

**Prof RAZAY** - No, that's all right.

**CHAIR** - Mr Shelton.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you, Chair. I certainly have one. Minister, following the passing of the fuel legislation package earlier this year, can you please outline what impacts that's had on our management of fuel in Tasmania?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks Mr Shelton. The Petroleum Reporting (Miscellaneous Amendment) Bill 2026 was progressed as a sensible and precautionary legislative package to ensure we had the tools and information required to keep Tasmania's fuel supply secure. This legislation gave us stronger tools to keep fuel companies accountable, to protect customers and act decisively during supply risks or emergency. And although I was not here personally to see the legislation through, I do thank all members for giving this legislation priority consideration and I would say, as a point of interest, it has been very valuable in us getting visibility over the fuel supply chain and as much visibility into the future as we're able to get. The passage of the legislation has helped ensure a cooperative report approach from fuel companies on getting the data we need to plan for pressures in the supply chain.

Sean Terry is the director of Energy Planning and Energy Security Coordinator under the *Energy Co-ordination and Planning Act*, one of the amended acts on the bill. Is there anything further you that you'd like to add, Sean? I thank you for the work you've done. We remain in a good position, but I would make the point that it is still somewhat fluid.

**Mr TERRY** - Thank you, minister. No, I don't think I've got anything to add.

Yes, it has been a very valuable tool in our armoury. Also, it's established a really good working relationship with the fuel companies; very helpful. Now we're able to account for that. We're able to use that as a planning tool and we are publishing our fuel in stock every Friday also, so very useful.

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**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, Chair. Given that the development of energy projects to meet targets to meet the investments that are opening up as an opportunity as a result of Marinus Link, the data factory work that we're hearing, it seems surprising to me that the outputs under your area, Minister for Energy and Renewables, has a significant drop from the 2025-26 year to the 2029-30 year.

How do you explain your level of comfort? It's a critical drop in terms of your outputs, and given that there are these expectations of operational efficiencies, what are you expecting to be reshaped under your areas of responsibility to meet the reduction in these outputs?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, I appreciate the question. It is an area that I do think about because our energy agenda is so important to the state. I would point to the ongoing and continued funding of the renewable energy approvals pathway as a really strong and positive thing. I want to be supportive of the secretary as he and the department -

**Ms FINLAY** - It drops from \$25 million to \$4 million.

**Mr DUIGAN** - That's obviously reflective of a number of programs that are coming off

**Ms FINLAY** - And all the investment coming on.

**Mr DUIGAN** - but that's not to say there won't be future investments by government in other areas as new programs come to light, for example, what might replace the Energy Saver Loan Scheme which is not contemplated in the Budget as we speak.

**Ms FINLAY** - But the out-years contemplate that, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - They do. I think there has been a need for us to look at areas of spending. The really chunky bits of the energy portfolio, I think, in Treasury and General Finance, you know, where there is circa \$161 million for the North West Transmission Developments, those very large capital investments that we will make, that will facilitate the development and the achievement of our renewables energy agenda. That's notwithstanding the fact that we need to keep doing our business as usual and providing methods to encourage and support thinking around renewable energy services, hubs and renewable energy terminals. In the hydrogen space, again, there's a need to progress water into Bell Bay -

**Ms FINLAY** - So what you're doing is outlining all of the expectations, responsibilities and the load that will be carried by your area, but it drops to one-fifth of what is currently there now, in an area where energy has to grow for underpinning the economy. In the operational efficiencies line, it says that 'consideration will be given to minimise impacts of frontline services'. This doesn't guarantee that all of your services that support the development of energy economy in Tasmania. What advice have you received about risks of such a significant drop in those outputs to the services, the critical services required, to underpin the energy economy in Tasmania going forward?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would, again, point to the fact that I think the large majority of that drop in the out-years is around programs ending. But I'll point to Shane to talk more broadly.

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**Mr GREGORY** - Yes, minister. Through you, that statement is correct. As we see in every budget cycle, and every budget that's published, that throughout outputs, there is a drop off in the out-years of the forward Estimates.

**Ms FINLAY** - That's the reverse of what happens at Hydro.

**Mr GREGORY** - That's not unusual. That happens across every portfolio -

**Ms FINLAY** - And you're required, as a government, to contemplate what happens in those forward years, right? And so you know what is going to be needed. You have had 13 years to contemplate what is needed in the energy development in Tasmania going forward. So you will know the sorts of programs that are required to support either vulnerable Tasmanians, or small businesses, or a major industrial or new load coming on. How is it that you can expect that there's not going to be an impact in your capacity as a government, which isn't high, when you haven't done a great job at bringing on new generation, and supporting the economy with new energy projects. How is it that you expect to do better with less, with these operational efficiencies?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, I would point to, for example, our energy concessions. There is a large amount of money in the Budget for that: for vulnerable Tasmanians to be supported.

**Ms FINLAY** - Inflated Hydro dividends indicating to Tasmanians that they're likely to get renewable energy dividends. It's all false, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would also point to \$16.1 million in the Budget, which is there to support our direct-connected transmission customers to be shielded from any impacts of Project Marinus. So, there are a number of things in the Budget that are there, that support the energy portfolio; the actual delivery of the energy portfolio. I have great faith in the department to be able to consider what its priorities need to be - as we work forward.

**Ms FINLAY** - My question is what risks have been identified to you that you have discussed around -

**CHAIR** - Asked and answered.

**Ms FINLAY** - I am halfway through my question. How? He hasn't answered the question about risks.

**CHAIR** - You've had three. Three plus questions.

**Ms FINLAY** - Well the question was about risk. What risks are identified in that significant reduction in the outputs?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Look, as I said, the forward-year's outputs reflect largely the end of programs, and we will look -

**Ms FINLAY** - You think we can do better with less.

**Mr DUIGAN** - There is still the machinery-of-government changes that need to be finalised, bedded down - what that actually looks like, what our priorities are, and where we

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need to direct our funding. And I think, parliament has asked, and the people of Tasmania expect that we spend and make every dollar work as hard as it can.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Thank you, Chair. I think this is why the surplus in a couple of years' time is such a sham, because of exactly these issues. But, I wanted to go back, Chair, to -

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, just on that, I don't shy away from the issues.

**Ms FINLAY** - You don't shy away from the sham? He acknowledges the sham.

**Mr BAYLEY** - I know, but I guess we're hearing today that there's not enough money, and there's likely four projects -

**The committee suspended from 12.09 p.m. to 1 p.m.**

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### Sport

**CHAIR** - The time now being 1.00 p.m., the scrutiny of the Sport portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, names and positions for the benefit of *Hansard*.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Chair. With me at the table today is acting secretary, Department of State Growth, Shane Gregory. Next to him is Brett Stewart, deputy secretary, Creative Industries, Sport and Visitor Economy, and I should point out, we have James Avery in the back, chief executive officer of Stadiums Tasmania, and to my left, Amanda Lovell, my chief of staff.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Sport is one-and-a-half hours. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you very much, Chair. I'm pleased to be here as Minister for Sport, and I recognise the vital role sport and active recreation can play in improving physical and mental health and building community connectedness and social skills. The Tasmanian Government continues to support and invest in sport to build healthier, more active communities right across our state. There is some \$196 million being invested across our programs with support for community clubs, capital works and Stadiums Tasmania.

We are committed to ensuring more Tasmanians, regardless of age, background or ability have access to places where they can play sport and enjoy being active. At a time of increasing cost-of-living pressures, the continuation of the Ticket to Play program alongside the next round of Ticket to Wellbeing, which has increased funding of \$1.8 million per year for two years, ensures participation remains affordable and accessible. We are investing in cornerstone intergenerational sporting infrastructure, including the \$65 million contribution to the redevelopment of UTAS Stadium, \$105 million for the AFL high-performance training and administration facility at the Kingston Sports Precinct and the \$20 million JackJumpers and Jewels high-performance centre. In terms of community infrastructure, the Northern Suburbs

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Community Recreational Hub in Mowbray is now open and operating successfully under partnership arrangements with PCYC North and the Northern Tasmanian Netball Association, stage 3 of the hub delivering four additional indoor courts is progressing, with construction expected to commence later this year. Construction has also started on the new \$28 million Glenorchy Sports Centre, with works expected to take around 14 months, and \$30.8 million invested in the Devonport Oval Sports Complex will deliver real results in the north-west community.

We're also focused on improving participation, especially among women and girls, with funding to support both our specific women and girls strategy but also grant funding for our clubs and organisations. We want to see as many Tasmanian women and girls as possible have the opportunity to participate and follow their dreams. I look forward to continuing the work we're doing to ensure sport and active recreation and the organisations that support them and individual athletes can survive into the future and share our welcome questions on the Sport portfolio.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, AFL in Northern Tasmania has been a massive economic driver, and now the Hawks are out. I'm wondering what your plan is to make sure that the Devils, at a bare minimum, replace, if not improve, on the economic drivers for the northern economy, given that the visitation is uniquely different?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, thank you, I appreciate the question and would take this opportunity to say what a fantastic partnership the State of Tasmania, northern Tasmania, more pointedly, and Hawthorn have enjoyed over the years, 25 years of engagement. As the full scope of that partnership comes to a close, I think it's important to recognise Hawthorn for the role that it has played, but also for the role that the Tasmanian people have played in strengthening the Hawthorn Football Club. It is a very different football club now than it was back in the year 2000 when it came to Tasmania.

In terms of football content in the north, the projections are very, very strong. Of course, from 2028 when the Devils come into the competition for the first few years until Mac Point is online, we'll see a lot of content, six to seven games, and these are not Hawthorn v the Gold Coast. These are Hawthorn v Collingwood, Devils v Collingwood, Devils v Carlton. These will be massive events in northern Tasmania. They will be massive events.

The landscape will change and I understand that people are looking forward and saying, 'Well what is it going to look like?', and I'm full of confidence that the landscape will shift dramatically. We will see very large -

**Ms FINLAY** - Have you done modelling to confirm your confidence in terms of the impact on the northern economy.

**Mr DUIGAN** - We would expect there to be more AFL content, not less, that the visitation will be greater, not less. We'll not only have AFL men's content, there'll be AFLW content, there'll be VFL content, you know, both men's and women's with visitation implications across all of those games. We will have more content, more visitation and a stronger economy on the back of having our very own AFL team.

**Ms FINLAY** - What confirmation can you give to the northern community post 2031 about top tier AFL games, AFLW, VFL? Broken down, what will be the commitment to the northern community post 2031?

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**Mr DUIGAN** - So, you know, I think what we would say as a baseline is that there would be at least four AFL men's games, you know, plus all of the other content that I've described.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Minister, I want to give you an opportunity to answer these questions because we note from the Treasury output upstairs that the Treasurer did answer these. When did you first become aware that former minister Ogilvie was involved in Supreme Court proceedings?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. I'm aware that this is a complex matter. It's a legal matter. There are confidentiality-

**Ms FINLAY** - Haven't had any advice since -

**CHAIR** - Minister, I'd just like to remind members that, in accordance with paragraph eight of the proceedings of an Estimates committee in the resolution of the House, questions must be relevant to the portfolio and the outputs of a particular session. The current portfolio is sport and, so, I ask all members to stick to questions that are relevant to the budget outputs of this portfolio, please.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Well, Chair, as a result of the minister's position in Cabinet and ministerial position in relation to this, I think these questions are absolutely appropriate. When did Cabinet first decide that legal costs incurred by minister Ogilvie would be paid for with public funds.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley. I've read out what I'd like to do, please.

**Ms FINLAY** - Cabinet minister, taking questions at Estimates.

**Mr BAYLEY** - He's a minister of the Crown and we are paying \$120,000 worth of taxpayer funds for a minister's legal fees.

**CHAIR** - It is not relevant to this portfolio.

**Mr BAYLEY** - It's relevant to taxpayers' funds in the budget.

**CHAIR** - It is not relevant to this portfolio, Mr Bayley.

**Ms FINLAY** - Is the Minister for Sport a member of Cabinet?

**CHAIR** - Ms Finlay, I've made my ruling. Please move on or Mr Bayley I will move.

**Ms FINLAY** - Is the Minister for Sport a member of Cabinet?

**Mr BAYLEY** - Can I ask again, I just want to check with you, Chair, that as a minister of the Crown, who is a member of Cabinet, we understand that the decision to approve legal costs went through Cabinet. It's an entirely reasonable question to ask. When did you first become aware of these issues and were you part of Cabinet when those decisions were made?

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**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley, I've made my ruling.

**Ms FINLAY** - The minister is preparing to answer.

**CHAIR** - Have you got another question?

**Mr BAYLEY** - I have a question in relation to becoming aware of the fact that Ms Ogilvie had made false statements in relation to her position.

**CHAIR** - Okay, we'll move on. Professor Razay.

**Prof RAZAY** - Thank you very much. Honourable minister, you know, I ask you in the past as well about the impact of the loss of Hawthorn club and I feel that the north, they feel the loss of their club at the end of 27 is a blow for them. The community are concerned, businesses are concerned because of the loss of economic boom, 25 years of the most successful footy experience that brought more than \$20 million, and we are now in agreement that Hawthorn are going to finish at the end of 2027. Now we'll have 2029-30 there will be six footy games. Is out of the table, is that correct?

**Mr DUIGAN** - A minimum of six.

**Prof RAZAY** - Maximum?

**Mr DUIGAN** - You know, 11.

**Prof RAZAY** - So, it will be a real boost. I am concerned about from 2031 because the games will drop to four games. Four devils games in Launceston then. My question, I think that we should think about how can we replace the loss of two AFL games in Launceston and we should from now think about alternatives, because I mean they attracted big attendance, a massive boost for the economy. What are we, the government, thinking about looking at the two extra games from 2031?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks, Professor Razay, I appreciate the question and, you know, again I would point to my contention that the landscape will change. Yes, we have Hawthorn, yes, Hawthorn plays the Gold Coast or Port Adelaide or whoever it might be in Launceston and these have been really successful over time. You know, my contention is that the Devils playing Collingwood or Carlton or Essendon, one of those big Melbourne clubs, those are different events. They are the next scale of events. But, to your point, around 2030-31 and beyond, you know, it's important to recognise that we wouldn't be resting on our heels. You know, we have, UTAS Stadium has transitioned into the ownership of Stadiums Tasmania, which is an entity that we have set up to better utilise, you know, our stadium facilities around the state. We have James Avery in the room, James and Stadiums Tasmania have done work around a content strategy and potentially would be able to add some value here. James, if you wouldn't mind in terms of your thinking around what you would see at UTAS and northern Tasmania, because I for one, you know, I'm invested in seeing as much as we can in northern Tasmania, don't worry

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**Prof RAZAY** - Exactly, and the community wants reassurance, basically, of what are we planning from 2031.

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**Mr AVERY** - Professor, so, we're looking at a whole range of different content options, not just AFL football. I think it's important to note that our vision for UTAS Stadium is a truly multi-purpose venue. So, cricket will be returning to the venue. From a fan-facing Big Bash Hurricanes perspective, we're in negotiations with Cricket Tasmania at the moment about getting them to come back as soon as the upcoming summer.

Football and cricket are the obvious candidates, but, in addition to that, we feel there is a real need, and the venue should be getting content outside of those traditional sports that have a stronghold in Tasmania. So, for example, when we're in active discussions with some rectangular sports about getting rectangular sport down there over the winter, you would have seen that we obviously staged the Foo Fighters concert there earlier this year, We're looking at other artists and other major events of a similar nature. One of the real benefits of the UTAS Stadium redevelopment is the new function space that's going to be available. So, business and corporate events that would traditionally run say from a Monday to Friday is something that we're going to be able to deliver as well at the venue that hasn't really been done before. So, it's about looking outside of those traditional football and cricket opportunities. It's about looking outside the traditional Friday-to-Sunday opportunities and have a venue that operates events big, small and medium, seven days a week. And that's what we're actively building at the moment in our discussions with concert promoters, other sporting codes, business event conferencing, booking agencies from around Australia and more broadly as well.

**Ms BURNET** - Minister, I'm interested in how it appears to me that your government is really very much focused on the big end of town and providing high-performance centres delivering for the AFL and elite sports over more grassroot sports. According to Football Tasmania CEO Tony Pignata, in February of this year, I think, he said the Tasmanian government invests around \$540 into every Tasmanian who plays Aussie rules and around \$138 into every basketballer, yet only \$19 in a football player. So, I'm interested to know, minister, what is the spend for AFL versus other sporting codes, and I'd like to know the breakdown for the regions and from 2026-27 to 2029-30, please.

**Mr DUGAN** - Thank you, I appreciate your question and, you know, I was with Tony Pignata the other day and we were announcing support for a business case around advancing the home of football at Wentworth Park and, you know, that would be a very substantial investment into football and, you know, really welcome the work that they are doing. I would make the point and I take your point around the big end of town and spending on high-performance centres. It's important to recognise that these are, you know, point-in-time investments being made as Tasmania emerges onto the national stage, you know. We haven't been necessarily represented at the highest level in some of these sports. So, these are point-in-time investments that we'll make and then they won't be needed to be made in future. So, I take your point, but it needs to be considered in that context. We're also investing very heavily, I must say, in community sporting infrastructure around the state. In every corner of Tasmania there are large-scale community sporting infrastructure projects going ahead. Brett, to the other detail of the question, perhaps you might be able to provide some breakdown.

**Mr STEWART** - Thanks minister, and through you: the investment in grassroots and community football in Tasmania is made through our funding arrangement with AFL Tasmania. That's a total of \$500,000 per year. That's a similar level to other larger sports, in terms of the total investment. Those figures you mentioned around per player, we don't have

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those figures. We basically invest in sport at a total level. For example, it's a very similar level of investment to our grassroots investment in basketball, netball, et cetera.

In terms of the regional breakdown, we don't have those numbers available because it's up to those sporting bodies as to how they distribute their funds across the regions. We would have to talk to those sporting bodies, if they were to have those breakdowns available.

**Ms BURNET** - So you don't have any idea of how much you're spending on facilities in each of the regions?

**Mr STEWART** - Oh, if we're talking facilities, sorry.

**Ms BURNET** - Yes.

**Mr STEWART** - Yes we certainly would have that breakdown. I am not sure I have that one available, we might have to take that one on notice.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Oh, look, I can spool through it if you'd like?

**Ms BURNET** - I'm sure everybody else wouldn't.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I've got it, it's a good story.

**Ms BURNET** - No, it's okay. If you're happy to take it on notice, minister?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, it's easily available, but you know, I would make the point that we are spending on community sporting infrastructure in a very major way, and unlike governments of the past.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, Elphin Sports Centre in Launceston is the key facility, and not just for basketball, but it has a range of other sports, including badminton, of course, over the years, and increasing popularity of pickleball. While Elphin is a well-known space for those of us in the north, we also know that it's got some challenges ahead of it, among some upgrades that are needed. What's the government doing to improve accessibility to the venue, and the quality of amenities at Elphin Sports Centre?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Shelton, I appreciate that question. It's a bit of an awkward one, in terms of its footprint and layout, and it's not without its challenges. There is work that needs to be done to address appropriate accessibility at Elphin Sports Centre, but it does remain a key community facility, and has served the northern community for many years.

As the member may be aware, the government made a decision to direct \$18.9 million of its original 2024 state election commitment of \$21.5 million toward building four additional indoor courts, the Northern Rec Hub. This decision was made when it became clear that funds would not deliver what was originally envisaged at Elphin. As a result, it was decided the best way to increase court capacity in the Launceston region was build courts of the Northern Rec Hub. Importantly though, we'll still complete necessary accessibility upgrades, and improvements, including a new lift at Elphin Sports Centre, and I have - new lift accessibility upgrades and improvements, so it can continue to provide what it needs to.

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I'm also pleased to confirm that this year's Budget includes an additional \$2.1 million for further accessibility and amenity upgrades. That takes the level of investment to \$4.7 million for Elphin, which will be a pretty meaningful upgrade of what is an important facility.

**Mr SHELTON** - [inaudible] anticipated and an improvement for the users of the sports centre, and as a member of the Public Works department, I have visited the Community Hub out at Mowbray, and it blows you away when you get inside there, so well done, minister.

**Mr WINTER** - Minister, since our last hearing you and the government have announced there's \$100,000 available for the North Launceston Football Club to facilitate scoping and design work for the new club rooms at Inveresk, which is a good thing. The designs, I understand, are still being finalised, but the Budget shows no capital funding to actually deliver anything. Can you update the committee on the timelines around getting the design finalised, and then how is your government actually going to fund it, given there's no funding in the Budget?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, appreciate that. Yes, been working very cooperatively with North Launceston; things are moving well in that direction, and I believe Stadiums Tasmania has been heavily involved in that process as the auspicing agency and I'll pass to James in a moment.

In terms of delivering what is scoped, I think that's obviously a conversation for a future budget when we know what that looks like. I'd also like to put on the record that we've been discussing this with the City of Launceston Council and see a role for that body in the future build-out of facilities for the club.

James, it might be good for you to update the committee on where we're at with scoping for North Launceston.

**Mr AVERY** - Through you, minister. That work is underway at the moment with an architect, Stadiums Tasmania, the Bombers, City of Launceston and AFL Tasmania. That piece of work is being guided by for AFL Tasmania's Community Facility Guidelines. We anticipate that that work, in terms of feasibility and initial scoping, will be complete by August.

At the moment, we are trying to do everything we can to ensure that the Bombers have everything they need in terms of a new facility there that operates essentially within the same precinct, so they're not displaced outside of the stadium's footprint.

**Mr WINTER** - Minister, we've lost a lot of time since the initial no answer on providing the \$100,000. We're now hearing that we won't get access to the designs or scoping until August. That the club gets kicked out of their home of 103 years in September the following year. You've referenced that the capital funding of the new facility is a quote, 'conversation for a future budget'.

Isn't it true that it's not funded until next year, then the club simply will not have a home to play at in 2028?

**Mr DUIGAN** - No, I think I'm on the record as saying we will make sure that North Launceston continues to have a home. No-one's getting kicked out.

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**Mr WINTER** - Correct me if I'm wrong. In 2028 the North Launceston Bombers, can you confirm they will be able to play and train at York Park?

**Mr DUIGAN** - They don't always train at York Park now, as far as I know, but we'll make sure that they've got somewhere to play and somewhere to train and somewhere to do their weights and get changed and all of those things.

**Mr WINTER** - Where will that be?

**Mr DUIGAN** - It will be in York Park or the York Park precinct.

**Mr WINTER** - I'm trying to get clarity here for a 133-year-old club.

Your guarantees that in 2028, I mean, it's pretty clear on the old timeline they're not going to have the new facility built at Inveresk. Where exactly will they play and train in 2028?

**Mr DUIGAN** - That's probably a good one for you, James.

**Mr AVERY** - There's been no discussion of them playing elsewhere. I think their future in terms of playing at York Park has been assured. In terms of training, we would still envisage that they'll train there. The Devils will want to have access to the venue as well throughout that period. Really, we have up until March 2028 when AFL games will commence and that's when the Bombers will need new club rooms and obviously new change facilities. That's the timeline that everyone's working to. At the moment, there is nothing to suggest that a new facility can't be developed by March 2028.

**Mr WINTER** - I accept the evidence we just heard from the minister. I mean, if it's not funded until this time next year.

**Mr AVERY** - Sorry, in terms of the timeline to be able to commission build and go through the procurement process, all those sorts of things, there is still enough time notwithstanding clearly funding needs to be allocated.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Minister, I've got a number of questions in relation to head concussions in sport, and you probably remember we've asked questions of you in parliament about this. In a recent story by 7NEWS reporter Lily Thomson on concussion in sport, we heard directly from Tasmanians in sport about the culture around concussion. One player said, and I quote:

I think a few of the boys are a bit nervous to mention the word concussion with head knocks and stuff just in case they sort of can't play or aren't allowed to play contact sport anymore.

Another said, I quote:

I think a lot of people get knocks and then want to keep playing or want to get back as quickly as they can when they probably shouldn't.

And professor of neuroscience, Alan Pearce, warned of participants, particularly men, underreporting or hiding their symptoms.

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Do you acknowledge that much more needs to be done to change community attitudes and provide education around concussion in sport? What are you doing about it?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, and I appreciate that question. I did see that report and obviously aware of reporting prior to - and the growing level of issue in this space. The Tasmanian government is committed to supporting a proactive approach to raising awareness and educating the sport and active recreation sector on concussion in sport to help mitigate the risks of concussion on individuals. We know that there are concerns about the health impacts of concussion and that it can affect athletes at all levels of sport, and we recognise the landscape can change and we remain open to ongoing conversations about concussion management and education.

Brett, from a departmental position, anything to add there?

**Mr STEWART** - Probably nothing specific, minister, only other than there were some guidelines developed by the Australian Institute of Sport on concussion in sport. This is managed through each individual sport at a national level. Our role in terms of providing education and awareness through our various sporting bodies is conducted by Active Tasmania. Very active in this space. That role of directing sports and clubs to that national-led activity in this space is very important, and I know the team works very hard to make sure that that awareness continues to grow.

**Mr BAYLEY** - I'm interested in that, minister, you mentioned the proactive approach. One of the things that the Institute of Sport recommended was that clubs and schools introduce a concussion officer to oversee the management of concussion. They say, and I quote:

A concussion officer is a single point of contact and manages the coordination of matters related to concussion. A concussion officer is not a concussion expert and is not expected to diagnose concussion. Analogous to the role of a fire warden, the concussion officer ensures that anyone diagnosed with concussion follows the organisation's agreed concussion protocol.

I guess in terms of your proactive approach, in relation to that explicit recommendation of a concussion officer in sports and in schools, what have you done? How many concussion officers are there out there in clubs and schools at the moment? Are there any designated concussion officers?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, this is certainly something we're seeing in football at a junior level. There are clubs providing concussion officers and, Brett, again, you would have better oversight.

**Mr STEWART** - I think the important thing to note here is it really is a decision for individual sports as to how they approach this. The issue of concussion varies widely across different sports depending on the nature of that code. Obviously there are codes where there's more likelihood of concussion than other codes. I think it's really important that we respect the role of those individual sports to consider this on their basis. Most, if not all of those sports, or certainly the sports where concussion is more of an issue, have very strong leadership at the national level on this, again, guided by those AIS guidelines. The role that we play in terms of

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connection and awareness is very important, but we also need to remember that it is the role of those individual sports to deal with this as they see fit.

**Mr BAYLEY** - In relation to schools, though, for example, the recommendation was for clubs and schools. Can you tell me - you probably can't, I accept that you probably can't take this and tell me now, but are you happy to take on notice - how many schools have got designated concussion officers working within their staff and parental volunteers?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would have to defer, I think, to the DECYP.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Are you aware of any, explicitly?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Certainly, in clubland I'm aware of it. To the schools, I'm not. I think, again, in fairness, it's probably a question for DECYP.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Are you happy to take it on notice? To be fair, I've been given the reverse, this is a sport issue.

**Mr DUIGAN** - It's another department and it would live in there.

**Mr BAYLEY** - You could seek that information from the department on behalf -

**Mr DUIGAN** - I could, but equally you could too.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Well, you are the minister for Sport and this is a concussion issue.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I am, yes, and in our space we're doing that.

**Mr BAYLEY** - And it's been recommended by the Australian Institute of Sport, not the Australian Institute of Schools. I just put to you, are you happy to take that on notice and provide the committee with an update?

**Mr DUIGAN** - It is outside of my area of control, in terms of that portfolio, so no I won't take that one on notice.

**Mr BAYLEY** - You have a colleague in that portfolio, though, and you will have a committee.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I do, and you have a committee.

**CHAIR** - Ms Burnet.

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, you mentioned that you had caught up with Tony Pignata at Wentworth Park the other day. Your latest Budget allocates \$350,000 for a business case to plan an \$80 million home of football at Wentworth Park, yet local associations like Central Region Junior Football Association, which manages over 4000 players alone, are telling us they are already operating past breaking point. Since grassroots competitions are forced to survive on a 'patchwork' - which is a very good term for it - a patchwork of school and council ovals with degraded, overused services, failing lights and delayed kick-off times - why is your government funding a centralised elite hub study instead of rolling out a distributed

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funding model to immediately upgrade the community pitches where young Tasmanians actually play every weekend?

**Mr DUIGAN** - What we're seeking to do is to do both things. I think we would recognise that football is a very important sport in the state of Tasmania. We have invested substantially into it over time, particularly ahead of the Women's World Cup, where there were a great many upgrades made to football facilities around the state in order to put us in a position to be able to host training teams.

We're also doing a lot of work around a statewide, more holistic, infrastructure planning piece, which I think has been somewhat absent of recent times, and perhaps, Brett, that might be one that you speak to about how we look at infrastructure in a more coherent, strategic manner going forward.

**Ms BURNET** - Because presumably you've done that with local councils. I know that the local councils down here, down in the south were looking at a coordinated approach to delivering those.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, often there'll be a council do a piece of work, but it's not connected to any other piece of work, so this is more a state-based holistic piece.

**Mr STEWART** - Thanks, minister. Just in relation to the funding for the feasibility study at Wentworth: my understanding is that that's also to consider community uses as well. It's not just for elite. It would be for the elite level, but, as with a lot of facilities that we see across the state, they do house both elite and various, sort of, cascading levels of community sport.

In relation to the more holistic piece that we're embarking on, there has been some really great work done by individual councils across the state and by groups of councils. What we're looking to do is take that work - some of which is actually very recent, the southern one's very recent - and provide a statewide strategic view on community infrastructure, sporting infrastructure, to effectively inform future investment decisions. That might be around where there could be gaps both regionally or by code, by court type or ground type. That work we will undertake over the next 12 months. It's funded in the Budget. We're very pleased that it was funded because we think we can take the work that's been done by those councils and enhance it by creating a statewide view.

**Prof RAZAY** - Thank you very much, honourable minister. The government's announcement of \$110 million spending on major events is welcome and to hear this morning that Stadiums Tasmania is actively involved in the raising major events from 2031. What the north are concerned about sometimes is, is funding there for the whole of Tasmania - and Stadiums Tasmania also cover other stadiums - what guarantee is there that the north will have a significant proportion of that and will the government consider establishing a dedicated northern Tasmania major event fund or guarantee a northern allocation with the existing Event Attraction Fund that reports annually about visitor and economic outcomes for the north?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would be somewhat concerned, weighing into the heart of that question, Prof Razay, noting that it is a question about events which I don't hold portfolio responsibility for. However, you know I am very forthright in my views about sports content in the north and the need to make sure that our peak sporting bodies are providing content into the north and

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through the, you know, through the purview of this portfolio, I would seek to make sure the north gets its share always.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, already this morning we've talked about the cost of living and how it impacts families and it can make it challenging for young children to participate in sporting programs right across the state. What's the government doing to help reduce the cost barriers for young Tasmanians to participate in sport?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Shelton. Yes, certainly understand the value of keeping sport and active recreation accessible for young Tasmanians and we recognise the significance and the benefits going from, you know, physical activity, physical health, obviously, but as I've mentioned earlier: wellbeing, building community, connectedness, social skills, all of those things and those great relationships you build when people are involved in sport and participation.

The cost of being involved, you know, with registrations and joining a club can be challenging and that's why we've committed \$5.8 million over the next four years to Ticket to Play and we've also expanded the program eligibility to include applicants who receive Family Tax Benefit A. Under Ticket to Play program, applicants are allocated two vouchers up to \$100 each toward club membership fees for eligible kids aged 5 to 18 and I'm pleased to advise the committee that the most recent round of the program was the most successful since its inception back in 2019.

Also worth reminding the committee that this has been, I think a Tasmanian initiative instigated by, obviously the department, and the former minister Howlett, I think, so it's great news more Tasmanian kids are up and participating. We're seeing that across a whole range of sports. So it is a good program and is having the desired result.

**Mr WINTER** - Minister, are you able to guarantee that the North Launceston Football Club will be playing and training within the Inveresk precinct in season 2028?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think, James, we're able to make that guarantee?

**Mr AVERY** - Yes.

**Mr WINTER** - Great. I'm going to move on. Thank you very much.

The bill to establish Stadiums Tasmania was expected to initially assume responsibility for up to five assets: MyState - well then called the DEC (Derwent Entertainment Centre), Silverdome, Bellerive, Dial Park, and I'll call it York Park. So far Dial Park has been ruled out. You've got Silverdome and York Park within - can you take the committee through the reasons why there's a hold-up in moving MyState and Bellerive into the Stadiums Tasmania portfolio?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, and I think the Dial Park one is a good result for community, would be my assessment of that. You know it's home principally to the Penguin footy club and the range of fundraising opportunities that that facility provides to that club.

Work is ongoing and continuing around the transfer of the other two that you mentioned, MyState and Ninja. I think I would be right in saying, James, that we would see MyState being the next piece to transfer across, noting there are existing arrangements in place for that. Also

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of recent times there have been more meetings of the mind from Clarence Council Cricket, Stadiums Tasmania, about Ninja, but James you would be best placed to provide an update on this.

**Mr AVERY** - Thanks, minister. In terms of MyState Bank Arena, the difference between the two venues in the north versus the two venues in the south is that the venues in the north the previous owner was operating those venues. In the case of Silverdome, that was a Department of State Growth-owned and effectively operated venue, for UTAS Stadium it was a City of Launceston Council-owned and operated venue. The two venues in the south are operated by different entities to those that own it. So you have the LK Group operating MyState Bank Arena, even though through DSG the venue is owned, and Ninja Stadium is owned by the City of Clarence, operated by Cricket Tasmania. So there's a greater level of complexity in terms of transferring the operations of those venues and in many respects the ownership. But we certainly are in very deep discussions with the Department of State Growth around the transfer of ownership of MyState Bank Arena, and then that leads to a contemplation around the transfer of operations. With Ninja Stadium we have been in lengthy discussions with the City of Clarence who are doing some due diligence work on this process as we speak, which I understand is about to come to an end, and Cricket Tasmania, who we have a have an outstanding relationship with and our objectives are aligned in terms of Stadiums Tasmania taking over the operations and the ownership of that venue.

They are lengthy processes when you've got councils and others involved, they understandably want to put a lot of time into what it looks like when they hand over these large community assets to a different entity, but having said all of that, our prioritisation was the venues in the north - also because they're undergoing redevelopment projects, which Stadiums Tasmania oversees as well. Now that we have those on our books, we've turned our attention to those venues in the south and those discussions are very deep.

**Mr WINTER** - I think I can accept the complexity around Bellerive Oval, through you minister, but what I'm struggling to understand is it's been four years since the Stadium Tasmania bill went through the parliament - the asset is currently owned by State Growth, one part of government seeking to transfer it to another part of government, Stadiums Tasmania - why are we still four years on unable to transfer the asset to Stadiums Tasmania as per the government's policy?

**Mr DUIGAN** - And so I think as James has intimated, when the Silverdome and UTAS came onto the books of Stadium Tasmania, they also came with very large-scale upgrade schedules of works, you know, and that's where a lot of Stadiums' capability was directed as those scope of works are brought under control and delivered. You know, we're getting to the point now where I think others can be considered. But you know, I think as James has sort of detailed, the ownership is one aspect of MyState. The operation is another aspect of that, so there are some complexities in making sure we get those things right is quite important. So, still committed to absolutely committed to the outcome, but you know, putting one foot in front of the other.

**Mr WINTER** - It's been four years. Can you give us a date in which Stadiums Tasmania believes it will have possession of both Bellerive and MyState.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would be loath to put a date on.

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**Mr AVERY** - Well, I mean, it's a question in terms of ownership of MyState Bank Arena, my view is that could be closed out very quickly from this point on. So the timeline would be very short. In terms of Ninja Stadium: there are council elections occurring. I honestly don't know if we would be able to get this transfer done before council elections. That adds another layer of complexity in terms of the next six months or so, but as soon as that milestone and threshold is out of the way again, we would be hoping that we could have a transfer of the asset from an ownership perspective almost immediately thereafter, that would be our desire.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Chair, I want to put this question to the minister again because he is a minister of Cabinet and I want to ask and note that you joined the Cabinet in October 2023. Were you at any point involved in the decision to allow former minister Ogilvie to use public funds to pay for her legal costs? This question has been asked Chair in the other committee.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley, I've made my ruling. Do I need to read it again?

**Mr BAYLEY** - Well, do I need to dissent in it Chair because it has been asked in the other committee, it was allowed in the other committee but the Premier and the Treasurer answered these questions, well, they didn't actually answer them, but they addressed these questions. They are entirely legitimate questions to ask.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley, I was not obviously privy in that hearing. I did not hear what the Premier or anyone else said. I made my ruling in this particular hearing.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Well, Chair, I dissent in your ruling because I think this is a legitimate question to put to the minister as a member of Cabinet. Minister, you joined the Cabinet in October.

**CHAIR** - Mr Bayley, just stop there, please. Okay.

Mr Bayley, in accordance with the resolution agreed to by the House, any dissent to a ruling of the Chair must be taken at once and stated in writing. While the resolution enables the committee to continue to meet, it may not further examine the output under consideration. This is difficult when the committee is on overview. Accordingly, I will suspend the sitting to advise the Speaker who will make a ruling on the matter.

Stop the broadcast. Thank you.

**The committee suspended from 1.44 p.m. to 2.04 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - Start the recording, please. Thank you. in response to my earlier ruling and the dissent move by the member for Clark, Mr Bayley, the Speaker has given the following ruling:

This year, the Order of the House establishing the Estimates committees included a new provision. Questions must be relevant to the portfolio and outputs of a particular session. Ministers must also be relevant to the question asked and, at the discretion of the Chair, the committee may move to a new question if the minister is not deemed to be relevant to the question asked. In relation to the Premier, as Leader of the government, he is able to be questioned on any matter relating to the governance of the state by the Executive, as is in the case and question time in the House.

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The question asked by the member is not relevant to the portfolio of the minister or output of this particular session. It is not the intention of the Chair to attempt to prevent continuation of the broad-ranging examination, but the matter of relevancy does need to be considered, particularly in light of the new provision in the order. As in the practice, if there are unresolved matters in the opinion of members, these can be raised as matters of concern in the committee's report.

With that, we will continue on and I think, Mr Bayley, I'll just check, you're on your second question.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Thank you, I'm happy to move on to a second question. I appreciate that. Thank you for your ruling, although I'm very interested in the minister's view and knowledge of those issues. Minister, going back to concussion, one of the areas where there was a significant need for support for players was in relation to mental health - mental health particularly while they are undergoing a concussion sidelining-type event. There are some real benefits in people's wellbeing and an ability to really change attitudes with mental health support at that point. Will you have a look at what the government could do to ensure that people are getting that crucial mental health support when they are sidelined with a concussion event?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you for the question. I think there is obviously a maturing of that conversation around people's mental health and their ability and their openness to seek clarification there. I would say that there is broadly an overarching policy around these concussion matters that has been mentioned and it is the purview of each individual sport. I am happy to look at where we sit and what our policy says around that. I think it is something that we need to be proactive about. Brett, if you have any further thoughts around things that do exist or the opportunities for people to progress that matter.

**Mr BAYLEY** - Is there anything like this already in terms of mental health support for concussion sufferers?

**Mr STEWART** - I'm not aware of anything in our direct control in terms of, for example, at the Tasmanian Institute of Sport, but I'm just checking on that. Director of the TIS, Adam Sproule, is online, but he's not present. I know that, in general terms, both at the TIS and certainly out into the broader sporting community, awareness and education and confronting the issue overtly around mental health is certainly on the rise, thankfully. We're not just talking to players and families about physical health and fitness and injuries and things like that. We're also engaging with those codes around mental health, and I know that Adam and the team at the TIS and the coaches at the TIS have that at their forefront, particularly when we're dealing with athletes that are children. There is a child safety element to all of that as well.

**Ms BURNET** - Thank you. Minister, I do have a question, and it relates to child safety as well, because peak water safety bodies are warning of a concerning dangerous trend across Australia where nearly half of all year 6 students can no longer fulfil basic water survival requirements. It's a big issue for health and wellbeing. With regional and community public pools across Tasmania facing extreme pressures from rising operating costs and ageing infrastructure, schools and families are finding it harder and more expensive to access local lanes for swimming training and survival. When community councils are forced to beg for state funding to keep basic aquatic centres open or redevelop facilities like the Glenorchy War

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Memorial Pool, how can your government justify multimillion sports consultant studies while grassroots public pools, the very places where Tasmanian children learn the basic survival skills that prevent them drowning, are left under-resourced, and I'd include the Doone Kennedy Aquatic Centre. Now, I know it's run by Hobart Council, but this is a state, like a regional facility.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, it is.

**Ms BURNET** - Not just, and I want to talk about all of those other regional pools as well.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yeah, which are by and large, and typically as I would think of it, council-owned facilities.

**Ms BURNET** - It's a pretty important part of the state's infrastructure.

**Mr DUIGAN** - No doubt, but to the point that they are typically council-owned facilities, I'm not, I'm struggling to get to the nub of your question. What is it you're seeking that the government do?

**Ms BURNET** - Well, I'm concerned about the reduced rates of learn-to-swim availability, people being able to afford to getting that basic skill under their belt, and for their kids. So, what's the government doing to spend more on making sure that those swimming facilities, particularly in the south - I mean, you've spent a bit on the Glenorchy Pool, but the Doone Kennedy Aquatic Centre, it's a regional facility - why aren't you spending to help preserve that and make it better?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Look, I think we would need to be careful in taking ownership of everybody's assets as a government. That's one thing I would say: we need to be making sure we spend our resources properly. We are doing, as has been discussed earlier in the piece here, some work around community sporting infrastructure, and I'm not sure where the pools piece sits in community sporting infrastructure and, I guess, the broader learn-to-swim piece is likely a DECYP thing.

**Ms BURNET** - It's the facilities.

**Mr DUIGAN** - But I do take your point about problematic rates of people who can swim.

**Mr STEWART** - So, there's a couple of elements to that question. Certainly, in the work we're doing around our strategy for community sporting infrastructure, pools will be part of that consideration, just like any other sporting infrastructure. We have actually done some work with Hobart City Council to redirect some funding to the Hobart Aquatic Centre. I'm just tracking down the detail on that for you.

**Ms BURNET** - Okay, it would be nice to see that figure. Thanks.

**Mr STEWART** - The other side of the coin on this is around the work that we do through Active Tasmania to support the Royal Life Saving Society, who recently celebrated 80 years of activity in Tasmania. We invest \$100,000 a year into our partnership with them so that they can deliver their programs, including learn to swim. We also have a very strong relationship and provide pretty significant funding to Surf Life Saving Tasmania. So, yes, we could do

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more, but, I guess, with the limited funding we have, we fund both infrastructure and we're including pools and other aquatic infrastructure in terms of those plans, but also we fund the activities and operations of those organisations.

**Prof RAZAY** - Minister, is there any even little possibility, if like Hawthorn have only one game from 2028 till 2031, just one game. Imagine if it's their home game, it's Hawthorn against the Devils, it will be like a derby. Do you know what derby means? The whole of Tasmania will be amazing, wouldn't it? It will generate so much passion, and that will actually help Devils to expand even more, so, it will be the highlight of every year here. I know it's like say well I am a dreamer, but I think it's not beyond us to arrange it. Imagine in 31 when we lose two Devils games, then they can only increase it by one game, it will become two games. Wow.

**Ms FINLAY** - Good thinking.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Professor Razay. I appreciate your passion, and it's by no means the worst idea that anyone's ever floated?

**Ms FINLAY** - Wow, are you taking it up, Minister?

**Mr DUIGAN** - As I say, we're all in on the Devils.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, the demand on indoor courts, as I mentioned, at the Elphin Centre in the north, but there's also significant demand in the south. One of the projects that will go some way towards addressing the issue in the south is the Glenorchy Sports Centre being built at the Claremont College site.

I'm interested to know how that's progressing in relationship to the construction of the facility. Can you tell the committee how many courts this centre will provide and what groups will benefit from the new courts?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Shelton. I am pleased to be able to advise that construction of the Glenorchy Sports Centre has reached an important milestone with foundation works now complete. Work on the next stage, the main structure, was scheduled to commence last week, and this is a significant step forward in delivering more indoor community sports courts for the northern suburbs of Hobart. It's part of our ongoing focus on providing more courts around the state more generally. A reasonable whack of 530 cubic metres of concrete has been poured, which, alongside 44 tonnes of steel on site, is forming the backbone of the emerging facility being built by local builder Fairbrother. It's also giving back well beyond community sport, with a strong local workforce of around 100, including apprentices who have already contributed 680 hours of hands-on training and development.

In the next phase of construction, we will see the building's frame begin to rise, creating visible sign of momentum as the new multi-sport function centre takes place. It will deliver four indoor multi-sport courts, a dedicated show court and modern amenities, accessible design features and flexible community spaces. The facility will also include two versatile multi-purpose spaces able to host meetings, events and club activities and provide storage area for user groups and clubs.

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Importantly, the location is well positioned near key transport routes including intercity, cycleway and park and ride facilities.

The Glenorchy Sports Centre remains on track for completion in mid 2027. I should mention sports catered for are basketball, netball, pickleball, futsal, volleyball and other indoor sports.

**Mr WINTER** - Minister, what's the latest cost estimate you have available for the UTAS Stadium redevelopment?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Latest cost, and noting James is here at the table, the scope of that development is \$130 million, and I haven't been advised otherwise.

**Mr AVERY** - The project's within budget.

**Mr WINTER** - Okay, excellent. Is it still expected to be completed by November 2027?

**Mr AVERY** - Correct.

**Mr WINTER** - Is it still expected the capacity we're back to 17,000 for the commencement of the 2027 AFL season?

**Mr AVERY** - Correct. It could be a little more potentially.

**Mr WINTER** - Excellent.

**Mr WINTER** - I wanted to ask more deeply about the finances around Stadiums Tasmania. The Budget shows that, outside of grant revenue and interest, the organisation only generated \$160,000 last financial year - \$107,000 of that was user charges and fees.

I can see that last financial year staff salaries went up to around \$1 million, which doubled from the year earlier. The estimate for this financial year is almost \$4 million.

Can you take us through what's happening around these numbers at Stadiums Tasmania and also how you see the organisation operating into the future and how large the grant needs going to need to be to offset their losses?

**Mr DUIGAN** - The first point to make is that Stadiums Tas has moved in its early years from being in its planning phase and now is in its delivery phase. There has been a substantial uplift in the capability within the organisation and that's the people to whom you reference there. That will continue to a point as more venues come online, and, I guess, James, it is probably for you to provide detail around those questions put by the member.

**Mr AVERY** - From a revenue perspective, the difference you've seen in previous year in start-up mode without any assets on our books, so, without operating the venues and therefore our ability to drive revenue was compromised because we didn't have the venues. In the most recent financial year, we've had those venues, so, you've seen an increase in revenue accordingly.

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The same is the case for costs. Costs have increased as we've implemented more staff, taken on staff, from those venues. As part of our act, we have to offer employment to those venue staff when we're taking on those venues. So, we've increased our staff, our headcount, by taking those venues and also increased headcount to fill out the required venue structure that was always set up but just couldn't be delivered on until the venues arrived into our portfolio.

**Mr BAYLEY** - I want to just go quickly, one last one on concussion. The AIS report was from July 2024 and, as I mentioned in some earlier questioning, it was recommending concussion officers for clubs and schools. There's been identified the need for mental health support for players who are on the sidelines because of their concussion.

I guess I want to just get a sense of your appetite for these kind of initiatives being driven by government and ask you an explicit question around considering standing up some kind of community engagement consultation process on the issues so that you can hear directly from clubs, participants, experts, et cetera, and with a view of understanding exactly what the government can, should and is prepared to do in relation to supporting sports and supporting all different codes support their participants when it comes to concussion and head injury.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, I appreciate the question. I think there is, and I would certainly be prepared to have a conversation with my colleague minister for Health and Mental Health around a broader look at this issue and what supports are currently there and what supports we could do.

**Mr BAYLEY** - And education presumably. What about the broader community conversation and standing up some kind of process to understand this better?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Broadly, yes.

**Mr BAYLEY** - One last one, which is to the Macquarie Point stadium. Obviously, the Macquarie Point Development Corporation is taking on a significant amount of debt to build the stadium, \$490.7 million, which will need to be serviced from more borrowings in the general government sector, at least \$30-odd million every single year.

I think I know the answer to the question, but I just want to check in again. The asset is going to transfer to Stadiums Tasmania when completed. It would be normal that the liabilities that are attached to a development such as that would transition and travel with the asset. I think when last I asked you this question that was not going to be the case; it was going to sit with Macquarie Point Development Corporation.

Is there anything to update the committee about in relation to Stadiums Tasmania and the debt incurred by the state and state-owned entities, Macquarie Point Development, in relation to that debt and the transfer of that debt?

**Mr DUIGAN** - What I would say to that is I think that is a piece of work that remains to be done. I think that is not yet landed. Anyone have any further commentary that they'd like to provide to that?

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**Mr AVERY** - Only, minister, that, yes, the venue is to be transferred to Stadiums Tasmania's ownership. The financing pathway including any transfer of debt hasn't been determined at this point.

**Mr BAYLEY** - What would it mean for Stadiums Tasmania to have the asset and the debt, and the liability transferred as well? Would you envisage Stadiums Tasmania as being able to raise enough revenue via that asset to be able to service the debt liabilities that travel with it?

**Mr AVERY** - The current operating model around the venue doesn't account for that.

**Mr BAYLEY** - And that delivers a very small, sort of a couple of million-dollar, profit, is that correct?

**Mr AVERY** - That's correct.

**Ms BURNET** - I want to take you now to the Domain Athletic Centre and on 28 February, I don't know if you were there, but the Hobart Track Classic was on. Mr Fairs actually did the media release on behalf of the government in relation to that. It was a great event, but I'm just curious to know what sort of priority athletics is for your government.

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I couldn't see any specific infrastructure spending. Again, I know this is a Hobart City Council run facility, but this is the state athletics track, and it was pretty tired and pretty embarrassing to have some of the worst track in the country, I would hazard a guess. What is your government doing to invest in athletics, a really accessible sport for youngsters to keep them healthy?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, it's one of the great sports, and at least at a community level you don't require hugely expensive infrastructure to enable kids to participate. In terms of the domain and other athletic facilities owned by the state, again, that would be something we would contemplate through the infrastructure plan. Brett, anything that you're able to bring to the table regarding our current plans around athletics infrastructure?

**Mr STEWART** - Nothing specific, minister. We do provide some funding through one of our funding programs to Athletics Tasmania, but that's not for infrastructure, it's for helping them increase their capacity to operate. Obviously, being a council-owned asset, we engage with councils regularly on their assets and they can approach government for funding support. We haven't had a specific approach that I'm aware of around -

**Ms BURNET** - It might have been for the shotput some years ago that Mr Street was looking after - but we've got the athletics facility and you're building a \$1.13 billion stadium just over the hill. I mean, it seems like a very poor cousin in the sporting world, to be honest.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I might take that as a comment. I can provide some information around pool funding since 2024. The government has provided to the Hobart Aquatic Centre \$1,129,371; to the Cressy War Memorial Pool \$25,000, to the Glenorchy Pool \$5 million; and to the Port Huon Aquatic Centre \$489,697.

**CHAIR** - Professor Razay?

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**Prof RAZAY** - The Northern Tasmania Cricket Association are in desperate need of renovation. It's steeped in history as Australia's oldest first-class cricket ground. It is well used for multi-use sporting events. It's grown very tired over the years. The Launceston City Council has put forward a \$61 million master plan for it. What's the government's involvement, and what's its interest in being part of the action plan?

**Mr DUGAN** - Thank you, Professor Razay. It is a great ground and a great precinct, and it could be further developed. There's value in that - noting our role as owners of the Elphin Sports Centre which sits in that precinct. Of course, I'm aware of the Launceston City Council's master plan for a redevelopment of the NTCA, and the government has, as I have previously said, provided \$4.7 million for the upgrades to the Elphin Sports Centre. I believe council has committed \$20 million to the project, with a remaining \$20 million needed to implement the project and we recognise the importance of the sporting precinct that hosts lots of people and players and clubs who share that facility.

I believe the council is currently undertaking stakeholder engagement with those who use the facility and we look forward to further updates from council in relation to the progress of the development and a development application when they reach that point. I'm not aware of any formal request to the Tasmanian Government for any additional funding for this project at this stage beyond what we provide to Elphin. I'm aware of the project and would be supportive of it.

**CHAIR** - Mr Shelton? I don't know how far you're going to get.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, we all know how important physical education in sport and rec, and participation is for the mental health and the physical side of, for our community. I understand that women have a higher level of regular participation in physical activities, but their level in sporting activity is lower than males. So, I guess, the question is what's the government doing to support and encourage greater involvement by women and girls in all levels and types of sport?

**Mr DUGAN** - Thank you Mr Shelton. Tasmania has long and proud history of supporting women and girls to be the best version of themselves in their chosen sport. You know, we of course have some great Olympians and elite athletes to point to -

**CHAIR** - The time for scrutiny has expired. We'll now take a short break. As time taken for breaks must be made up, can I encourage members to be as quick as they can in the changeover?

**The Committee suspended from 2.30 p.m. to 2.35 p.m.**

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### Parks

**CHAIR** - The scrutiny of the Parks portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, names and positions, please, for the benefit of Hansard.

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**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Chair. To my right is Mr Jason Jacobi, Secretary Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, and, to his right is Sophie Muller, Deputy Secretary Parks and Wildlife Service, and to my left is Amanda Lovell, my chief of staff.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Minister. The time scheduled for Estimates of the minister for Parks is two hours. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Chair. Tasmania's parks, reserves and Crown land cover about half of our state, and we know that they are deeply valued by Tasmanians and visitors alike. This government is committed to delivering targeted investment that helps protect our natural assets and supports their sustainable management while maintaining responsible financial discipline.

We have provided an additional \$12 million in funding over three years from 2026-27 to maintain and upgrade visitor experiences and infrastructure across our parks and reserves. The budget continues our investment in key sites across the state, enhancing access and safety in alpine areas at Ben Lomond and Mount Field, as well as iconic coastal destinations including Tasman Arch, Devils Kitchen and Cockle Creek. We're investing more than \$9 million in future-proofing Maria Island with works well underway to modernise critical wastewater and supporting electrical infrastructure on the island. We are continuing delivery of the \$40 million Next Iconic Walk in the Tyndall Range, building on Tasmania's reputation as a world-class walking destination. Through the Spirit Preparedness Fund, we're supporting regional tourism and helping businesses prepare for the new *Spirit of Tasmania* vessels, including \$750,000 in upgrades to the Black River campground. These investments support regional economies by creating jobs, driving visitation and providing opportunities for Tasmanian businesses and suppliers. We're also continuing to invest in bushfire winch capability with funding of \$2.8 million over four years to protect our natural assets, and this has proved critical for supporting early and rapid responses to bushfires, particularly in remote areas.

In the area of Lands Tasmania, we're continuing to modernise this system through development of the LISTmap common operating platform. Another piece of reform is building the implementation of national electronic conveyancing and the removal of paper certificates is from 1 September 2026. Chair, this budget continues to invest in sustainability, ensuring Tasmania remains well placed to meet future challenges while managing public finances responsibly, and I welcome the committee's questions.

**Ms FINLAY** - That might be true, minister, but the output for Parks clearly demonstrates a reduction in investment year-on-year across the Forwards, and the notes to the budget say that this decrease in appropriation reflects the profile of the operational efficiencies. So, my question is specific to the Park's output: What is the total savings target for Parks subject to the operational efficiencies?

**Mr DUIGAN** - So, the operational efficiencies target for the department -

**Ms FINLAY** - My question is around Parks, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - for 2026-27 is \$4.9 million, and this increases to \$13.9 million in 2027- 28; \$19.9 million in 2028-29; and \$20 million in 2029-30. In terms of Parks specifically, I would need to ask the secretary or I would, though also, again, as in the previous committee,

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in terms of the budget in the Forwards does reflect the end of certain existing programs that have timed out.

**Ms FINLAY** - Notes in other outputs do indicate that. There is nothing in the notes of this output. This output says that primarily it is from the operational efficiencies. You're expecting efficiencies and a reduction as early as next year. So, in a few weeks, there will be an expectation that the 2026-27 year has a reduction. Wondering what specifically is expected in Parks?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I will ask the secretary to address that question.

**Mr JACOBI** - I thank the member for the question. I'm not in a position to outline the specific reductions, for example in paid FTE in Parks or the reductions in Parks at this stage. There are a whole range of different activities that are currently underway, and I'd like to go into those if you allow me to have some time? So we have made substantial savings across the department already and we are on track to achieve our efficiency dividend target of \$3.4 million this year. Those savings have been made through savings on fleet, procurement, accommodation, consultancies, a whole variety of different discretionary funding sources that we have been able to trim and to achieve savings, and we will continue to stay focused over the forward Estimates in delivering further savings across those areas.

As the minister clearly outlined, there are in the Parks budget a number of outputs and projects that come to an end. So, they are contributing to the savings that you can see in the in the appropriation. But one of the key things will be, as the Premier outlined this morning, we will be commencing TNVR expressions of interest process in the next couple of weeks. We will seek expressions of interest from staff all across the department for a targeted and negotiated voluntary redundancy. I will be personally assessing each of those applications myself to determine how critical the role is to service delivery, and how much latitude we have with the forward programs that we have on our books, to afford to have that particular staff member take a voluntary redundancy. We have been doing that on our case-by-case basis. So, since March 2025, when the original rightsizing in the public service was announced, we've already made, I think it's 57 savings in paid FTE, which is quite substantial and without any material impact on operational service delivery.

I'm confident that through natural attrition - so we have a natural attrition rate of around about 13 per cent per year - that with natural attrition, so people resigning, leaving the department, moving to other positions, we will continue to be able to achieve a natural attrition rate, which will contribute to our operational efficiency targets in addition to the TNVRs that we might consider.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, minister, through you, if I could just have a follow up. It's always interesting looking at the expected outcomes of budgets and then the actuals. What you had assumed to be the budget in 2025-26 and the actual outcomes show an increase, not a decrease, despite the savings that you outline of the 57 roles that have left the Parks team without a material impact. Can you outline that?

**Mr JACOBI** - Just to clarify, that was not, that was across the whole department. So that 57 is not in Parks.

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**Ms FINLAY** - I'm only interested at the moment because that is terrifying. I mean, I think Tasmanians, as you said in your opening, love Parks, and Tasmanians and visitors alike do. Those people that know the people that work in, and support our parks, know how lean it is for them, and how much pressure and load they're feeling. So could you give me the number for parks?

**Mr JACOBI** - Like I like I said before, I don't.

**Ms FINLAY** - The ones that have already gone, not ones that are coming. You gave me a historical number there, in that process already. How many of those were from Parks?

**Mr JACOBI** - Yeah, if you just give me one minute, I'll just chase the number - 27 in total from Parks.

**Ms FINLAY** - And given that number, I'm wondering if you can table an outline of the roles that were included in that 27.

**Mr JACOBI** - We, I have to take that question on notice and see whether we actually have that specific detail, or through you minister?

**Ms MULLER** - Through you, minister. I guess that is a sort of point-in-time comparison, and what that does reflect is the increased hours in March 2025 in response to the West Coast Fire Complex. There's explanations around some of that point-in-time difference in FTE for Parks specifically.

**Mr JACOBI** - I think, through you minister, it's also really important to note that the 57 - 60 positions that have been reduced in paid FTE since March 2025 reflect a whole range of different vacancies and positions. We have in Parks, particularly, a large seasonal and transitional workforce. Some of those positions will be fixed-term positions that have just become vacant at the end of the season. Again, that is a point-in-time, many of those positions will be positions like seasonal firefighters that we would continue to recruit to ahead of the next fire season.

**Ms FINLAY** - Perhaps then I can ask a clarifying question: in terms of the core needs of Parks, so obviously you have those surge moments, and there's a seasonality, and we all understand that. But in terms of the underlying core resources required to deliver safe, well-maintained and internationally acclaimed resources that people love, what is the core positioning of Parks, and the reduction in roles in the core positioning of Parks, and do you see that there is actual capacity to continue to diminish that number, given how much pressure is already in the Parks teams, and the load that they have to deliver, you know, strong maintenance, strong delivery of asset care and investment for Tasmanian parks.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you, minister. Absolutely agree 100 per cent that the service delivery that is provided by Parks is critical to the presentation and experiences and protection of natural culture values. Very, very cognizant of that. I can assure you that to date almost every single position that has come through from Parks that needs to be recruited to has been approved to be recruited. There are only a number of positions that we have been able to either hold vacant or decide not to recruit to. I do believe that there is scope and there is room in the Parks and Wildlife Service for further reduction in equivalent paid FTE. I honestly do believe that there are positions where programs that have come to an end, those people, ideally we

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would seek to redeploy in the absolute first instance, but in the absence of being able to redeploy them or should they choose to take a voluntary redundancy, it is appropriate that we take a measured and considered view on the risk of not recruiting that position. And if it doesn't present any material risk to ongoing program or service delivery or park protection, then we should take the opportunity to see and realise it as a saving.

**Ms BADGER** - Thank you. As a part of the efficiencies that Parks are trying to find, will we be seeing any sale or disposal of Crown Land or any Parks' built assets, and can you outline what those would be if there are any?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Certainly there hasn't, I don't believe, been a change in policy around sale of Crown Land. For example, through the efficiency process there is a program of Crown Land sales that happens through Family and Services but as I say a change to that position has not, I don't believe, been made.

**Mr JACOBI** - No, that's correct minister. I think, you know, like we did for Low Head in recent weeks, we will seek expressions of interest from the community to see whether their interested in actually running and operating that facility on behalf of Parks and in collaboration with Parks, but other than the Crown Land sales program, which has deliberately identified Crown Land that is available for sale, there is no plan that I'm aware of to sell and dispose of assets.

**Ms BADGER** - Thank you. And I'd like to follow up on some questions that we asked last year in Estimates. We asked you around the \$7.8 million that's in the Budget to make Mount Field a year-round destination. I'm sure we're all very aware of the need to be honest and transparent with answers that we put forward in Estimates. We didn't get an answer as to how that funding would be spent, but two days later, an RTI came back that showed that there were five options as to how that money could be invested. So we're wondering six months on, minister, or thereabouts, if you could please outline for us which option of the five that were put to you, did you choose, if any, as to how that money would be invested at Mount Field?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. I think we have \$7.8 million to make Mount Field a year-round visitor destination and noting the fairly substantial visitation to Mount Field of recent times in the fagus season, planned improvements include improved signage, wayfinding and tracks as well as new options for public accommodation and amenities. That will significantly improve visitor safety and amenity.

Detailed planning and assessments are scheduled to commence in 2026-27 with on-ground works anticipated to commence in 2027-28. This investment builds on our existing \$2.05 million commitment to provide new arrival concourse and car park upgrades for visitors at the Mount Field National Park and look forward to those works commencing. That work is progressing - is currently in the detailed design approval stage. So in terms of, let's got to Sophie for more detail around.

**Ms MULLER** - Through you, minister, so we undertook some really detailed assessment of options around the expenditure of that \$7 billion, which really was, I guess, a desktop exercise to really kind of deeply consider some of the opportunities and constraints, particularly around walker safety, for example, along with some of the other considerations at that site around values protection.

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That options paper was considered by the minister and we haven't done significant work in terms of progressing the further scoping of the options since that time. The team that will be working on that project have been progressing the Mount Field arrival concourse work and they'll then - that's sort of well advanced and scheduled to commence next year with the approvals almost at the conclusion - they'll then, given their familiarity with the site, take on progress around further scoping of the work. There is significant further work to be done around those options, noting that it's a project that has several elements.

**Mr Di FALCO** - Minister, your department is a main contributor to your government's deer management strategy. What process does your department go through when allocating public land for hunting purposes?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Di Falco. I think we've just, in very recent times, been through the allocation of some further public land around hunting purposes. We know that wild fallow deer now occupy 27 per cent of the Tasmanian landmass and continue to have impacts wherever they find themselves. In relation to recreational hunting, it's currently approved in nine areas of reserved and FPPF land across northern Tasmania and the government has committed to make available more areas of public land for recreational deer hunting. PWS has been working with game services in conjunction with a range of sporting shooting bodies to make more available. I'm aware that approximately 24,000 hectares of additional land for hunting was identified for assessment and Jason, you might be able to provide the update as to where we are with that.

**Mr JACOBI** - I can, thank you. Through you minister, and I thank the member for the question. This was a really good process. In collaboration with SSAA, the Sporting Shooters' Association, and also ADA, we worked with them to identify a whole suite of parcels across the state that they thought would actually be fruitful in terms of realising hunting opportunity. Those parcels were then narrowed down by my team to identify a suite of locations across the state where we thought we would get the best bang for buck, pardon the expression. Parks and Wildlife Service then went through a formal - what's called reserve activity assessment process - which actually goes into a detailed assessment of each and every parcel; it looks at the natural and cultural values; it looks at issues such as access, adjacent landowners, and the proximity of those landowners; there was open consultation held with every adjoining landowner, I think dozens of landowners consulted in the implications of making these parcels available for recreational hunting. We now have a suite of I think it's 10 parcels, as the minister outlined, which are a combination of reserved land and future potential production forest land - noting of course that the reserve land parcels are a classification under the *Nature Conservation Act* that actually allows for hunting so it's consistent with the objectives of those land parcels and no doubt will provide both the recreational opportunity for hunters but also will be beneficial in terms of helping Parks and Wildlife Service to manage deer on those lands.

**CHAIR** - Do you have another question, Mr Di Falco?

**Mr Di FALCO** - I can wait for the rotation.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thanks, Chair. Minister, I'm aware of the important role the Parks and Wildlife Service plays in firefighting, fire management, and supporting firefighting efforts across Tasmania. How are we supporting the PWS to continue to play an effective role and strengthen our firefighting capacity across the state?

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**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. I appreciate the question, Mr Shelton. At first, I would acknowledge all the work that is done by our Parks staff in particular when it comes to firefighting, noting that they are often out in those wild areas, fighting alongside other agencies and this includes when fire threatens areas interstate. Earlier this year some 30 Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service staff assisted in multi-agency efforts to fight fires in Victoria and Western Australia. It's an important reciprocal thing that we do.

Parks has more than 160 personnel who are trained to fight fires in remote areas and tanker-based firefighters. In addition, there are 60 people trained to undertake roles in incident management teams and funding over the past five years has also enabled the training of PWS firefighters to be able to winch into difficult terrain to access areas to fight fires and this funding has allowed for a dedicated winch-capable helicopter to pre-position in areas of greatest risk and respond to bushfires quickly when required during the peak bushfire season which is generally mid-December to mid-March.

I'm aware winch crews successfully inserted 140 times over the 2024-25 fire season, most notably on the West Coast Fire Complex to undertake targeted control measures to prevent further spread and extinguish new fires and that's why I'm very pleased to confirm that this budget provides a further \$2.8 million over four years to support bushfire winching capability, and this capability's critical to early and rapid response which is so important.

**Ms BADGER** - Hear, hear.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I understand this can be particularly effective capability when dealing with fires started by lightning strikes and we are seeing an ever-greater incidence of that, and winch crews are most effective when dealing with multiple new starts caused by lightning strikes in events in remote areas. It is an important thing that we continue to fund and give Parks the ability to get to new starts quickly then get out of there and get to the next one. It is a challenging space.

Thanks for the question.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, just following on from the previous questions, whether to you or through you, there was a suggestion that there had already been some decisions to make vacancy holds in the previous efficiencies and also some roles not recruited and other roles that were considered not to be required. I'm just wondering whether either detailing of those roles could be provided?

I know that at our last Estimates you had that in spreadsheets and whether there would be something that you could table that would outline the positions de-identified, but just the types of positions that are included in the vacancy holds, the roles not being recruited and the roles considered not being required, in particular to Parks.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through you, minister, and I thank the member for the question. I was talking specifically at a whole-of-department level, and we are a pretty big department with a lot of different portfolios -

**Ms FINLAY** - This is the output for Parks. I'm just interested in Parks.

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**Mr JACOBI** - Just in terms of Parks, like I said before, almost every position that has come through for approval and consideration by the committee that I have established has been approved. There have been the cases where some of the positions we have to go back and seek further clarification about whether the position is fixed-term, whether it's a permanent position, what are the hours of the position. We have questioned on some occasions about whether the position can be shared with another role, or more importantly, whether we can redeploy another person from the organisation in Parks into that position and provide them with opportunities for succession. All of those considerations have been made on a case-by-case basis across a number of different positions, so it would be very difficult to provide you with a list that wouldn't just be a point-in-time list.

As I referred to before, most of the positions that I have determined to abolish are at SES level, so there are three positions at SES level across the department that I've decided not to recruit to and to abolish. They are not in the Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Ms FINLAY** - Out of interest, what are those three roles?

**Mr JACOBI** - One was the associate secretary role, the second was the Executive Director of Strategic Services and the third was the Director of Portfolio Services.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you. To date, there are no ongoing vacancies, positions not being recruited, or positions determined not to be necessary in the Parks output area?

**Mr JACOBI** - Just to be clear -

**Ms FINLAY** - I understand the comment about point-in-time, but in terms of ongoing core responsibilities, are there permanent vacancies in Parks that won't be filled, positions that you're not recruiting to or positions that you've deemed unnecessary?

**Mr JACOBI** - There's a huge turnover in Parks; positions are coming up for recruitment all of the time and we are assessing each of those positions as they come up. I really can't answer you as to whether a position that comes up in the next week would be one that we would recruit to or not recruit to because we are genuinely considering each and every position on its own merits. We always have vacancies in the Parks and Wildlife Service because there are people moving from positions and the position is vacant until we can actually recruit to it and that takes time so at any point in time, yes, there are vacancies across the Parks and Wildlife Service. Many of them, if not all of them, we are actively recruiting to but, again, it depends on the position, what it's performing, what it's doing, what is the critical need for that particular role. Again, it'll be incredibly difficult for me to answer that without finding myself next week needing to make a decision about a particular position that might be that we're not recruiting for -

**Ms FINLAY** - I understand that and you will understand that I'm not talking about churn, I'm not talking about turnover. I'm talking about the reprofiling of the teams that are delivering good outcomes to Parks, has there been a reprofiling where some of those decisions have been determined that are no longer necessary?

**Mr JACOBI** - I'm not aware of any reprofiling that has led to a decision being made, but we are very conscious of programs that are coming to an end that are not funded and how can we redeploy those staff within the Parks and Wildlife Service, or within my broader

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department, to ensure that all the skills and the benefits and the training that those people have done can continue to service both either Parks or my broader department.

**Ms FINLAY** - Minister, can I ask a question for yourself then, with the operational efficiencies that are required within Parks, what expectations that you have delivered to the team or what expectations have been brought down to you from either the Treasurer or the Premier around parks?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I'm the minister and I have responsibility for Parks, the secretary has responsibility for the department, and it is at a whole-of-department level that the efficiencies will be sought and it then becomes the job of the secretary and his team to deliver those efficiencies.

**Ms FINLAY** - The question is: have there been conversations between yourself about what your expectations are in the department, or have there been expectations from the Premier or the Treasurer to you about the expectations within parks.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Certainly, there is an expectation it's indicated in the Budget and the efficiencies are well known, I think within the department and certainly I have regular conversations with the department about efficiency measures and how we are going in terms of meeting those measures and it is at the operational level and I leave it in the hands of the secretary and his team.

**Ms BADGER** - Minister, notwithstanding that you weren't here when this decision was made. The acting minister at the time, Madeleine Ogilvie, has renewed for 12 months onto the deed of variation over Halls Island at Lake Malbena. That is despite a letter from the entire Crossbench expressing deep concerns that are shared throughout the community about the renewal of that lease, despite the fact that the proponent, Daniel Hackett, was still not responding to some correspondence from different people, concerns about the ongoing liquidation that Wild Drake is in, and certainly a growing concerns over the condition of Halls Hut notwithstanding that is on a different lease.

Minister, my question is why? Why did you renew that? What's changed in this situation that has given you some kind of confidence, or your predecessor in minister Ogilvie, that somehow this is going to turn around and it's going to be fixed and Hall's Island's going to be given the care that it deserves.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. I appreciate the question, and I acknowledge your long-standing interest in Halls and Lake Malbena. The first thing I'd say is that there is a lease in place till 2038 and the extension approved by -

**Ms BADGER** - Sorry, can I just double check, you just said 2038?

**Mr DUIGAN** - The lease is in place until 2038. The extension approved by the acting minister relates to a deadline for a milestone to be met, and this timing is dependent on the federal government's approval process. As you know, it's currently in the EPBC process and still waiting approval in that forum. The deed of variation is clear that while an active assessment process continues, the Minister for Parks should not unreasonably withhold an extension to the deed of variation.

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I think that is reasonably clear cut in terms of that provision that the deed - while an active assessment process continues, the Minister for Parks should not unreasonably withhold an extension that and that is the advice that I have lent on having provided a similar extension previously.

Responsibility sits with the proponent around aspects of this development proposal and there is no guarantee of future extensions. The lease and the deed of variation have been publicly available online as active disclosure for some years.

In regards to the hut, I understand Heritage Tasmania has sought a condition update from the leaseholder and will determine further actions based on the response, and it would be my expectation the proponent responds to Heritage Tasmania on the condition of the hut and the potential need for maintenance. I have asked my department, in terms of Parks, to keep me updated on the matter and provide further advice as may be required.

**Ms BADGER** - Thank you, minister. I do understand in the letter that acting minister Ogilvie, at the time, sent to Daniel Hackett, it had in relation to it the inspection of the condition of the hut and in addition works to be undertaken, and it had a deadline of before the winter season this year, which arguably could be today, although there was no specified date on that letter. Can you talk us through whether you're aware that that assessment and works, if they can be done, have been done and what would happen if those works haven't been done?

And just on your previous answer, I'll just get you to check again that the lease on the island was 2038.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Let me check again, that's my understanding. I think the extension is not to the lease itself per se, but to the -

**Ms BADGER** - No, because it's to the deed of variation. But I just note obviously in the lease and licence portal that's online -

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yep.

**Ms BADGER** - and that isn't updated with the deeds of variation, it's the old lease only that's on there. That certainly doesn't have the date, as far as I'm aware. I'm just trying to rapidly check it now. It certainly doesn't say 2038, so if there's been a change to the lease itself, if we can get that updated online, and I'd encourage you to pop the deeds of variation on there as well.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Are they not on there? They should be on there.

**Ms BADGER** - No, we go through this every time, I'm afraid, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Can we make sure the deed of variation gets put on there and just in terms of the lease end date?

**Ms BADGER** - Yep, that's correct, that's my understanding.

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**Mr DUIGAN** - Okay, 2038. And we were talking about the hut and the heritage inspections and that is a matter for the Heritage portfolio, so I won't delve too deeply into that other than to ask if Parks knows whether that has progressed or not.

**Ms MULLER** - Through you, minister, we don't have any further advice beyond what you've indicated, that the request has been made and we're awaiting advice from Heritage.

**Mr Di FALCO** - Minister, as part of the deer management within the Central Plateau Conservation Area, volunteers were required to undertake training delivered by Parks. Minister, the last time this course was delivered was three years ago and why was it delivered by a New South Wales-based organisation?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Di Falco. I'll pass to Sophie presumably for that one, or Jason.

**Mr JACOBI** - I thank the member for the question. Just to be clear, as I understand it, the training that was delivered was delivered by a specialist in aerial shooting and he was New South Wales based. It wasn't that the training was a requirement to do down here, it was just that the person who conducted the training had a particular specialty and expertise in that space.

In terms of why was it delivered. There are a whole range of accreditation requirements that we expected of the recreational shooters that participated in the program. This really was about all of the people that stuck their hand up to participate on the ground shooting program, that we could have the confidence that there was a complete understanding about the objectives that would need to be met and that the standard of animal welfare, particularly, would be maintained throughout the exercise.

As you know, we haven't had to repeat that training over the last couple of years because we've continued to use the shooters that were originally trained. So, we have an accredited list of people who continue to put their hand up and help us with that program each year.

**Mr Di FALCO** - Okay, but why can't someone local provide that training in the event that, you know, you increase the pool of people who are helping out with culls?

**Mr JACOBI** - I think that would be ideal if we could find an accredited training person, or do it through a registered package program, that would be an ideal outcome. The more people that could participate, the better.

**Mr Di FALCO** - Organisations like the Australian Deer Association (ADA)?

**Mr JACOBI** - Absolutely. We've been in discussions with ADA and Sporting Shooters' Association of Australia (SSAA) in the past about training and accreditation. I can't tell you exactly where that is at, but I think, yes, we would be hoping to have a program in place where more people could be accredited.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, I was actually in George Town a couple of weeks ago, and while I was there took an opportunity to drive out through Low Head and have a look around and my question really goes to the Low Head Historic Site. We know that it's a jewel in the crown of Australia's maritime history, so what is the government doing to ensure that the site

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is operated in a way that will honour the significance of the past and work to benefit regional northern Tasmania's community in the future.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks Mr Shelton. Yes, it's a, it's a good spot and offers a lot of value, I think, to George Town, north George Town and Low Head. Pleased to share with the committee that the opportunity to manage the Low Head site is now available for the first time in more than a decade. Expressions of interest for the future use and operation of the site opened just over a week ago, and this process delivers a rare opportunity for proponents to bring new ideas, investment and vision to one of Tasmania's most distinctive and recognisable heritage locations, and we're looking for an operator with the capacity and ambition to think creatively about what Low Head historic site could become, while obviously respecting those outstanding heritage values. It is a unique opportunity to take stewardship of one of Tasmania's great historic properties and contribute to the ongoing celebration of Tasmanian heritage.

Expressions of interest will be assessed by an evaluation panel, which will recommend a preferred proponent. An appropriate lease will be negotiated reflecting the preferred proponent's vision for the site in concert with heritage, community and partnership requirements, and we look forward to the outcomes of this process and what it will deliver for the site in the wider region.

Do we know when we will have the end of that EOI, when we would see those results? Questions without notice, don't ask those. Thank you. Thanks for the question.

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm interested across a lot of particular areas in this department and other departments. There are a lot of pressures being felt by people, particularly working in isolated areas, or doing a load where they may feel under-supported and under-resourced to deliver tasks with high expectation. I think we went over this last year, but what's the number of people within the Parks area that are currently off work on workers compensation?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, and while the our department heads are looking for that, I will make a quick comment about the work that they do and the work that you have referenced in your question, because it is really, when you find yourself often out in the far-flung corners of the state and you run into Parks staff or as I have the opportunity to, you know, go and meet with them as they go about their job, they do a fantastic amount of work. Some of it's not very glamorous, but they're clearly connected to the places and, you know, are such a value-add for people who visit our parks, you know, when they get to talk to the people delivering the services, it's always a good thing. In terms of those particular questions, we believe we have it -

**Ms FINLAY** - Perhaps while they're busily looking, you might also be able to find if there are any references in there to any ED5s particular to Parks at the moment as well. Minister, I'm sure you have had raised with you as no doubt other members of the committee have, concerns from people working in Parks often, probably mostly, people that work in Parks do it because they love it. They have a passion for Tasmania and for the outdoors, and therefore they feel compelled to go beyond areas of support because they want to deliver a good job.

One of the introduction areas of efficiencies was around accommodation and fleet, and I've heard stories of rangers, particularly in remote areas, having to organise their own accommodation. They might be tenting out with their own gear, they might be having to find their own ways to support themselves working for multiple nights away from home. I'm

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wondering if you have a comment on things that may have been raised with you in that area and what you're doing to seek to support those people, passionate people, that do great work, often under-resourced and under-supported in Parks?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. Appreciate that question, and wholeheartedly agree with your assertion that Parks people are pretty passionate about the work they do. I think that would be, universally, my experience. I think it is very important, you know at an operational management level that we set very clear expectations about what is a reasonable ask of somebody and what is not, and that we are not setting expectations that people are doing things outside the bounds of their day-to-day work. That is something that we have spoken about in this forum and other forums, I am aware of and it would be my expectation that that is communicated to members of the Parks department that they do their job, but it's important that they don't take it home and they don't make it become their life -

**Ms FINLAY** - Do you have concern with the efficiencies, that's going to get worse?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Look, we need to be clear about our priorities. We need to recruit and staff those priorities appropriately and look for efficiencies that we're able to make. It's important that we spend our money wisely and we need to do that. We've got to cut our cloth. More pointedly to the details that were asked previously.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you, minister, just in relation to psychological compensation claims in the Parks and Wildlife Service between 1 July 2025 and 31 March 2026, there is one position in the Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you. Does that chart go back five years?

**Mr JACOBI** - No, I don't have five years' worth of data on hand. I can check some of my other folders just to see if - if I could just look, in the next couple of minutes I'll have a look and see what I've got.

In relation to Employment Direction No. 5 (ED5s) across the department, again I won't go into the detail of the Parks and Wildlife Service because misconduct or ED5 related investigations are sensitive and by getting down to that level of detail I might be able to identify the particular person. But to be clear, the number of ED5s between 1 July 2025 and 31 March 2026, there are six in total across the whole of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas).

I'll look for the psychological claim data in the meantime if we can go to another question.

**Ms FINLAY** - With the psychological claims in terms of workers compensation, physical claims, or other categories of claims. How many categories of claims do you have?

**Mr JACOBI** - I do have that handy.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you. I appreciate the clarity, but I was after an overall number.

**Mr JACOBI** - If you look across the three categories of disease, physical injury, and psychosocial across the whole of the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS), there are 23 claims that were on foot between 1 July 2025 and 31 March 2026.

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**Ms FINLAY** - Would you characterise that as an uptick, a regular number or a reduction?

**Mr JACOBI** - I would have to double check the figures in comparison to the previous year.

**Ms BADGER** - Minister, I agree with your previous statement: it is very important that we spend our money wisely. I'm just interested in the recent boat retrieval from Halls Island. Is that something that the proponent, Daniel Hackett, initiated or was that a request from Parks? Were any public funds used for the retrieval of that boat?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Boat retrieval? Sophie, boat retrieval?

**Ms MULLER** - I'm not aware of any boat retrieval activities that have been undertaken.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Anyone know that boat retrieval in the room? Tory?

**Ms ROSS** - Daniel Hackett has advised us that [inaudible] in his boat have disappeared but he is following that up directly.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Now do we need to transpose that so it can be recorded into the record?

**Ms MULLER** - I might just repeat that. There's indication that the boat went missing, I think, was what Tory indicated then, but I'm not aware of Parks itself being involved in any activities to retrieve.

**Ms BADGER** - Can we get that followed up? The boat went missing. It was presumed by people that you would need a helicopter or something to remove it. It's like a kind of metal dinghy. It's not a pack raft. You couldn't exactly carry it easily. Notwithstanding, it could be possible, I won't rule that out, but if we could follow that up, we'll get that taken on notice. That would be great. Thank you, minister.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Just the actual question, what are you asking me to find whether the whether the boat was taken or - what can I provide to you? Status update on the boat?

**Ms BADGER** - Thank you.

**Mr DUIGAN** - And the boat is known? It is a known boat?

**Ms MULLER** - Yes.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through you, minister. I don't have the exact figures for Parks, and again, I'd be concerned about getting down to that level of detail. But if I look at the compensation claims, and noting that not all of these claims have been accepted, these are claims have been made for mental stress. We're actually seeing a significant reduction in the 2025-26 financial year. It's gone from 10 in 2022-23, to 13 in 2023-24, to 15 in 2024-25 and down to seven in 2025-26. So on average, you know, we still are tracking at relatively stable level.

**Ms FINLAY** - And the overall numbers across the three categories, was that just psychological?

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**Mr JACOBI** - No, this was just, this was just mental stress claims.

**Ms FINLAY** - Yes, and so the overall?

**Mr JACOBI** - So psychological claims across the whole of the department is seven in total, and I think I mentioned before, it was one in Parks.

**Ms BADGER** - When Parks announced their interim content creation, or influencer policy if you like, part of the announcement that came out and was reported on in the ABC was around it being an interim policy, and that there would be future legislation put in place. Can you talk us through what the time-frame for that legislation would be and essentially what the legislation would actually cover, I suppose, in a broad sense?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Okay, so as I'm aware there is some legislation coming through that will address the content creator licence amongst a number of amendments. In early October last year, we approved the establishment of the Enthusiast Business Licence (EBL) for amateur small scale videographers and photographers, including social media content creators, which enables the sale of content or receiving a consideration in exchange for content. The EBL minimises the financial burden on the licensee. The fee is \$100 for a licence that is valid for up to two years. Due to the low-risk nature of the activities of the licensees, public liability insurance is not required and so, as you mentioned, we're working towards a legislative change to remove the need for a business licence for the cohort of people currently required to hold a business licence. That would have a number of other flow-on effects for things that we're seeking to achieve around red tape.

**Ms BADGER** - Yeah, sure. Is there a timeframe that you're looking at for that?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yeah. My expectation is we'll have that in the parliament this year. Or is that not right?

**Mr JACOBI** - I think we're looking to progress the drafting, drafting the bill this year.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Drafting the bill.

**Mr Di FALCO** - Minister, you've just announced that you will be opening additional Crown land for hunting. Can you clarify if Alma Tiers Conservation Area, Eastern Tiers Conservation Area, Hardings Falls Recreational Reserve, Avoca Regional Reserve, Royal George Regional Reserve, Snow Hill Regional Reserve, Midday Hill Conservation Area, and River Hill Conservation Area will be opened, and could you table the full list of time-frames? Sorry about dumping a whole list on you.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yeah, no. And I'm vaguely concerned that my list of names may not necessarily correspond with the names that you have that you have put forward. New deer hunting areas: Eastern Tiers, Applawn Regional Reserve deer hunting. Then there's a couple of FPPFL lots in the Eastern Tiers, there's the Swan River deer hunting north area, Swan River deer hunting south area, Cygnet River deer hunting area. That's in the Eastern Tiers. In the Fingal Valley there are two blocks of FPPFL land. West of Ben Lomond there's another block of FPPFL land. Black Jack Hill, is Black Jack Hill deer hunting area. Then there is, in the existing deer hunting areas, which I don't need to go through presumably. I'm happy to table that document if that lines up with the document that you're seeking.

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**Mr Di FALCO** - Okay. Was there a reason why these other ones weren't included?

**Mr JACOBI** - I thank the member for the question. I suspect that after a full analysis of the parcels, they were impractical. There were a whole - some of the parcels were just too small to be viable. Some of the parcels, I understand, were difficult to access; in particular, there was just no logical - there was no way to get there. Also I suspect that maybe through the RAA process, we identified other impediments that have ruled them out.

**Mr Di FALCO** - Okay, so who undertook that analysis?

**Mr JACOBI** - It was led by the Parks and Wildlife Service. I will take the opportunity to compliment them on an extraordinary amount of work that was done over quite a short time-frame to identify these parcels to work with the industry and the shooters to do the assessments to, and the assessments were rigorous. You know, the consultation that was held, I have seen - even going down to each and every landholder, that's a lot of work in that.

In terms of the time-frame to make these available, I believe the Minister for Primary Industries will make an announcement in the next couple of days, but I suspect we're not far off that. The team have been in my department developing a new booking system, so you know the ballot that exists at the moment? We're combining the ballot into the new booking system with these additional parcels. It's transformational in terms of providing a much easier way for hunters to log in and register their booking. It's built off a platform that we've used previously for camping. I think it'll make a substantial difference to hunters being able to know and have the confidence that they can go to a particular reserve and not come into contact with, you know, too many other hunters at the same time. It's just a case of us now working through the practicalities of loading those parcels into the booking system and then the booking system going live.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I'll just quickly make the point that I remain very supportive of providing more access to recreational hunters in the deer space.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, one of the enjoyments you get as a local member is when you see a car and a caravan driving around the state and pulled up at the Bracknell free camp or wherever you are and having a chat to where they've been. It was only recently I was talking to one couple and they were telling me they've been to the east coast and as far down south as Hastings and had a dip in the pool, or was at the pool and through the caves. Of course, over my lifetime we visited, probably - well, several times anyway, and it's a great natural asset to the state. For the locals down there, of course, it has that local value as well and it brings the tourism visitors to the local area. As one of the more important natural assets, I'm interested to know, what is being done to secure the site as a much-loved attraction and ensure it offers a contemporary visitor experience?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, Mr Shelton for the question. Appreciate that. I expect many people have had the opportunity to get down to Hastings and the caves and the thermal pool and surrounding attractions, and it's long been a popular venue for locals and visitors alike.

In 2025 around 60,000 people or 59,000 people visited the caves and thermal springs and I'm pleased to advise the committee that an Expression of Interest process will be opening to canvas proposals to reimagine the site and deliver on its potential. It's hoped the process will deliver a new lease of life at the site. Proponents are invited to submit creative conceptual

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proposals for a reimagined tourism destination on the doorstep of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. We're looking for an operator who can offer innovative, sustainable and appropriate visitor experience. I believe a shortlist of respondents will be developed after the EOI process closes. They'll be asked to - all those respondents will be provided with further detail on the infrastructure and operation of the site. Expressions of interests are expected to close in late July.

Importantly, cave tours at Newdegate Cave will continue to be operated by Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service. This is about delivering on our commitment to significantly renovate and upgrade the precinct to refresh this iconic site as a regional tourism draw card for the far south. The caves remain the province of Parks all in the broader precinct, which is an opportunity for a new proponent.

**Mr SHELTON** - A great opportunity for someone.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Indeed.

**Ms FINLAY** - Just following on from my fellow committee member's questions regarding the deer management. Have there been any incidences with the new areas opened up or the areas within reserves where there is the other program that he spoke about with conflicts with other recreational users? I've had some concerns expressed in terms of season overlap, with Inland Fisheries and things. I'm just wondering what active consideration is being given to those competing demands?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think it's a good question. The secretary spoke to the level of detail that had been gone into in terms of it's not just as simple as opening them up as it might appear on face value, but to talk about the particular question -

**Ms FINLAY** - I am fully supportive of all deer management. I am interested in understanding the squeeze.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, of course.

**Mr JACOBI** - Just to be clear, the new parcels have not been opened yet. They will be open shortly, but that they have not been opened quite yet.

In terms of the assessment process, it would have adequately dealt with any other recreational or operators that were using those reserves and I'm pretty confident, without going into the detail, that most of these reserves were not highly used by other recreational or commercial operators of any sort.

To come to your point about potential conflict: there was a conflict in the Highlands around the recreational shooting component of the Walls of Jerusalem deer control program and the trout fishing season. What we identified was that when we were initially going to conduct the Walls of Jerusalem recreational hunting ground program, it was in the last couple of weeks of the trout season and it would have meant that those last couple of weeks we would have had to close the access to trout fishers. We decided against that and just deferred the Walls of Jerusalem ground shooting program until after the trout season had finished.

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**Ms FINLAY** - For consideration of up-and-coming seasons, have there been similar concerns or overlaps or times where there's been consideration for the on-ground shooting and the opening of the season?

**Mr JACOBI** - It's an interesting point. That is the only conflict that I'm aware of and what we'll turn our mind to over the course of the next 12 months, in consultation with the Inland Fisheries Service, is whether we could shorten the season for a couple of lakes in the Walls of Jerusalem area and give anglers adequate notice of that, maybe we take it back two or three weeks, which would enable hunters to do the ground shoot earlier, which I think would also be beneficial in terms of the number of deer taken.

We're very aware of that particular issue. I think we'll turn our mind to it. We don't want to displace trout fishers. We want to also though give the recreational ground shooting team the best ability in daylight and good weather to get any deer that are in that area, so it's a bit of a balance. It might be that we alternate from year to year or that we stagger the seasons. The most important thing is giving people plenty of notice so that they can plan for it.

**Ms FINLAY** - Because that's active under current consideration in terms of how best to manage that?

**Mr JACOBI** - Absolutely. We need to turn our mind to just that particular rub which is something worth addressing.

**Ms FINLAY** - In terms of rub, there was the question around the social media licencing and processes and I'd like to understand more the particular risk or concerns that are being managed by that process which has been implemented and whether you feel that there's a net benefit to investing in some opportunities to promote Tasmania, but we're also restricting, and you would probably use the word 'appropriate', through management other opportunities to promote Tasmania through social media influences. What's the consideration of the net benefit to Tasmania of those new regulations that are due to be implemented?

**Mr DUGAN** - As a starting point, from my perspective and since coming to the role, I would like to have seen it easier for small content creators to access our parks and make their content and put it online. I guess that's been the small business licence which was the immediate first step that was available to us without the requirement for legislative change. The legislative change will enable us to make it even subsequently easier for that to occur, and the net benefit to Tasmania around the role of influencers.

**Ms FINLAY** - What do you see are the risks, I suppose, and, therefore, the reason to have to establish that framework versus the benefits of doing that.

**Mr DUGAN** - There is you know, of course, the promotion of Tasmania, and the drawing of visitors to the state has benefit. Making sure that we are sending the right message to people about, you know, not necessarily trampling all over aspects of the parks that, you know, don't respond well to that is also an important part of that. So, you know, getting the balance right I think is probably where we need to be. Jason, also -

**Ms FINLAY** - That was my question in terms of that net benefit of the risks versus the limitations.

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**Ms MULLER** - I guess it's about managing the impact of the activity in terms of those important values. So, where content creators or photographers are staying on track using a handheld device, that impact is negligible. It's, you know, equivalent to someone that's just enjoying recreational activities in our parks and reserves. So, under our current legislation, they're required to have a business licence, but what we've done is, where that impact is minimal, is to facilitate that activity in a streamlined simple manner while also educating them around appropriate uses, as the minister indicated.

**Mr JACOBI** - If I can, I think it's worth being really clear here that if you're just doing a walk and you're carrying your iPhone or your camera and you're taking photos for your own personal enjoyment, knock yourself out. We don't want to stop anybody from doing that. If, however, you fall into the next category, which is this emerging social influencer category, and, you know, there's the possibility that the images that you might capture might be used for commercial gain at a point in time, then you need to have a licence, because we need to put some protections around where you go and how you do it and how you use those images, because they can have a material impact on natural and cultural values.

Then you flip into the next category, which is people who are genuinely coming to me as the Director of Parks and Wildlife and seeking an approval for doing a motion picture film. There are a whole lot of different caveats and conditions that we need to put in place to manage that particular behaviours. That might include drones, and we often approve drones but under quite specific controls so that they don't impact on raptors; we make sure that we know where people are going so they don't spread phytophthora. All of those considerations come into play, particularly when you're dealing with larger groups. We absolutely can see the benefit and work very closely with our colleagues in Tourism Tasmania to encourage and support people being able to take images of our natural areas for the benefits of bringing people to the state.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Just before we commence, sorry, we have a boat update that Sophie is able to provide.

**Ms MULLER** - Just to confirm that Parks has not been involved in any activities around retrieving or otherwise a boat. I do understand there was perhaps some social media commentary about the boat, which I haven't sighted myself, but -

**Ms BADGER** - Parks had nothing to do with it. No public funds. Thank you for chasing that up. I'm glad we sorted that out.

In regards to the Reserve Activity Assessment (RAA) reforms, as a part of those, and to increase transparency, the government did commit to providing regular updates of Reserve Activity Assessment level 2 and level 3s that were underway. When are we going expect to be able to see those?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you and I think it is an important part of our RAA reform process and providing that extra visibility. I must admit I had a look on the Parks website on the weekend, I think, looking for level 2 RAAs and couldn't find it immediately obvious where they were, but then I might be looking in the wrong place. I introduce to the table Danielle Poirier, Director (Major Projects and Infrastructure). Danielle, if you're able to update us here on the RAA process and the transparency, please.

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**Ms POIRIER** - At the moment we're working through some of the remaining items for transparency improvements as part of the remainder work in the reforms of the Reserve Activity Assessment process. As part of that, we will be looking at some of those improvements such as improving the visibility on level 2 RAAs. It's part of the package of work that we're working through at the moment and, so, we hope to see that this year, to be able to see that reporting that's available and that will be something that will be looking at the process or the point at which RAA is in a level 2 process, and the level 3s will continue to be online as they proceed through the process.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Safe to say level 2 RAAs will be displayed, and level 3s.

**Ms BADGER** - Regards to the works that are happening on McCall Road, or the Franklin Dam Road, they've sparked a lot of community interest and narration lately. I understand it may have been partially confirmed in the Legislative Council that these works are happening to facilitate a half-rafting experience on the Franklin. Can you confirm if that's the case or what else this road might be used for, and the total funds that are being put towards those works?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. My understanding, and I did answer a question on this the other day, was that these were scheduled roadworks in the under \$20,000 bracket. But, Sophie, you might have more to say on Mount McCall?

**Ms MULLER** - The works were sort of routine maintenance works that were undertaken to the value of around \$20,000, and my understanding is that that particular road is consistent with the 1999 and the 2016 TWWHA Management Plans, which has recognised this is a four-wheel-drive access route, and that's been the case for sort of decades. The purpose of that road is both to support four-wheel-drive access but also to support safety access and commercial rafting operations in the Gordon River.

**Ms BADGER** - Sure, I guess it's a bit more than a four-wheel-drive track. With the works, you could - for what's visible certainly from the from the outset of that road - you could quite easily get a two-wheel-drive vehicle up there. So, I guess, how that then sits in with the management plan, particularly when the management plan prior to the one that you've just cited, the 1992 management plan, did recommend the closure of the road to retain the wilderness qualities of that area.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I have ridden my motorbike up the Mount McCall Track road and, at that time, and that would have been six months ago, and it was very much a four-wheel-drive track at that point.

**Ms BADGER** - Yes, prior to the works.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yeah, and I guess, you know, maintenance works occur and put it in a good state, and then weather occurs which puts it in a less good state over time, but, as I understand, routine maintenance, but yeah, and I do have a formal reply coming to your office on that issue.

**Mr Di FALCO** - Minister, you mentioned earlier a booking platform. Will Sustainable Timbers be included? And is there a consistent approach, as this strategy crosses three ministries?

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**Mr DUIGAN** - In terms of booking hunting access to those new reserves and existing reserves, I would need to pass to the secretary for that detail.

**Mr JACOBI** - I don't believe we've got any STT parcels on that booking system at the moment, but there is absolutely no reason over time why we couldn't combine both the STT booking system and this one.

**Mr SHELTON** - So, there's a bit happening in Parks, and, as a part of Lyons, for the next few months, the Tasman Arch and Devils Kitchen, I understand there's some upgrades there and, so, this for the Tasman tourism sector is a very important area for them. So can you update the committee on exactly what's being done to revitalise Tasman Arch and Devil's Kitchen in the Tasman National Park, and the changes visitors can expect to see in the future?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, indeed. Thank you, Mr Shelton. I can confirm infrastructure upgrades to another of Tasmania's fantastic national parks are underway. Works began in April to make parts of the Tasman National Park more accessible, and this is a really important piece of work, you know, this accessibility piece that people of all abilities can get out and enjoy our parks. The Tasmanian government is investing \$1.65 million in the upgrades and minor changes to walking tracks and platforms at the popular Tasman Arch and Devils Kitchen coastal site. AJR Construct, a Tasmanian company, is being contracted to deliver the infrastructure improvements and these works will benefit 25 Tasmanians employed in roles.

This project follows on from stage 1 of the Tasman Gateway project completed in 2022 that included new public toilet facility, upgraded car park and dedicated bus layby area. I thank the community for their patience during the upgrades, which have meant some closure to visitors until the end of July. We know that walkers and visitors to these special places are quite encouraged when they say works ongoing.

I understand access to the Waterfall Bay track from Devils Kitchen has also been closed during construction. Entry remains open from Waterfall Bay Road and Tasman Arch and Devils Kitchen works are part of a wider program to improve accessibility in our parks and reserves.

On that front, upgrades have recently been delivered at Goblin Forest, the Stanley Nut Reserve and Ferndene. I've been up to the ones at Ferndene, and they are great - the follow-on from works completed at Dove Lake Boardwalk in December 2023.

As I say, access is a great way to make our state more inclusive, and accessibility upgrades will continue into the future.

**Mr SHELTON** - Very good for what is now the electorate of Lyons and may not be in the future, as there are three Lyons members at the table. Future Franklin members could be visiting it.

**Ms FINLAY** - Last year, I was making some enquiries around the risk register in Parks and the maintenance schedules. I know with the resources available it is always difficult to keep up to date with maintenance schedules. I'm just wondering within the parks area specifically how concerned you are with the delays in maintenance and how far behind the maintenance schedule is. Can you outline specifically - and you might have a chart for this -

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how many particular assets around toilets, tracks, bridges, roads, huts and visitor facilities are currently overdue in their maintenance?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you. I appreciate your question. While we're we are looking for that level of detail, I am pleased to be able to point to a further \$12 million in the budget that didn't exist previously to address exactly the sort of issues you're talking about. \$4 million a year, noting that Parks looks after a suite of assets with a billion-dollar value. It is a very substantial job and there is prioritisation required and, in some circumstances, you know, potentially a way that we look at the landscape as to what is the correct level of service delivery.

**Ms FINLAY** - I suppose I'm interested in the answer to that particularly because of the load on workforce under more and more pressure all the time, but also the safety for visitors, whether they be locals or tourists in terms of historical overdue maintenance, and then the efficiencies that are required to be realised, you will have less to do more year on year going forward. I am wondering what the current status is with the delays and whether you have an opinion on how you feel about despite that extra investment that's not going to bring it up.

**Mr DUIGAN** - In terms of the question you ask around maintenance and those types of things that will bring it up. I would point to that, and I'm pleased to see it there.

I note the budget that didn't pass had an even bigger uptick and I really like that budget for that particular aspect that this one has an uptick, and I'd ask Sophie or Jason to speak to this.

**Ms MULLER** - We have our asset management system, which is the of key source of truth for capturing the state and condition and detail around those 34,000 assets at Parks is responsible for. We work really closely with our regional staff and our major projects team to drive a prioritised list of upgrades to invest in and particularly that \$12 million over the next three years is an uplift on the \$1 million that we currently have to invest in our asset maintenance. We're working really closely with those teams on that prioritised list and some of the things that we think about are asset criticality; visitor service impacts and visitor safety issues; operational priorities such as fire and incident management; planning complexity, and availability of staff and contractors; where there's efficiencies to be gained by doing multiple things in the one area, for example. So, planning is underway for the uplift in the delivery of that maintenance program and that will make a substantial inroad in terms of addressing that prioritised list of maintenance works.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you. A substantial inroad, but it won't fully realise the backlog. It will make improvements, which is great and it's an increased investment, but it won't make whole all of the historical maintenance issues.

**Ms MULLER** - I think it's an ongoing rolling program of work that, you know, continues to be overseen through the asset management system. You know, obviously decisions are made over time, so, while you might have an asset that you hadn't planned to do work on at one point in time over the course of the year becomes a priority because it's had an unplanned failure, for example. So, we really are prioritising and juggling the delivery of our asset management program depending on need.

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**Ms FINLAY** - And you feel confident in terms of the availability of either team members who would routinely do some of this work or contractors that come in - the availability of contractors to do the work relative to the uptick?

**Ms MULLER** - Yes

**Ms BADGER** - Over recent years, we've seen a series of serious impacts on the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, from the serious bushfires the summer prior through to deer and other invasive species as well. What's the status update on the overdue State of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA) report? When can we expect to see that released, and what's the hold up been?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I believe it is scheduled to be released in 2027, I would have said. I beg your pardon? Sorry we're not talking about the management plan, State of the TWWHA, I will hand to Sophie and Jason for that one.

**Ms MULLER** - We have a State of the TWWHA report that's been in progress for a couple of years, and that's been through several iterations and engagement, for example, with our National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council (NPWAC), our national advisory council. That work remains in draft, but it is still under review and we hope to have it released at some stage this year. We've also, I guess, considered that report in the context of the management plan review to ensure that the two are aligned and avoid confusion about the role and purpose of the two documents.

**Ms BADGER** - Great, and can you provide an update on what progress has been made on commencing and indeed completing the 10 packages or projects that were identified in the detailed plan for a comprehensive cultural assessment of the TWWHA. This is following on from questions in last Estimates as well.

**Mr DUIGAN** - We understand that it potentially lives in a different portfolio, but the secretary is able to - although is walking away from the table, so, it reduces his ability to speak to some level of detail on that. I believe it is in the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio, but it would appear that we have magically got something.

**Mr JACOBI** - I do

**Mr DUIGAN** - Noting the crossover of TWWHA management into Parks.

**Mr JACOBI** - So, yes, they're in 10 packages. All of those programs are funded from the \$5.1 million TWWHA funding that we received from the Commonwealth Government, which is matched by the Tasmanian Government. The current projects that are being delivered by the Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania include the Aboriginal Community Access Visits project. That's a really valuable opportunity to take Aboriginal people onto country. So, we continue to use that as a chance to take Aboriginal people from across Tasmania to extraordinary sites in the TWWHA, and that's ongoing. The At Risk Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Sites project is another program and that aims to identify at-risk Aboriginal culture heritage sites and landscapes within the TWWHA and determine appropriate actions for their effective ongoing management. A lot of that includes GIS modelling and LiDAR digital imagery recording. It's invaluable in terms of being able to look at past condition and future condition and to mitigate

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against that, and we've also done a bit of work around monitoring significant Aboriginal sites, including rock markings.

There's also the Highlands to Lakes project, which is underway at the moment, I don't know if you've heard about that, but that's a project to improve understanding of the management and occupation of the Highland lakes by Aboriginal people, including identifying the adaptive responses to climate changes. That's been really informative, particularly around Aboriginal people's relationship with country and cedar gum that's in that area.

The other is the Southern Lacuna project. The project aims to improve our understanding of the management, use and occupation of inland areas of the TWHHA by Aboriginal people. This has been enhancing our understanding and supports advice and support for cultural values management.

Just to go to the projects that were completed in-between the financial year 2019-20, and the financial year 2024-25. The first ones I spoke about were the sort of current projects underway. The ones completed are:

- Rock Art in the Landscape and Seascape -

I can talk in more detail for these if you would like.

- Assistant Aboriginal Heritage Advisors Program (That was employment of Aboriginal people in AHT and giving them training in cultural heritage management);
- the post-contact and shared values project;
- the Aboriginal cultural and heritage awareness training;
- the guide for interpretation and presentation of Aboriginal cultural values;
- cultural burning workshops;
- the stabilisation of Aboriginal heritage site AH552.

There are a further seven projects as scheduled or will continue to be delivered between 2026 and 2028, and I can talk to those if you'd like:

- the Holocene seascapes and coastal settlement;
- People in the Button Grass;
- strategic responses to predictive and unexpected natural disasters and climatic events;
- reviewing, building and integrating robust systems for Aboriginal cultural values management;
- at-risk Aboriginal cultural heritage sites project;
- other community access visits, which I said before was ongoing, and;
- The TWHHA Cultural Values Climate Change Adaptation Strategy.

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**Mr Di FALCO** - Minister, the Inland Fishery Services acknowledged a downturn in fees over the past five years. Have you seen a similar decrease in Parks permits? Do you believe the access is contributing, or does your data say differently?

**Mr DUIGAN** - In terms of Parks permits, like park entry passes?

**Mr Di FALCO** - Yeah.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I certainly don't believe so. I think our parks are very popular and we're seeing, potential uplift and having things like 'pay and display' Parks ticketing machines has delivered even further on that. Jason, I'm happy for you to speak to that. But certainly not would be my answer to that. We would expect to see you know we know that people come to Tasmania for our parks. It is a very robust pillar of our visitor economy. So anything you would say about Parks?

**Ms MULLER** - Through you, minister, just to sort of add a little bit more detail to that response. We've had significant growth in our revenue through our Parks Pass sales. So that's up 15.4 per cent to April compared to the same period the previous year, so significant growth in Parks Passes, but also in our other commercial products as well, so accommodation, experiences et cetera, those products are generating, as at the end, of April \$7.8 million, compared to the full year revenue last year of \$7.4 million. A really pleasing uplift across the board in terms of Parks-generated revenue, and that revenue all goes back into be reinvested in Parks, importantly.

**Mr DUIGAN** - That was the point I was going to make, that every single dollar that we collect in terms of park entry fees and those other issue, other products from Parks go back into managing Parks which is critically important.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you, minister, I note that the Budget includes funding for the Tamar Island Wetlands, which is a well known and popular area on the fringe of Launceston City and it's now without the without the resident bull that used to be there, but can you outline what the funding is being used for and how this is expected to enhance the visitor experience and also care for the Tamar ecosystem?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks, Mr Shelton. Yes, indeed, we are investing more than \$3 million to replace sections of the boardwalk and improve, I think, some bridges and things along that popular walkway.

The Tamar Island Wetland is a unique estuarine wetland ecosystem of mudflats, lagoons and islands and it's, of course, enjoyed by many locals and national and international visitors. The island focuses on educational interpretation and is also a great spot to see birdlife in Tasmania with around 60 species identified in the area. Visitors can explore the extensive wetland habitat managed by the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service and wander along the accessible boardwalk - again, one of those important accessible assets that we have in the landscape.

Pleasingly, upgrades to the bridge and the boardwalks are now underway. As part of the project, redundant jetty infrastructure is being removed on the outer side of the island. There was, you may know if you've ever cruised up there, a jetty without a pontoon which used to be there back in the day. The next stage of works will be the replacement of the first two bridges

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leading from the Tamar Island Wetland Centre and we are committed to continually improving and making it fit-for-purpose. It's a good spot.

**Ms FINLAY** - The access, the Park fees and increased revenue is positive, and I know we probably had a question like this; if it wasn't in November, it was sometime recently because I remember asking the question around local access and the capacity of Tasmanians to be able to continue to afford to engage and enjoy our beautiful spaces. From memory, the response was that a local is more likely to buy a year's pass and visitors are more likely to buy short passes and that's where the price differentiation comes in, so I know that bit of information.

On top of that information, what are you as a minister of the department putting your mind to in terms of making sure that Tasmanians can continue to engage with access and enjoy for not only outdoor active recreation, but for mental health, community connection, family engagement? What are you hearing about concerns from Tasmanians with the cost of access and are you having other conversations despite that pricing policy to encourage and support Tasmanians to be able to continue to access our parks?

**Mr DUIGAN** - It is a good question, and it is something with which we do grapple. You would like to see a circumstance potentially where Tasmanians could be given priority or cheaper access to the Parks suite via the Constitution and clause 117, or whichever clause it is that prohibits that.

**Ms FINLAY** - We manage those things in lots of other ways with internal policies.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, we do. I think having a range of options for people to buy at various price points is important. Having consistent pricing mechanisms is important and that's been absent, I would say in the Parks space.

Jason, Sophie, you would have more developed ideas of how you make these things affordable for Tasmanians.

**Mr JACOBI** - I'll come to Sophie in a minute. I think one of the most important things to remember is that the Parks Passes only apply to National Park tenure. There are hundreds and hundreds of different reserves, often local to residents and communities that are absolutely free.

**Ms FINLAY** - However, our beautiful parks that require passes are still places that Tasmanians love to enjoy.

**Mr JACOBI** - The big iconic ones are. I think it would be fair to say that we do have our mind very firmly focused on making sure that it remains affordable. There's nothing we want more to make sure that families, particularly anyone who might be socioeconomically challenged, can continue to take their kids to a park and the Parks' pricing structure has always kept that very much firmly in mind, and we're also applying the same principles to most of our business products. So whether it's the booking system, camping, whether it's access to some of our business enterprises like places like Hastings, all of those things, we're firmly keeping an eye on how we can keep the price down. But in turn it is about sort of making sure that we maintain pace with contemporary standards and expectations. All the advice that we continue to get is that most of our products are underpriced. You know that people are actually,

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particularly some of the bespoke products like Three Capes Track, people are prepared to pay more.

**Ms FINLAY** - It does actually segue into my next question, because that question was around general and standard access for enjoyment of families and others. Now that you can catch a bus for free, that might be able to go somewhere and then when they're there be able to enjoy a park. I have actually had representation into my office of people on some of the products as an example, the Overland Track, where more and more locals, seemingly from feedback, seem to be squeezed out of the opportunity and there's many more interstate or international visitors on those products. I'm just wondering what you can tell me about the trend of percentage of locals versus visitors.

**Mr JACOBI** - Well, I think my recollection I don't have the exact figures in front of me, but by and large, the majority of visitors - through you minister, sorry - by and large the majority of visitors to the Overland Track are domestic, there's a small percentage which is international, I think, I'm checking my figures, but around 10 per cent might be international. But the domestic -

**Ms FINLAY** - Of the domestic breakdown, Tasmania versus interstate?

**Mr JACOBI** - I don't know if we've actually got the breakdown of domestic from Tasmania to Australia.

**Ms FINLAY** - It would seem like an important thing to have.

**Mr JACOBI** - Well, we could probably interrogate that, but it would require us to go back through each and every booking to see where they actually have come from -

**Ms FINLAY** - You honestly don't track that? Tasmanian visitation versus interstate visitation?

**Mr JACOBI** - We can get that information quickly, maybe by the end of this session even, ideally.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, I just, I am genuinely surprised that that's not something tracked.

**Mr JACOBI** - I think yes, Overland Track is increasingly becoming more and more popular. We continue to maintain a free season. So you can walk it from I think it's April right through until October for free. We have maintained a walker registration system as part of that just to keep a bit of an understanding about how many people are on the track at any one point in time. But that free period is an opportunity for Tasmanians to just go and get out there and enjoy the Overland Track at no cost. Did you want to add anything?

**Ms MULLER** - Maybe just one further point: when the booking system goes live each year for the Overland Track booking season, it pretty much sells out on that day. So that just I guess speaks to the popularity of the product and the experience, and there is a bit of pot luck involved as to whether or not you get the tickets that you're after, or the season booking that you're after.

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**Ms FINLAY** - Interesting problem to have to manage.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I've not had any luck getting tickets.

**Ms FINLAY** - I did hear you say that the other day. Like my colleague, some questions about local projects, I asked at the last Estimates around the support from Parks for the project at Kate Reed that can unlock a whole lot of, I understand there's been some positive progress there. Just wondering if you can update the committee on the development at Kate Reed and the subsequent developments of that will unlock?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yeah, thanks, and I think there has been, you know, some good positive development there. You know, I think I've said it before that I'm supportive and I've been, put together working groups with council and various others over time to see that opportunity progress. I believe we are in a position to potentially provide an update. Who would like to do that? Sophie?

**Ms FINLAY** - Keen particularly to know if there are any barriers at a state level on that proceeding at this stage?

**Ms MULLER** - So through you, Minister: Parks is participating in a working group that's been formed across government and with Launceston City Council to progress consideration of that development, and I guess importantly in terms of the road, that will involve a revocation of part of the reserve, so there's a process to be gone through, that's the statutory process,

**Ms FINLAY** - Are you open to that process?

**Ms MULLER** - Yes.

**Ms FINLAY** - Yeah, Great. Okay, that's fantastic, and then an update on the Pioneer Dam works and access?

**Mr DUIGAN** - I think we have got genuine progress to report on Pioneer as well, Sophie?

**Ms MULLER** - Correct, Minister. Work is underway in relation to Pioneer Dam, so the site's currently closed to enable that work to occur. I will attempt to find, if we've got it, a date -

**Mr DUIGAN** - I've got it. Dewatering progress is well underway and excavation work to decommission the dam has begun. Weather-permitting, works are scheduled for completion at the end of this month now, public access to Pioneer Lake will reopen following completion of the dam works.

Boom gates and signage will remain in place, temporarily closing the Pioneer Lake area until the works are completed. I don't suppose there's a whole lot of demand for camping up there at the moment. PWS has engaged specialist contractors to continuously monitor the site for risk, including the installation of geotech markers. No change has been recorded to date.

The Dam Safety Emergency Plan setting out the procedures to implement in case of an emergency has been prepared. The plan includes event triggers which detail when the plan may be enacted.

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**Ms FINLAY** - In your notes there, I'm particularly interested, as is the former camping community, whether the intention is eventually for it to reopen to camping.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Certainly that's my expectation.

**Ms FINLAY** - There were nods all around?

**Mr JACOBI** - Through you, minister, it's not designated as a formal camping site -

**Ms FINLAY** - No, but people would be able to -

**Mr JACOBI** - I can't see any reason why people couldn't still continue to camp there.

**Ms BADGER** - With increasing awareness around the Tyndalls Range and the proposed new walk there, certainly what we're seeing is an increasing number of people going up onto the incredibly sensitive plateau. We've seen other areas of, arguably slightly less ecologically sensitivity, such as Mount Anne, which have, you know, caps on visitor numbers and that sort of thing to facilitate safe access.

Certainly, I was up on the Tyndall Plateau earlier this year. There was around 60 people there that day. There were over 20 people camped at the lake. That's more than we'd see in any other space. There're a lot more pads where people are creating their own path in the areas.

How are you going to manage visitation on that plateau to protect that - what is an area of outstanding universal value into the future when it's only going to increase how many people go up there, considering it is free and the other walk will cost a considerable amount of money? While there's equally, supposedly, people who are willing to pay for a premium product, we're also seeing people promote things online, such as the Three Capes Track and hacks on how to do these things during a paid season for free. How are you going to manage the Tyndall's Plateau into the future?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thank you, appreciate the question. You know, I think once the Next Iconic Walk is in place, a large majority of those people who we're talking about will take the opportunity to do the walk.

**Ms BADGER** - Do you think that or are there statistics to support that, minister?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Well, I would be happy to defer to subject matter experts in this, but when there is a formal walk in place, it would be my expectation that a lot of those people would take the opportunity to go on that walk, noting it will give you experiences and take you into areas that walking the plateau doesn't necessarily do. I would say that.

In terms of the broader management piece around our overnight walks - Jason or Sophie?

**Mr JACOBI** - Through you, minister, we have spent a fair bit of funding in recent years on the improvements of the Tyndalls Track off Anthony Road to improve the quality and condition and sustainability of that track to the summit.

I hadn't realised - you know, if you were up there and there was 60 people camped, that is a lot, but all of our walking tracks, even our most remote tracks, as you'd probably appreciate,

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on some peak weekends and Easter weekends and long weekends, they do get hammered. They do get a lot of use. We have put in place the walker registration system as a tool to help manage that. Personally, I've observed that that actually has discreetly spread the load; people are going into book, if it's booked and full, they then book for another weekend on another date and that helps to manage. We don't have that in place though for the Tyndalls. Now, that could be an option that we could consider. We could trial adding it to the walker registration system to see whether that makes any material difference.

The only real next step is literally to make it a bookable product and then to make it enforceable, but that would - that's a significant step, and that would remove the ability for people to just go and walk it whenever they want to, which they by and large do now.

I suppose, my first preference would be to continue to look at how can we improve the quality of the track to keep people on the track rather than doing braiding, how could we maybe do some additional platforms to help make sure that if people are up there in big numbers that it's sustainable. That would be probably the best long term approach.

**Ms BADGER** - Thank you. I'm just wondering in terms of the ...

**Mr JACOBI** - approach.

**Ms BADGER** - Thank you. I'm just wondering in terms of the Halls Hut lease which expires in 2027 and given that there has been a request made by the acting Parks minister in terms of the assessments and works to be undertaken on that hut as part of the deed variation for the lease over the island, how are you going to be enforcing that work which would be done by the winter season, which is now, and we don't have an answer of how it's going? What can you commit to ensure that appropriate works and care are taken by 2027 before any possible renewal of the Halls Hut lease can take place, or indeed any variation over the lease of the island into the future?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Again, I would just make the differentiation that the hut and the condition of the hut is a matter for Heritage.

**Ms BADGER** - They don't sign off on the lease though, do they, minister - that's you?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes, that is me.

**Ms BADGER** - I'm asking you as the signatory.

**Mr DUIGAN** - I would be relying on advice from my department around whether Heritage is satisfied with what's been done with the hut, whether the state of the hut is appropriate in order for me to continue to extend the lease.

**Mr JACOBI** - I can advise that the Heritage Council are taking an active interest in this matter at the moment and another part of my department under Heritage reporting to the Minister for Environment and Heritage, is actively pursuing that and are in discussions with Mr Hackett.

**Ms BADGER** - 'Actively pursuing', as in the winter deadline, I assume? I'm curious, you're the minister who signs off on that notwithstanding you obviously didn't send the letter

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because you weren't here, so we'll allow you a grace period, minister, but how will you be enforcing that given the request was by the winter season that those assessments and works were undertaken?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Again, I would see that as a matter for Heritage and when Heritage says that it is satisfied or dissatisfied, then that then would become a matter for me.

**Ms BADGER** - Are you going to follow up with them because the request from Parks was winter 2026, which is now, but will you follow up with them and see if they are satisfied, given we are at that deadline?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Noting that the secretary has some responsibilities in both portfolios, I would expect to be well informed on the matter.

**Mr SHELTON** - I'm following on from my colleague in Lyons' question about walks on the west coast. You mentioned in your opening address the \$40 million to be spent on the next multi-day walk planned for our beautiful west coast of Tasmania. I know this has been talked about for some time. Are we any closer to seeing this being realised and what impact will it have for the region?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Thanks, Mr Shelton. Yes, we are and we are very excited to be so, noting money in the Budget for the delivery of this exciting work. The parliament's Public Works Committee has confirmed the project meets the identified need for multi-day walking opportunities and as such has approved the project to go ahead.

This complements the announcement by the Australian Government that the project does not require assessment and approval under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*. Both of these developments are good news for the important project. The proposed three-day, two-night walk will be developed between Lake Plimsoll and Lake Margaret Power Station in the state's west, and this project offers Tasmanians and visitors a fresh opportunity to experience the outstanding natural values and history and will bring, of course, economic and social benefits to the west coast and Tasmania.

We're now moving on to finalising approvals, including the development application with West Coast Council. The \$40 million walk will enhance Tasmania's reputation as one of the great walking destinations in Australia and indeed the world and there is demand, as has been canvassed here today, for multi-day walking in Tasmania with popular walks, Three Capes Track and the Overland Track consistently highly booked and capturing return visitors. The next iconic walk will provide more opportunity for visitors and Tasmanians alike to experience what our unique environment has to offer.

It is set to create an estimated 139 jobs during construction, and 40 jobs during the operational phase. As well as direct employment, the walk will deliver ongoing benefits to the west coast economy, opening more tourism, hospitality and business opportunities and I know there are many people in Queenstown and beyond who are looking forward to the next iconic walk coming to fruition.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, Chair. When's the last time, as a department, either department-wide or specifically for Parks, there was a cultural survey of employees?

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**Mr DUIGAN** - Am I able to - before we get to that question, and I think that will be one for the operational team - just in regard to your question around the Overland Track and local travellers on it: for the 2025-26 season, 15 per cent in the booked season were Tasmanian.

**Ms FINLAY** - Pretty low number. Thank you. Culture?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Culture. It's not one I think I have any visibility on.

**Mr JACOBI** - Just bear with me. Not sure when we last did a whole-of-culture survey. 2024.

**Ms FINLAY** - Was that an internal or externally managed survey process?

**Mr JACOBI** - I might just ask Chief Operating Officer, Diedre Wilson, to come to the table, through you, minister, if that's okay?

**Mr DUIGAN** - An introduction for Hansard.

**Ms WILSON** - I'm Deidre Wilson, Acting Chief Operations Officer in NRE Tas.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you, and do you have, sorry through you Minister, granular information for Parks out of that, in terms of what was returned for culture in Parks?

**Ms WILSON** - Through you, minister, we'd have to take that question on notice. We don't have that to hand.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you. Are you happy to take that on notice, minister?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Just exactly what was that one?

**Ms FINLAY** - What the outcome of the statewide cultural survey, or the service-wide cultural survey return, for Parks on culture?

**Mr DUIGAN** - The outcome, is an outcome something that we -

**Ms FINLAY** - Are there details, at the level of Parks, that can talk to the culture?

**Mr JACOBI** - Through you, minister. It's not like a satisfaction survey where you can point to a particular level of satisfaction in a division. It could certainly give you the number of people in Parks that participated in the survey, and it might be able to give you a breakdown of some of the key themes or questions that were addressed in the survey, and what the Parks percentage or attribution was. Well, we can we can try and find a summary.

**Ms FINLAY** - Yes, that would be interesting.

**Mr JACOBI** - It'll be like a high-level summary of key themes in Parks for that particular survey.

**Ms FINLAY** - Thank you. Are you happy to take that on notice, minister?

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**Mr DUIGAN** - I think we're happy to take that one. Thank you. So, a summary.

**Ms FINLAY** - From the results that were understood from the 2024, what processes or programs or projects were undertaken by Parks in terms of responding to reports of culture, and areas of improvement?

**Mr JACOBI** - Through you, minister, Diedre if you would like to kick off, and I'll just try and find them -

**Ms WILSON** - Yes, through you, minister, we took a whole-of-agency approach and we do take a whole-of-agency approach to reviewing any information that comes from the State Service surveys. We have continued to work on a range of activities around culture, for example our Leadership Development Program. Through people and culture. we have a well-being strategy, a diversity and inclusion plan. So there's a whole range of activities that we do across NRE Tas that is for the whole of the agency and we actively work towards a culture of well-being and support.

**Mr JACOBI** - If I can add to that: Our Employment Assistance Program reporting for the 2025-26 financial year has seen bullying and harassment drop out of the top reasons employees access the services, and that's a reflection of the work that we've done around respectful workplace behaviours.

**Ms FINLAY** - It was at the top before, was it?

**Mr JACOBI** - I don't think it was at the top, but it's dropped out of the top 10. So it's no longer in the top 10 reasons for employees seeking access to EAP services.

**Ms FINLAY** - What are the top 10 reasons?

**Mr JACOBI** - There would be a whole range of different things. I haven't got that in the brief.

**Ms FINLAY** - It says that it's dropped out, but it doesn't say what they are.

**Mr JACOBI** - So it's dropped out. It's no longer in the top 10.

**Ms FINLAY** - That would be one measure. What would be the other measures, having a wellness program specifically in response to that survey, what things would you be particularly looking to improve in terms of the wellness program?

**Mr JACOBI** - We've got a whole lot of different wellness, well-being and wellness programs in place. The latest tool that we've deployed is KO360 which is a reporting tool, specifically targeted at psychosocial wellness. We also have our Health and Safety team rolling out sessions to staff all across the state and that includes Parks and delivering presentations to staff on psychosocial safety. We have our How We Work Strategy, which I think we might have touched on before, which is very much about the principles of good behaviours and workplace practices and getting along with your colleagues.

We've gone out to consultation on alcohol and other drugs policy recently, which I think is an important part, too, about just managing behaviours. The Leadership Program that Deirdre

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pointed to before is probably the one thing I think is an executive of NRA, we are most proud of that we invested in a significant leadership, comprehensive Leadership Development Program across over close to 100 staff in the department, which included many Parks staff. We are rolling out now what's called the Inspiring Leaders Program, which is a subset of that to other classification staff across the whole department as well.

**Ms FINLAY** - I'm interested in the KO360 program, the reason it was implemented and what it seeks to do.

**Ms WILSON** - We're deciding how best to answer. It was in recognition that we would like to ensure that remote area workers had more ready access to support. We recognise that we have a diverse workplace and you need a range of tools and mechanisms for people to be able to engage and receive support.

**Mr JACOBI** - KO360 is a well-being app resource. It's an additional proactive control measure to support employee mental health. De-identified usage and trend data from app is used alongside EAP and safety data to identify any emerging psychological risk themes and to inform well-being interventions.

**Ms FINLAY** - What is the de identified data from KO360 telling you?

**Mr JACOBI** - I only think we have deployed that in the last couple of months. I don't know that we would have any substantial data. It's the initiative that's the important piece.

**Ms MULLER** - Anecdotally, the feedback from staff on the ground has been positive, particularly where there have been incidents that involve public engagement that hasn't been positive for staff. That tool has really been one that staff have reported positively on.

**Ms BADGER** - Minister, I note that an RTI that was received around the Our Mountains Future Review for Kunanyi/Mt Wellington. Part of the consideration was possibly handing management over to the state from the Wellington Trust, which of course would fall into Parks. There's no money in the current budget for that to happen. Minister, are you able today to rule out the handing over of the management of Kunanyi from Wellington Park to the Parks and Wildlife Service?

**Mr DUIGAN** - Yes.

**Ms BADGER** - Thank you. I appreciate the interest of time as well there, minister. I was also wondering around the compliance officers for Parks. It's my understanding - and please do correct me if I'm wrong - there are five compliance officers. Their work obviously is a lot given the number of NBT operators, that Parks have an increasing visitation, there's a need for unfortunately for more Notice of Breaches (NOB) for people who don't have passes.

How are Parks expecting those five or so people to continue that work, particularly with the new influencer or content creation policies? Obviously, that's an increase in work as well. Or is this a space where you would be looking at implementing some sort of AI tool or other assistance?

**Mr DUIGAN** - That's a good question, thank you. I think there are a range of things, you know, I would note the difficult job compliance officers do. That's a challenging space to be

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in. I think there are a number of things that we would be rolling out in terms of booking products and having a better understanding of who's in and who's out of the park at various times that would do the heavy lifting of that compliance piece. But Sophie, obviously this is work that you are intimately acquainted with.

**Ms MULLER** - Through you, minister. The statewide compliance unit supports the work of over 200 Parks-authorized officers so that compliance activity is done by lots of Parks staff on the ground who are able to undertake compliance, whether that's education, information, cautioning people on the ground through -

**Ms BADGER** - I should have been a bit more specific, maybe the compliance team that go out and check NBTs that have, you know, the body-worn cameras, sort of like, a little bit more than the standard field officer who could issue a Notice of Breach, notwithstanding, that's very important work.

**Ms MULLER** - I guess our compliance response though is those 200 officers that are involved in compliance, along with the statewide team who provide support and assistance and training and capacity building of those 200-odd authorized officers. In terms of our engagement with nature-based tourism operators that's one of many compliance activities that staff are involved in.

**Mr SHELTON** - Minister, I think we all know how popular our camping grounds and natural experiences like caves are with the locals and visitors alike. With the two ships coming on an increased visitation through coming into the state, this visitation is only going to increase, so my question is around the booking system. Where is the government at with this much anticipated online booking system which is planned to make it easier for people wanting to enjoy Tasmania's great natural assets.

**Mr DUIGAN** - Pleased to report that we are on track to deliver, and acknowledge there is a great deal of interest in the roll out of the project. Government continues to recognise the need to invest in Parks to keep our competitive advantage. But, you know, as people are drawn to the state and drawn to our parks, it's good that we have a system and a range of systems in place to allow them to have some certainty around that.

We have committed \$2 million to deliver a new statewide online booking system for Parks products. This new system will make it easier and simpler for people to plan their camping trips, to understand what's available and book campsites along with, obviously, those world-class walking experiences. We've been talking about cave tools and park passes. It will provide a one-stop-shop for booking and relevant information including specific sites, experience and safety messaging. It will also help reduce the so-called ghost camping, which can mean people who do the right thing are at risk of missing out because of others who may not necessarily be doing the right thing.

I'm pleased the contract to operate the Parks online booking system has now been awarded. eDirect Australia is a subsidiary of software provider Tyler Technologies and it will deliver the system. The awarding of the contract followed a rigorous 2-stage procurement process. I understand there was a very strong response from the industry for this service. The new platform will replace more than a dozen existing IT systems and manual processes and enable innovative capability to better serve visitors. US eDirect has extensive experience in partnering with Parks.

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**CHAIR** - The time for scrutiny has now expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Attorney General, Minister for Justice, Corrections and Rehabilitation at 8.30 a.m. tomorrow.

**The committee adjourned at 4.35 p.m.**