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**THE PARLIAMENTARY JOINT SESSIONAL COMMITTEE MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 2, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON FRIDAY 26 JUNE 2026.**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS OF FINAL REPORT OF THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN INSTITUTIONAL SETTINGS**

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**The committee met at 9.03 a.m.**

**CHAIR** (Ms Webb) - Welcome to the public hearing for the Joint Sessional Committee on Recommendations of the Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry. We're having some hearings today and I welcome those who are either attending or watching online.

At the table here we have members of the committee Marcus Vermeij, Liberal member for Clark; honourable Sarah Lovell, member for Rumney; me, Meg Webb, member for Nelson.; online we have Cecily Rosol, Greens member for Bass; and Jess Greene, Labor member for Bass. We also have support from Jenny and Ally, and Roey on Hansard. Thank you for the support.

Recognising that today's hearing may be triggering for some members of the committee, members of the community watching online and others who may come into the room because of the topics it covers, I would encourage anyone impacted by the content to make contact with support services. These include the statewide sexual assault support line which is 24-hour support from local specialist counsellors, the Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) or Laurel House on 1800 697 877 or 1800MYSUPPORT; Lifeline 24-hour crisis support, 13 11 14; Tasmanian Lifeline from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day on 1800 98 44 34; 13YARN, a 24-hour crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people on 139 276; or Relationships Australia from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, 1300 364 277.

Before we begin, could you please state your name and the capacity in which you're appearing before the committee?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC).

**Ms HURWURTH** - Courtney Frances Hurworth, Chief Reform Lead.

**Ms RUSSEL** - Amanda Russell, Deputy Secretary, State Service Management Office (SSMO).

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Can I confirm that you've received and read the information for witnesses guide sent to you by the Committee Secretary?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes, I have.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. All evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or placed out of parliament. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege.

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This hearing is public, which means members of the public and the media may be present. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. This hearing is also being broadcast. Should you wish for some or all of your evidence to be heard in private, you must make that request to the committee, and the committee will consider the request. The committee is taking sworn evidence, so please would you take the statutory declarations that are in front of you.

**Ms KATHRINE LOUISE MORGAN-WICKS**, SECRETARY AND HEAD OF THE STATE SERVICE, **Ms COURTNEY FRANCES HURWORTH**, CHIEF REFORM LEAD, KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE, and **Ms AMANDA FAYE RUSSELL**, DEPUTY SECRETARY, STATE SERVICE MANAGEMENT OFFICE, DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. perhaps you would like to make an opening statement for the committee before we move on to more detailed questions.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Thank you, Chair. Good morning everyone and thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today. As I have said previously, the commission of inquiry was a significant turning point for Tasmania. It exposed serious and systemic failures and led to substantial reform across government. The Woolcott review builds on that work and reflects our ongoing responsibility to strengthen the systems, processes and culture that support child safety and integrity across the State Service.

In November 2023, the Tasmanian Government asked former Australian public service commissioner Peter Woolcott AO to independently review how agencies responded to concerns raised by the commission of inquiry about Tasmanian State Service employees and officers. The review considered both how those matters were managed and whether the broader employment, integrity, oversight and information-sharing arrangements supporting those responses remained fit for purpose.

Importantly, Mr Woolcott found that concerns relating to named State Service employees and officers raised by the commission of inquiry had been dealt with by the Tasmanian government. At the same time, he identified, however, opportunities to strengthen that consistency and to improve arrangements across the State Service. Several of these recommendations align closely with reforms already underway through the government's response to the commission of inquiry. They build on existing work to strengthen child safety, accountability and stewardship across government.

Over the past six months, our focus has been moving from response to the Woolcott review to delivery. The government has released its response to the review. It has identified lead agencies and commence work on a number of recommendations. Since the government's response was released, progress has included: proposed legislative amendments through the commission of inquiry miscellaneous bill, consultation with agencies and unions on proposed changes to employment directions, and work across government to establish a coordinated approach to implementation.

This has also involved considering how the Woolcott recommendations align with broader reform activity already underway, including the implementation of the commission of inquiry recommendations, child safety reform, public sector reform and also machinery of

government changes. Keeping the community informed remains an important part of this work, and we've continued to publish monthly disclosures relating to suspensions and investigations associated with allegations of child sexual abuse and related conduct, including matters arising from the commission of inquiry. Woolcott acknowledged this has been a significant step forward. Transparency remains important as this work progresses, we intend to continue providing regular public reporting and updates so that the community can see how implementation is progressing and these outcomes are being achieved.

The government is committed to implementing the Woolcott recommendations in a considered and practical way, with a focus on achieving meaningful and lasting improvements across the State Service. As head of the State Service, my role is to provide system-wide leadership, support a coordinated whole-of-government approach, maintain clear accountability for delivery, and to strengthen stewardship across the State Service.

The recommendations themselves vary significantly in scope and complexity. Some can be progressed within existing arrangements while others will involve legislative reform, broader system changes or work across multiple agencies, and will take a bit longer to implement. We will drive this work through a whole-of-government implementation plan that will support coordinated delivery, clear priorities and oversight of progress across the State Service. This implementation plan is currently being developed.

Given the links between these recs and other reform activities already underway, we are approaching implementation as a coordinated whole-of-government reform program. Our focus is on strengthening the systems, governance and capability that support child safety, integrity and stewardship across the State Service. This is about more than just implementing individual recommendations; we are trying to embed lasting reform. Lasting reform requires more than policy and more than legislative change. It has to have sustained attention to leadership, culture, capability and organisational practice across the State Service, and that is what I am committed to doing.

To support this work, the Chief Reform Lead in the Department of Premier and Cabinet will support me - my Chief Reform Lead being Courtney Hurworth - to coordinate implementation across government, support planning, monitoring and reporting, and provide oversight of progress. Implementation will be aligned with broader reform activity across government, including public sector reform, machinery of government changes and child safety reform. Consistent with the government's response, supported recommendations relating to child safety and wellbeing will be incorporated into the Change for Children Action Plan and aligned with the broader Keeping Children Safe reform program.

We will continue to work closely with the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor as this work progresses. The Monitor has an incredibly important role in supporting transparency and accountability across child safety reforms, and we will work constructively with him, as we have been over the last couple of years as oversight arrangements continue to evolve.

We'll also continue to work closely with agencies, key stakeholders and Mr Woolcott to make sure that implementation remains aligned with the intent of his review and to support a shared understanding of the reforms being delivered. The Woolcott Review highlights areas where the systems supporting integrity, accountability, stewardship and child safety across the State Service can be strengthened. Our responsibility now is to deliver this reform well.

I welcome the committee's questions.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for that opening statement. It's much appreciated, and good to hear some of the sentiments expressed there nice and clearly. There are some things I want to pick up, in an overarching sense, before we delve into some more specifics about recommendations. When I look through the government's response and it's got the lead agencies allocated, it looks to me that DPAC has 19 recommendations allocated, Department of Justice 13. Some things I wanted to ask in relation to the DPAC allocated recommendations, overarching, is will they all be referred to the Implementation Monitor to monitor for implementation and report on as part of his work? Or are any of those not being referred to the Implementation Monitor? My follow up to that will be: if we aren't allocating all of them for him to be monitoring, in an ongoing sense, around implementation, how will you be monitoring and reporting on them?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Thank you, Chair, for that question. In terms of the recommendations that can be referred to the monitor, noting that our conversations with the Implementation Monitor are always wide-ranging and we provide any information that he asks, and we will provide an update on all recommendations. Certainly, with the advice from the Department of Justice, in terms of the very legal interpretation of the act that creates and establishes the Implementation Monitor, we have taken that legal view of the recommendations that legally can be referred. But as head of the State Service, I'm very happy to discuss and provide evidence to the monitor in relation to achieving an implementation of all recommendations.

**CHAIR** - Are you able, then, to identify or provide to us a list of which ones you are referring to the monitor for his oversight and ongoing monitoring and reporting, and which ones you aren't doing in that legal sense? Is that something you could provide to us? Not necessarily read through them now.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I think that's something we could provide in time. It is an active conversation with the Implementation Monitor at the moment. Courtney may be able to provide further advice on that.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Yes, so the process, as I understand it, is that we propose a set of recommendations through the Attorney-General, and then there's a process of discussing with the monitor what his views are prior to confirming the final recommendations to be referred. At the moment, we're in a process of having those discussions with the monitor. I understand the monitor's met with Justice on one occasion and is anticipating a meeting coming up on another to discuss his views on what should be referred in his own interpretation of his legislation. I've had multiple discussions with him around this. So, we're in the process, once the referral is complete, we can provide a list.

**CHAIR** - What's the timeline, then, on all that being finalised? I guess I'm looking ahead; we're expecting the Implementation Monitor to provide his next annual report at the end of September. Are we expecting that in that annual report he'll be reporting on implementation relating to recommendations from the Woolcott review that have been referred to him?

**Ms HURWORTH** - In terms of his reporting that's due at the end of September, we have just provided tranche 1 of all of the information and reporting he seeks from us. Tranche 2 is being provided on 10 July. So, monitoring of Woolcott recommendations won't make it into his annual report this year. I think his plan around that is to comment on - and I don't want to

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verbal him - but my understanding is to comment on the overarching governance that's been put in place, the preliminary work that's been undertaken, confirm his views on what's been referred to him, and forecast that he will be looking at those in the next annual report.

**CHAIR** - So, we're expecting to have finalised at least which recommendations have been formally referred to him by the government in enough time for him to report at least on that element of it in September's annual report?

**Ms HURWORTH** - Correct.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Was it when we spoke with Mr Woolcott about his report a few months back, he mentioned to this committee that, of course, under his interpretation of the legislation related to the Implementation Monitor was that referrals for matters to be monitored and to be reported on by him could also be made from the parliament and, for example, from this committee on behalf of the parliament. So, it's useful for us to understand what's happening at the government end of things, in terms of referring matters for monitoring, so that we can also understand if there's anything for us to contemplate as a committee or as a parliament on that level as well.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Chair, I'm happy to write to the committee once those conversations have finalised between the Implementation Monitor and DPAC. Perhaps if I can provide an example, there's a recommendation there about, for example, the arrangements for the State Service Management Office and the appointment of a commissioner in the State Service Management Office. I'd need to check what - and I don't wish to assert the role of the Attorney-General in those conversations, but if that's one that they believe doesn't fit within section 13 of the Implementation Monitor's act, as the head of the State Service I'm still happy to share that information with the Implementation Monitor. And so, you know, whether it's our intention to appoint a commissioner, or has it been done, and here is the progress update, we'll also publicly report on all of the recommendations, in terms of our progress.

**CHAIR** - Where would that occur, so that we can understand? Will it be on the Keeping Children Safe website, where you're reporting on commission of inquiry implementation of recommendations?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes, it will.

**CHAIR** - When will we expect that to begin to appear there on the website?

**Ms HURWORTH** - I keep wanting to say, 'through you, minister'.

**CHAIR** - We all have muscle memory habits.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Our next public report on the Keeping Children Safe website on commission of inquiry recommendations and related review recommendations will be in July, so on or just after 10 July. At that time we'll confirm what's referred to the monitor, so he will confirm it in his September report, and we'll commence reporting on them then.

**CHAIR** - As a separate set of recommendations appearing on the website under a heading 'Woolcott review'?

**Ms HURWORTH** - Correct.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Thank you for that. Sorry about that housekeeping, but I just want to be clear on how things are being monitored and reported on going forward, so that's really useful to us.

**Ms LOVELL** - Secretary, if I could take you specifically to one of the recommendations from the Woolcott review, which is Operational Recommendation 5.2. This recommendation is in relation to State Service Management Office working in partnership with the Integrity Commission. There's two parts to the recommendation.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I thought that was a Justice recommendation?

**Ms LOVELL** - No, it's been allocated to DPAC.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Under culture?

**Ms LOVELL** - No, it's Operational Recommendation, so there's Strategic Recommendations and Operational Recommendations. This one is in relation to working with the Integrity Commission to roll out mandatory training on ethical decision making and integrity for all State Service employees in a management position - that's part 1 of the recommendation, and we'll come to part 2 in a moment - and that the head of each agency report on participation as part of the agency's annual report. Both of those recommendations have been supported by the government, so I was just wondering if you can provide us with an update on progress of that.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes, I can. Thank you, Ms Lovell. I have met with the CEO of the Integrity Commission, who absolutely feel that this training falls fairly and squarely within their remit, and they're actually very excited about the work here. We all know the Integrity Commission have had various ethical training modules that have been delivered over time, and I think it is great timing in terms of an update for the State Service. Those discussions are underway. I know that Mandy has also been having conversations because we have our training consortium that sits within the State Service Management Office also, so I might ask Mandy to update.

**Ms RUSSELL** - Thank you, and good morning. Yes, as Kath says, we've been having discussions with the CEO of the Integrity Commission and really building on the foundational work that the Integrity Commission already have in place. Complementary to this recommendation, as Kath has said, I think is a number of supporting elements that the State Service Management Office will be able to provide through the training consortium that actually complements the Integrity Commission work. Recently, in fact this week, having a discussion with the CEO of the Integrity Commission. We will be meeting shortly. We're looking forward to getting started in effectively developing and consolidating a pilot that we then build on, because we really do understand that whilst that capability needs to commence at leadership levels, the State Service Management Office in particular will, no doubt, have a role to play in embedding that through the head of the State Service as we develop and refine that training.

**Ms LOVELL** - Thank you. How many employees are in a management position?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Across the State Service?

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes. Has that work been done to identify how many employees will be undertaking this training?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - We're able to identify how many employees are in Senior Executive Service (SES) positions, for example. I just don't have that number today, but it feels like it's around 200 and -

**Ms LOVELL** - The recommendation specifically says 'mandatory training for all State Service employees in a management position', and that 'the head of each agency should report on participation as part of the annual report'. How will you identify, or have you done the work to identify who should be participating in that training? Will that be done by heads of agency? How will you ensure that that training is going to the right people?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - That will be done by heads of agency. The reason why I hesitate is because, for example, in Service Tasmania or other high-volume units, we have management levels that are not at SES, so might be at a Band 8 or a Band 6 and, at times, a team leader at Band 4, so -

**Ms LOVELL** - I guess that's the question. Who decides who is in a management position? Will direction be given from SSMO around that?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes.

**Ms LOVELL** - What's the expectation around who will be required to undertake this training?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Each head of agency - and we'll work with them through the secretaries board to make sure that appropriate layers of management are identified, and that then they're able to clearly describe who has attended and report on that in their annual report.

**Ms LOVELL** - Do you have any idea now as to who will be required, what sort of roles you'll be looking at, or what level?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Courtney, if you'd like to add to that? I have my own views. But yes.

**Ms HURWORTH** - I think what you're getting at is one of the complexities that we had in finalising the review. The reviewers obviously come from the APS, and the APS are not, except for some key areas, actually service deliverers. And so, when they were thinking about the review, they were thinking about departments in the sense that we would understand sort of central departments and policy departments. Obviously for us, that becomes more complex because we deliver services. So, your question is, how far down in a service do you go?

**Ms LOVELL** - Yeah. I guess the terminology that's been used in this report is maybe not terminology that has a clear definition in the State Service.

**Ms HURWORTH** - Correct.

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**Ms LOVELL** - How will we know and what decisions are being made around who should be completing this training?

**Ms HURWORTH** - I guess the way that Mandy and I have talked about attacking this one is that you really have to go through what are the requirements of different roles in terms of decision making and then look at whether that capability is needed in that role. And it is a significant task. We did discuss that extensively with Peter and Radha when they were talking through with us what their recommendations intended to achieve. So, we couldn't provide you a list right now that says, 'This is every single position we would look at'. It will have to be a process where we talk through heads of agency through sec board, with their people and culture areas, coordinated through SSMO, around what are the requirements of roles in terms of making decisions, managing conflicts of interest and how far do we need to go in terms of what a manager is to achieve that?

**Ms LOVELL** - What are some of the criteria that you're looking at around setting that?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Remembering that in terms of the decision making - so, we have mandatory training for all State Service employees and volunteers in relation to child safety. We've made sure that we are absolutely covering the field there.

I think Mr Woolcott wanted to make sure that we also had quite extensive coverage in terms of ethical decision making. For example, in a hospital, I would absolutely want to see that at nurse unit manager level, assistant nurse unit manager level, anyone that stands as a supervisor and is going to be making decisions in relation to issues that are escalated up to them in a management or supervision capacity. But we would need to go to - I'm happy to work with the State Service Management Office to say, 'Well, what is that criteria that could assist heads of agencies', who I think have a very good idea in terms of where they see issues escalate, or where they see things being stopped, or is there a barrier? That also ties into our work of, if you have a complaint, that we've got a common complaint and grievance-raising procedure that's right across the State Service. And a lot of work has happened in this space.

**Ms LOVELL** - Appreciating it is a significant piece of work, but I also think this is one of the recommendations that probably links quite closely to the culture that we've talked about repeatedly: that that's where the real, meaningful change will come from. Have you got a timeline for when you expect that work to be done or when we'll see the training being rolled out?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes, Courtney's just reminded me. We are working through that in the draft of the implementation plan now. I need to consult with secretaries, but we're expecting that the draft implementation plan should be going through to the next secretaries board. So, probably in the next couple of months we will have that finalised and be able to be published.

**Ms LOVELL** - Okay, great. Obviously, it's pretty well known the Integrity Commission doesn't have huge amounts of resources to even do the work that they're tasked with already. Will they be provided with any additional resources to deliver this training, or have they raised that with you as a concern at all?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - In terms of my conversations with the CEO, she hasn't raised a request for further resource for this training. But it's certainly something that each head of



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agency would be working through in terms of their budgets to make sure that this is a recommendation that must be implemented and training that has to be run across their agency. It will be my expectation that they'll be meeting that from agency budgets.

**CHAIR** - A couple of follow ups on that, if I may. Thinking of that timeline where in a couple of months you'll have an implementation plan that will sort of outline some understandings about who this might apply to, for example, noting it's ethical decision making and integrity training, not just the decision making training, are you expecting that we begin to roll out this training within this 2026-27 financial year? Or when do we start rolling it out?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes, that is my expectation: in the 2026-27 financial year.

**CHAIR** - Great. I'm also interested in how we are going to be assessing, evaluating its effectiveness or its impact. Presuming we already have some training in place, I think, for some people in the public service around integrity and matters like that, have we had a program in any way assessing its effectiveness or impact previously that we will now be thinking to apply to this more broad-based training that's going to roll out?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I'd probably need to speak to the CEO of the Integrity Commission and whether they've previously evaluated the effectiveness of their ethics and integrity training. I'm just not aware of whether they have. I don't know, Mandy, if you'd like to add from a TEC or TTC perspective?

**Ms RUSSELL** - We work with the Integrity Commission closely on that. I think it's a really important question in terms of how we also modify and reflect learnings as we go along in terms of the importance of foundational training.

The only other comment I'd make to what Kath has said is that, nationally, there are other jurisdictions that are quite happy to work with us. I think as part of the head of the State Service and supporting Kath in her role as the head of the State Service, that's a really active partnership with other jurisdictions. So, as part of the contributory work that the State Service Management Office does with the Integrity Commission, we'll be looking to tap into other jurisdictions and their learnings, which I think is really quite important in this space.

**CHAIR** - I agree, because my next question was going to be around quality assurance and benchmarking - how do we ensure that the training that we do roll out in this space is going to be the quality that we want it to - and I'm not reflecting on the Integrity Commission in any way in asking this question - but is there some benchmarking? Is there a particular quality assurance sort of program that we have, to know that the training we implement here is of the right quality and effectiveness that we want it to be?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Perhaps if I can ask Courtney to reflect on the child safety training and the work that we have been doing in terms of evaluation, as an example, noting that we haven't yet rolled out this ethics training in terms of the development.

**CHAIR** - But we would potentially look to have a similar approach, if we were talking about quality and effectiveness?

**Ms HURWORTH** - Yes. I think one of the things the commission of inquiry has given us is some pretty good blueprints on how we can do some of these sorts of things, particularly

at scale. As Ms Lovell alluded to, we may be talking about large amounts, and certainly with mandatory training, large cohorts of staff. With the commission of inquiry work, each agency had sort of developed their own child safety training, either prior to or just after the commission handed in its report. Part of what my unit did, alongside experts that we took from different areas, including the National Office for Child Safety, was to review all of the training packages that agencies had developed and put a set of standards around what we expected to see in those training packages. Then we actually worked with SSMO and we've developed sort of what we would consider a gold standard training package, which we've made available to the entire community. We would consider we would take a similar approach to that in some of these ethics, integrity and conflict of interest matters.

I would also point out that we do have some really strong internal bench strength when it comes to designing training and working with subject matter experts around training. And we recently had our child safety training externally audited, and it's considered to be exceptional.

**CHAIR** - So, hopefully what we'll expect to see is that similar approach and similar standards brought to this training. I know we're going to move on to other areas, and Ms Rosol has her hand up there.

**Ms ROSOL** - Just a follow-up question: we've talked about quality of the training. I'm wondering about funding for the training as well, because if a large number of staff are going to undergo this training, have you done any work around costings for that? Will extra funding be provided to the Integrity Commission or to departments to implement the training, given you're hoping to roll it out in this financial year?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Thanks, Ms Rosol. So, I should note that additional funding is in the Integrity Commission's budget for 2026-27, but I had previously mentioned that the CEO of the Integrity Commission hasn't raised the issue of additional funding for this package with me. Coincidentally, I'm actually meeting her directly after this, so I will absolutely - she might raise it. But it is my expectation that, as it is a core recommendation, heads of agency will be working within their budgets to make funding available for this training to be conducted in this financial year. But we will work through that as a matter of sec board. If there is an issue in terms of a particular agency not having budget, I will work with Treasury to make sure that that budget is made available.

**CHAIR** - Does that mean, then, that the agencies purchase the training from the Integrity Commission as a fee-for-service type arrangement? If you've said they've got to look to their budgets to cover it, is the expectation the Integrity Commission is delivering this from within its budget, or that agencies are purchasing it from the Integrity Commission from within their budgets?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - At the moment we don't have a settled agreement on exactly how it's going to be, but those are all options to discuss with the Integrity Commission. I'm probably reflecting on the way in which agencies send staff and pay for our training consortium training modules, for example, to go towards the cost. You know, we're not trying to make a profit out of this training - it's really just a cost recovery basis.

**CHAIR** - There might be a similar model with the Integrity Commission in this area, for example.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes. We're very aware they're a much smaller entity and they have a much smaller budget than departments, and it needs to be fair in terms of departmental staffing.

**CHAIR** - Indeed. I'd certainly note, too, because you mentioned extra funding in their budget in this financial year, the Budget we've just passed, but that is, of course, for other responsibilities that have now come on to them from other commission of inquiry recommendations. So, that additional funding that is in the Budget already this year isn't for this purpose of training particularly?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - If I can reflect, Chair, on conversations I have had with the CEO - but not attempting to verbal the CEO - she is very, I believe, passionate about their existing work, that is to raise awareness and particularly awareness to ensure compliance. So, they do have that as an existing business-as-usual activity within the Integrity Commission.

I know that she is reviewing that work and it's been an active part of our conversations. I just need to work out, have they already got a fantastic module that's sitting there or do we need to do some further work together to lift that? And do we have, for example, one module that's very detailed in terms of ethics and integrity for more senior people in the service versus here is an introduction to it, should you be on the pathway moving through management positions, et cetera. We probably need to look at some kind of staged and more bespoke approach.

**Mrs GREENE** - Just moving on from training, my question's regarding the Operational Recommendation 5.2, which was calling for the establishment of a new role: commissioner of the State Service. I note that that recommendation was only noted rather than supported or supported in principle by government. I guess my question is: have DPAC prepared any options or a business case relating to the establishment of this new role or will it not be proceeding? If it's not proceeding, what alternative government's arrangements will deliver the same outcome?

**CHAIR** - Just to clarify, this is Operational Recommendation 5.4, Part Two, and it follows on from Strategic Recommendation 5.4, which is called Part One, which is sort of together. It's definitely an area for discussion.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Apologies, between Strategic Recommendations and Operational Recommendations, the numbering is getting a bit confusing. Yes, Part Two of Strategic Recommendation 5.4: Establish a new role of Commissioner of the State Service. And noting that we have noted that recommendation and, I think, at Estimates I also spoke about the work that the department is undertaking with our machinery of government change. This sits squarely within our State Service Management Office, which is part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet. As part of the machinery of government change, we are bringing in large parts of the Department of State Growth and we are looking at the creation of a new unit, in terms of Workforce Tasmania, that's going to bring together our State Service Management Office in terms of public sector workforce and also Jobs and Skills and private sector workforce.

Now, Mr Woolcott's made these recommendations and I have had a conversation with him about the fact of this machinery of government change that's come in after he's conducted his review, and noted that we'll consider the issue of a commissioner or a title change and kind of definition of role change as part of this machinery of government work which is currently

underway. But at the moment, I'm just trying to fix, in terms of the structure, how Jobs and Skills will sit alongside SSMO. You know, as an example, both units at the moment have data and analytics functions which I'd like to see combined in a new structure, but that work is currently underway.

**Mrs GREENE** - Do you have the timeline on when there might be some progress, then, once you've worked out the structure?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes, so the machinery of government change and the moves into DPAC are due in December this year. At the moment our focus has been on the units that are moving out of DPAC, and then our focus is on settling that structure and working with staff in both State Growth and DPAC. We also have our expression of interest process that will be running in relation to targeted and negotiated voluntary redundancies (TNVR), et cetera, and we have to do a lot of skill matching, so there's quite a bit of work that's in it. It'll be occurring over the next few months, but must be completed by December.

**CHAIR** - It is interesting to hear you describe how you're approaching this recommendation. I understand that you're not rejecting the recommendation; you're just thinking about how it fits with other changes that are occurring within DPAC currently. You've described this new entity of Workforce Tasmania that you're creating there and it having under its roof, two things: matters relating to the public sector through an SSMO sort of area, and then matters related to the private sector.

The thing that occurs to me when I look at these recommendations from the Woolcott review, is that the focus is very much - and I'm looking at Strategic Recommendation 5.4. The gist of what they're getting at there is wanting to, in some sense, elevate the State Service Management Office in terms of its role as a custodian of the public service, and the elements of that that are around being a steward of the accountabilities for capability, culture, integrity and performance. That's particular characteristics of the State Service, the public sector as opposed to the private sector, and management and roles within the private sector.

Bringing those two things, the public sector and the private sector, into one entity, it occurs to me that that might not take us towards the intent of this recommendation, but might potentially take away from it or blur it by putting public and private alongside each other. Can you comment on that?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I think that could be one view, Chair. But, certainly, we're also hoping that bringing them together can give greater bench strength within this workforce unit. I probably think of all the contacts that, for example, we've had from the private sector about trying to access training that we're providing in the public sector, particularly around child safety. We've made that training publicly available. It's been prepared and funded by the government for roll-out to the public sector, but wanting to also provide that to private sector employees, employers, sporting clubs, associations, et cetera so that if that could assist them in raising awareness of child safety, we think that's a positive thing.

I could just go ahead and make a recommendation to the Premier: just let's appoint a commissioner, let's change the title. What I actually want to get right is the structure that sits within the office. I know Mr Woolcott has a very certain view in terms of the way in which he used to run the Australian Public Service Commission and Commissioner. We've had long conversations about the way in which they approached that for the Australian Public Service.

I need to make sure that that can fit the Tasmanian State Service and also fit the available budget that we have for it. I have to take all of those considerations. But if I can get the structure and make sure that we've got the role and responsibilities right, and that we've got two units that now can come together with a greater resource in terms of the priorities for both public sector and transformation - and I have my chief reform lead that will also be working on public sector transformation and these Woolcott recommendations, alongside of making sure our SSMO is running efficiently, and that we're bringing in our jobs and skills unit, and managing their outcomes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, I appreciate those comments. The thing I want to delve into a little bit deeper in relation to this, though, is that the concept of stewardship and custodian of public service values was very strong in the Woolcott review, and the need for that to be strengthened in Tasmania, which is why they've gone to these recommendations. That's the principles behind these recommendations.

Noting that you don't necessarily feel it needs to be done in exactly the way Mr Woolcott's outlined it, reflecting on his Australian Public Service background, what is it within the Tasmanian public service then that needs to be strengthened in order to give better effect to this stewardship and custodian role, do you think, that isn't just changing the title?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I haven't rejected just changing the title. All I've said is that we're currently working through it and I need to make a recommendation to the Premier, as the employer and who is responsible for the State Service Management Office.

I think when I look at - and we do liaise in terms of the Australian Public Service Commissioner. I've been an Australian public servant, I'm very aware of the way in which they've operated, and in terms of them being nearly an independent complaints body, and I know Mr Woolcott had various conversations with me about heads of agency which are currently the decision makers in relation to Employment Direction 5 (ED5), for conduct investigations in relation to employees. It doesn't work that way in the public service for the Commonwealth government. They've got this separate commission that are able to manage all of those matters and take them through to conclusion. It's quite a change management piece and it's certainly not - Mr Woolcott didn't go as far as to say take that away from heads of agencies or make that change in Employment Direction 5. He still sees them as decision makers. We've made a halfway step to that, though, in the creation of our Shared Capability and Centralised Investigation (SCCI) team within DPAC, that intends to take the most serious misconduct matters.

I think Mr Woolcott's quite happy with the way in which SCCI has been operating. They've taken a large scale, in particular, the Ashley Youth Detention Centre matters. I think we're evaluating that as we go and I've had head of agency that were initially, 'Well, why would you be taking matters off us? You know, we can do them'. I said, 'Well, you can do them', but in that case there was a significant backlog and we were getting in there. We would like to now apply that consistency and look at the serious misconduct matters all coming into our SCCI team so that lower-grade matters are continuing to be dealt with by heads of agencies. That's where a direct application of the APS I don't think would work and I've discussed the reasons why with Mr Woolcott -

**CHAIR** - I'm not advocating for that either. What I'm asking for is your reflections on how, with the Tasmanian context in mind, giving effect to the intent and the principles behind the recommendations, we might be -

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - On stewardship?

**CHAIR** - Yes, on stewardship particularly, which is really a cultural piece, in a sense. It's an understanding of role and values. Clearly, the assessment from Mr Woolcott has been that we're not hitting the mark in that space in terms of leadership within our public service around the role of stewardship and custodian of values. How can we actually strengthen, through what you're planning, that public service ethos and principles, particularly if we're going to be bringing the private sector in alongside potentially under this entity?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Stewardship is currently in every head of agency performance management agreement. I think we have come an incredibly long way in terms of stewardship on child safety. Each of the heads of agency have been working incredibly hard to ensure that they have reviewed all of their policies and procedures across agencies. They have led in terms of rolling out mandatory training, and with some resistance in particular cohorts, et cetera, within agencies that I'm aware of, but they've stayed true to that course. But the concept of stewardship, obviously, is far broader than child safety. I'm working with the secretaries board in relation to what are the key priorities in terms of our TSS and our public sector transformation that we're going to focus on from a stewardship level? But our first priority has been the recommendations of the commission of inquiry.

**Ms LOVELL** - Sorry to jump around a bit, but I had some follow up questions on Operational Recommendation 5.2 (part two). This is the recommendation around mandatory training regarding management of conflicts of interest. There's obviously been the Auditor-General report recently around conflicts of interest as well that identified some concerns. I know there's been a new policy released earlier this year, or developed earlier this year, that appears to I guess meet the requirements that the Auditor-General certainly had identified. What work has been done to ensure that that policy has been I guess rolled out and that that mandatory training is happening and people are up to date on that?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - In terms of the conflict of interest policy in itself and the Auditor-General report, I didn't bring a direct update in relation to conflicts of interest, but I'm happy to provide one to the committee. But, certainly, we would see that - and I'll need to work with the secretary's board in terms of the roll-out of both, and combination of ethics, integrity and conflicts of interest. And the training would need to pick up any relevant Integrity Commission report or Auditor-General report and recommendations as part of that training program.

**Ms LOVELL** - These two recommendations identify, I guess, different groups of employees as being the target groups for this training. Is it your expectation that this conflict of interest training would be rolled out to that broader group as well? Will that be done in, like, a staged approach? I imagine the group that's been identified by Mr Woolcott is a much smaller group, I imagine. Will there be a prioritisation of these staff officials and people with delegated decision-making authority? Do you know when that work will be done?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I think we're probably back in the same position as we are working at the moment with the Integrity Commission. We're working with our training

consortium and we'll work together with the secretary's board to develop that criteria and make it very clear the expectation of whom, within each agency, is required to attend ethics, integrity or conflict of interest training.

Conflict of interest training already occurs across the State Service. Every single State servant, under the code of conduct in the *State Service Act*, is subject to a code of conduct that requires the management of conflicts of interest. So, certainly, that's a standing expectation as a Tasmanian state servant. I am aware that different agencies roll out different forms of training in relation to conflicts of interest, but again, we need to look right across and make sure that there are no gaps in that application in particular agencies.

It's a standard, for example, as part of recruitment. So if you, in the State Service, are on a recruitment panel or in procurement, it is a standard component of conflicts of interest. It features in our governance, so in terms of people that are on executives or executive committees or governance committees, that there are standing items for the declaration of conflicts of interest. But we all know that it can go down very deep, in terms of even very junior officers that could be exposed to the potential or the management of a conflict.

**Ms LOVELL** - I understand there's already some training that happens broadly across the State Service, but I guess Mr Woolcott's identified this particular group for a reason. Is it your expectation that this group that's been identified will undertake more in-depth training, or more detailed training, and what work is being - I mean, you've talked about the work that's being done. Do you expect this will happen, I mean, more quickly than the work that's being done with the Integrity Commission? It seems that this would be maybe a simpler piece of work, if it's a smaller group, and you've already got a policy in place?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes, Ms Lovell, in terms of the smaller group being identified, and if we've already got existing modules of training that we could quickly also tweak or update, and we will compare to the conflicts of interest training that the APS run out - that Mr Woolcott's obviously very familiar with - to make sure that it is consistent. You know, we can target that as a first priority. I just don't want to disrupt - in case the Integrity Commission have a plan for the ethics and integrity training that they wish to put out as a priority. But if it's a smaller cohort, absolutely, and it's my expectation that would occur in the 2026-27 financial year.

**Ms LOVELL** - Is it your - because the recommendation, this one, is not to partner with the Integrity Commission, this is for SSMO to develop and deliver the training. But are you saying that you're expecting the Integrity Commission to include this as part of their work on the ethics and integrity -

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I'll have a conversation with the Integrity Commission, because they also, in many of their reports, have raised conflicts of interest and have previously rolled out training in relation to conflicts of interest. What I'm trying to do is make sure that we don't have three different service providers that are trying to hit State Service employees in terms of, you know, one topic. So, we need to make sure we're coordinated, whether that's a partnership between our training consortium and the Integrity Commission. You know, if the Auditor-General, for example, in his office wants to also run out a particular form of training, I just need to check in and make sure that - because we all know that this takes time, in terms of state servants. If I'm training nurses or nurse unit managers, for example, we also need to roster them in, hire additional people to cover them to do training, et cetera, noting that the

scheduling for mandatory training in hospitals can be quite difficult, I'm reflecting on them only because I'm aware of it, but -

**Ms HURWORTH** - Even the principles, the assistant principles, and that's one of the key differences between the APS and our jurisdiction.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - We have to take people off the frontline to attend our various training. We need to make sure it's concise, you know, positive and able to be completed, and evaluated, and makes a difference.

**Ms LOVELL** - This recommendation speaks specifically about officials, and particularly those with delegated decision-making authority on a regular basis, so who would fall into that category?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - In terms of officials, we'd obviously start with the SES. The SES will have taken part in various conflict of interest training already. But in terms of - again, 'officials' is not a defined term in the State Service. I'd be looking to our heads of agencies to identify who are the officers across the agency that have the potential to be able to recognise, identify and manage a conflict of interest in their day-to-day work in the State Service.

**Ms ROSOL** - I would like to ask some questions about ED5 or Strategic Recommendation 4.1. There's several parts to that there that go to the code of conduct, and I note that in the response to Strategic Recommendation 4.1 (Part Four), it refers to the update to the ED5, which was published in 2024. Just wondering if you could outline further responses that you might have to this. You said you support the recommendations. What work have you been doing around the ED5s and the recommendations here?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Thank you, Ms Rosol. I'm aware that we have written to all of the heads of agencies to consult on the draft employment directions that Mr Woolcott and, I know, Radha Thomas spent a significant amount of time developing and also consulting with heads of agencies and union representatives in relation to those EDs. So, we're expecting that feedback to come back in, I think, the next two to three weeks, from memory.

**Ms HURWORTH** - We have all agencies already.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Oh, apologies. I might ask Courtney to update on that consultation. And we'll be working through those employment directions. We'd obviously published a first tranche of amendments to ED5. We did that - in terms of timing, because we were trying to align - we knew that Mr Woolcott was working on it, we did show him that amended ED5 to make sure that it did fit or align with what he was thinking. And I think it was actually quite timely in doing that, noting the then timing of the final response of Woolcott. I might ask Mandy also to comment on employment directions, which also sits in SSMO's responsibility.

**Ms RUSSELL** - Thank you, Ms Rosol. As Kath has said, we did publish a revised ED5 that really did reflect some of the conversations that we were having with Mr Woolcott during the course of his review - and I would point that around August 2024 that was signed by the Premier.



Importantly, at that time, we also took the opportunity to publish a guide on ED5 and what had changed. I think that was an important step forward for the State Service Management Office in the way that we approach any sort of change that's not process related, but very much goes to the points of the committee around cultural change. So, I would point that out, and happy to provide that link to the committee. Because we took the opportunity, then, to talk about key changes in delegations in the intent of undertaking investigations in the process around, and the changes that reflected, at that time, safety and protection of children and our trauma-informed approach, that really looking to exemplify the changes that the commission of inquiry spoke about and what we needed to do as a State Service. and how that was being complemented, for example, with trauma-informed training for investigators, the establishment by the Department of Education, Children and Young People (DECYP) of the investigation panel and other related matters.

The other point I would make is that Mr Woolcott made observations and provided draft EDs for not only code of conduct but for suspension. Also for performance management. With the work in collaboration with Courtney and her team, I've been speaking with the unions around their perspective and their really valuable insights into the system changes that they see around the recommendations. Also, as Kath has said, we've provided a request to heads of agencies, they've been providing feedback and we're really looking forward to consolidating that and providing that through to Kath in her role as the head of the State Service for consideration and on to the Premier.

I think that what that reflects is that the tenet of Mr Woolcott's changes was around not only clarifying matters of process, but also how we build in guidance. We've had some really great observations from, in particular, our public sector unions around that. So, looking forward to working through those changes.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I think, Ms Rosol, aligned with - so you have an employment direction, but there are some significant amendments to the *State Service Act*, including amendments to the code of conduct, that are going to have to be reflected through as new practice in terms of employee conduct and the conduct of investigations. I'm thinking of, for example, Mr Woolcott's recommendation in terms of 'at all times', for example, in the code of conduct, and which we've also having several conversations with the unions about also, hearing their concerns and feedback.

**Ms ROSOL** - When we heard from Mr Woolcott and Radha Thomas in the hearing, they talked about the separation out of the delegates. I heard a mention of separation of the sanction delegates and the breach delegates. I would be interested to know your response to that and what work is happening in relation to that?

**Ms RUSSELL** - Thank you, Ms Rosol, that actually was clarified in the changes to the ED that the Premier signed in August of 2024 that I recently mentioned. That had been in place for some of our larger agencies, such as the Department of Health, and Children and Young People, prior to that time. But we took the opportunity, in reflecting agencies' feedback, around what that actually meant in practice and effectively, the separation of the breach delegate from the sanction was really enabling us to ensure that we had agency-reflective processes in place that provided the opportunity for the timely progression of investigations, and then for the appropriateness of the sanction to be primarily concentrated at heads of agency because, obviously, they have a broad system-wide view of their organisations. It enabled us to really

have a focus on progressing those investigations in the most efficient and effective way possible when balancing procedural fairness.

Again, we articulated many of those changes in our guides. And working through that with agencies is often a process of working alongside agencies as they're working through those changes to support them in that practice.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - But small agencies that have a small number of ED5 matters, it would be typical for the same decision maker on breach and sanction. And, certainly, that's been my approach as a head of agency in, you know, various agencies. But somewhere there is a larger amount, to have a head of agency that is dedicated to several days' worth of reading, et cetera, in terms of breach, where that could be shared with another delegate within the agency to keep these investigations moving in a timely matter. But the head of agencies always retaining that sanction determination.

**Ms ROSOL** - Can I just clarify, then, because it sounds from what you're saying that you have done that work and are happy with the work that's happened there and think it's sufficient. But in the hearing that we had recently, Mr Woolcott and Ms Thomas were saying they were still proposing further changes around that. I'm curious about that difference in the way of assessing what's happened there. If I'm hearing that right or if you have further comment on that?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I probably - and I did listen to the hearing, and apologies if I didn't pick up that aspect. I'm happy to have a look at the *Hansard* or have a conversation with Mr Woolcott if he - so, we are consulting on his version of ED5 now with heads of agencies. But what we're saying is we actually provided for that delegate and separation in the previous iteration of ED5 that's currently live. We're not proposing at the moment, depending on feedback from agencies, to change Mr Woolcott's version. So, we'll just have a look at what that difference is there. But we currently have the ability to separate breach and sanction determination. It just requires the preparation of a delegation for that head of agency.

**Mrs GREENE** - Just a quick question about the timeliness of ED5 investigations. How long, roughly, is it taking now before investigators are appointed when someone is stood down?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I could probably, just from anecdotal evidence, be able to answer that from my own experience. An employee, say, for example, in the Department of Health, if there is an allegation in relation to child sexual abuse, there is immediate standdown, so once that allegation is made known. But there is sometimes a time delay then to the commencement of an ED5, but the important thing is about the standing down of the employee. But it could be within 24 or 48 hours that then the ED5 investigation is commenced, or it can be a couple of weeks if further information is required in order to then establish and be able to clarify all allegations relating to that matter for that particular employee. But the importance is around the standdown, or the effect of a suspension, in relation to the allegation.

**Mrs GREENE** - I agree that the standdown is important, but how long is it until an investigator is appointed? Because we know historically sometimes it's taken months or even longer for investigations to commence. Is it something perhaps you can take on notice, with matters of people who are currently stood down, how long it's taking for investigators to be appointed at the moment?

**CHAIR** - Is that something that you would collect data on and be able to provide to us in that sense?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I don't believe that we collect data on the timing between a standdown and the commencement of ED5 investigations, but I'm happy to have a conversation with our agencies about what their experience has been.

The check that we do have in place is that agencies are required to identify every state servant that is suspended and notify that to the State Service Management Office, and we do our own follow-up. We're reviewing all of those matters, and if we believe that there is an unduly long length of time between standdown and ED5 commencement, we're raising and questioning that with agencies. So, there's that double-check by our SCCI team as it relates to child sexual abuse, noting that I don't have the data on non-child sexual abuse suspensions that could occur in agencies for other types of misconduct.

**Mrs GREENE** - Thank you. It would be appreciated if you could follow that up, because I know there have been examples of when the ED5 process has commenced but it is an exceptionally long amount of time before an investigator has been appointed, which then delays the process even longer, so if you could follow up that would be much appreciated.

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Yes, I can follow up with heads of agencies.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Would it be fair to say that you, as the head of the State Service, have an expectation of a particular timeliness for that sort of thing to commence, from standdown to when an investigator is appointed? Is there something you can point us to about your expectation there?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - In terms of our ED5 guidance, I don't think we specify an amount of hours or days, for example, for that to occur, but it is to occur within a timely manner. Certainly, if there are instances or concerns about a long length of time between a standdown or suspension and the commencement of an ED5, I'd be happy to look if there's a particular concern about a matter and also discuss that with the secretaries board.

**Ms LOVELL** - Operational Recommendation 5.4 talks about an engagement and partnership framework for engagement with relevant community-based organisations responsible for child safety and wellbeing services across Tasmania, and that's been supported. It talks about the Change for Children action plan. Has that work been completed yet?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - I might ask our chief reform lead to speak to that one.

**Ms HURWORTH** - The Change for Children action plan is due to be published in August. It does include the response to this and the recommendation around key account management process, around working with stakeholders.

One of the things that's unique in Tasmania is that our spectrum of stakeholders is smaller but they still get the same amount of requests as a bigger jurisdiction for engagement in policy advice and activity. Certainly, in the child safety and family violence space, it's also now pressure from the Commonwealth because they're moving into those spheres in really substantial ways.

We had started work on this prior to Woolcott providing these recommendations because we were hearing that feedback already through our work. We're not going to have a perfect approach, but we are looking at how we can use technology as well in a way to streamline our engagement with, particularly, our peaks.

**Ms LOVELL** - Can you talk a little bit more about that and what that looks like or what you're considering there?

**Ms HURWORTH** - In my area, if I just use child safety as an example, one of the things that we've tried to do through our governance structure is almost like - and I don't like this term - a customer relationship management approach. We try to share and record when we meet with stakeholders and on what issues, and whether we can then consolidate our engagements around specific issues.

The other comment I would make is, as we've become more sophisticated about trauma-informed approaches to engaging with community groups who may have experienced different types of trauma over time, we've become more sophisticated in enabling those groups to control their own engagement.

If I use our Victim-Survivor Advisory Group in this area as an example, we have a very structured process of seeking expressions of interest across government around what they wish to engage with victim/survivors on and how. Then we take that back to that group, they consider what their engagement interest is, and then we have a pretty detailed discussion between agencies and that group around the how. Although it's not directly related to managing volume, it is, in the sense that volume can be traumatic for people, as can the view that it can look like government's coming and asking you the same question over and over again from different agencies on different things.

**Unknown** - [inaudible 10.18.00]

**Ms HURWORTH** - Yeah. We've piloted a pretty intensive model through our Victim-Survivor Advisory Council, which has been different for government and it's required quite a bit of cultural change. We're still working on that with agencies around how you work with community. But we're trying to look at how we can extend similar approaches to broader engagement with, particularly, peak organisations who, as you would know, are small. But also cohorts in the community. We will detail that in the Change For Children Action Plan.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for that. You talk about incorporating that into the governance of the Keeping Children Safe reform program. Operational Recommendation 5.5, the final part of that which flows on from what we've just been talking about. It says, 'Reporting and progress should occur to the secretaries board and publicly'. How will we see how that's being arranged and how that's progressing in terms of its effectiveness?

**Ms HURWORTH** - I think there's two parts to what you're asking. How will you see progress? We will report against these recommendations specifically through the Keeping Children Safe website. How will you see effectiveness is a different question entirely. I suppose there's two parts to that: what does it mean for government, and what does it mean for community? Part of the work we've been doing around our Victim-Survivor Advisory Group includes an external evaluation, looking at whether we've implemented a trauma-informed best-practice approach. That will include the management of volume and other things like that.

There'll be learnings from that that we can extrapolate and share to other parts of our engagement.

The other element that I think is really exciting is that we're working with the Implementation Monitor around how we can use different levers the government has to look into impact on community, and impact on government culture. Myself and Mandy are working in collaboration with the Implementation Monitor's office around looking at how we can tap into things like the corporate survey, to look at how your attitudes not only to child safety are changing, but how are your attitudes to engagement more broadly, the sharing of information, cultural matters that Woolcott has raised are changing over time? We're working collaboratively with the monitor not only to inform ourselves, but also so the monitor has access to data and information.

**Ms RUSSELL** - I'd just reinforce those positive conversations because we want to capture as many single opportunities to replicate this data over time as we can.

The recent conversations with the Independent Monitor have been around our State Service survey that we run every two years. It has very valid information across a broad range of cultural aspects in the State Service, and it really does connect into the matters that Courtney mentioned. The monitor's very keen. We've had some discussions around the type of questions and how that can flow through not only the State Service survey, but also other reporting mechanisms that he may wish to institute.

**Ms HURWORTH** - The monitor did receive some additional funding in this Budget. What he's looking at is doing some evaluation deep dives into certain areas which will also cover some of these areas - certain areas not only of child safety outcomes, but implementation outcomes. He will be seeking submissions and advice from the community as well as ourselves around where we think it would be beneficial for him to do those deep dives. We'll be providing him some advice. One of the areas we may look at is the way we engage broadly with community and reform, including child safety reform.

**CHAIR** - My final question is more of an overarching question. When I read the Woolcott review, both parts, and also note the process that Mr Woolcott and Radha Thomas went through with it across an extended period of time - I think it ended up being a much more extensive process than was anticipated when it was first commissioned as a review. It appears to have been an incredibly comprehensive but constructive process and then result in terms of these recommendations. I wondered whether you wanted to make some comments about what you felt was the impact and value that that process has had, and what difference it might have made? I thought that might be something you'd like to put on the record here as a reflection. We've had reviews of the State Service before - I'm thinking back to the Watt Review, probably most recently - but in some ways this Woolcott Review seems to have really dug in, and the engagement's been very good, from my observation, from the public service with it. So I'm wondering would you like to make some comments about that process?

**Ms MORGAN-WICKS** - Thank you, Chair. The Woolcott Review is such a significant piece of work, but it - in fact, I think Mr Woolcott would probably also reflect - it is building upon both the Tasmanian State Service Review (TSSR) review and Watt. He was certainly engaged with Ian Watt, I think they're friends anyway, in terms of previous work and collaboration. You know, he's obviously gone right through all of the recommendations of the COI and was not attempting to replicate but, again, to build.

## PUBLIC

Really, what I see, as the head of the State Service, we have such an opportunity in terms of the transformation of the public sector here in Tasmania. I think it would be very fair to say that the commission of inquiry was a huge shock to the Tasmanian State Service. We need to absolutely respect that and respond to it, and respond to it positively. We are not ignoring the TSSR review - we are still working through those recommendations, and stewardship - and Mr Woolcott's picked that up very strongly from the Watt Review - is going to flow through these. So we are building on each of these recommendations and we have funding in the budget to actually implement the recommendations. Often we'll have these reviews across State Service into particular things, and as a head of agency you can be scraping together money for resources or teams to work through it.

I think this has absolutely been - and I know that the Premier, in terms of his priority to implement the COI recommendations, remains strong and true. That is certainly in his instructions to me as the head of the State Service. And I think Mr Woolcott has picked that all up - refined but also added, given his vast experiences as an APS commissioner and what he's seen. He sees Tasmania as a small jurisdiction but a mighty jurisdiction in attempting to take on, to be honest, what I'm not seeing the state of transformation in any other state and particularly in relation to child safety. I think Victoria have had quite a shock in terms of the incidents that have occurred, for example, in their childcare sector. But they are, and with all respect to Victoria, behind where we have had that experience in Tasmania.

We've now had over five years that we've been working through making child safety an absolute priority in all of the services that we provide. I would probably challenge any other jurisdiction to be able to state that they have been doing that. I think from the federal Children's Commissioner in speaking so positively about the work that Tasmania has done. We know we've got more to do. Absolutely respect that. I know that we've got a way to go in terms of the culture of the service, but a report like Woolcott stands us in incredibly good stead. Follow those recommendations, see them through, and then what is the next stage in terms of transformation for us.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, appreciate that. We're out of time. Thank you to members of the committee and thank you very much for appearing today to speak with us and provide evidence to the committee. Before we wrap up I have to say the evidence you have provided at the hearing today is protected by parliamentary privilege. I take this opportunity to remind you that any comments you may make to the media or others outside the room, even if you repeat what you've said here, will not be protected. Do you understand that?

**WITNESSES** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**The committee suspended from 10.27 a.m. to 10.38 a.m.**

### Department

**CHAIR** (Ms Webb) - Welcome, everyone, to the Joint Sessional Committee on Recommendations of the Final Report of the Commission of Inquiry's public hearings this morning, particularly focused around following up on discussion of the Woolcott Report to government.

## PUBLIC

Welcome to today's hearing. Let me introduce the members of the committee who are here at the table: Marcus Vermey MP, Liberal member for Clark; the honourable Cassy O'Connor MLC, member for Hobart; honourable Sarah Lovell MLC, member for Rumney; myself, Meg Webb, member for Nelson. Online joining us from the committee we have Cecily Rosol MP, Greens member for Bass; and Jess Greene MP, Labor member for Bass. Thank you for joining us here at the table. We've also got supporting us Jenny and Ally and also Roey on Hansard. Thank you.

I need to begin by recognising that contents of this hearing may be triggering to some members of the committee, members of the community watching online or others who may come into the room. I'd encourage anyone impacted by the content matter in this hearing to make contact with support services. These include the statewide sexual assault support line which is 24-hour support from local specialist counsellors, the Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) or Laurel House on 1800 697 877 or 1800MYSUPPORT; Lifeline 24-hour crisis support, 13 11 14; Tasmanian Lifeline from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. every day on 1800 98 44 34; 13YARN, a 24-hour crisis support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, on 139 276; or Relationships Australia from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Friday, 1300 364 277.

With that, Deputy, welcome to the hearing. You're online, your staff are here in the room to support you as required. To begin with, could we please have everyone state their name and capacity in which they're appearing before the committee?

**Mr BARNETT** - Thanks very much, Chair. Thanks very much for the invitation to appear today. I'm joined in the committee at the table in Hobart by my Secretary, Kristy Bourne, and also by the Director of Strategic Policy and Planning, Bruce Paterson.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I presume everybody has received and read the information for witness guide that we provided through the Committee Secretary. Thank you. Excellent.

As I need to note, all evidence taken at this hearing is protected by parliamentary privilege, allowing individuals to speak with freedom without fear of being sued or questioned in any court or place out of parliament. I remind you that any comments you make outside the hearing may not be afforded such privilege. This hearing is public, which means members of the public and media may be present. The evidence you present is being recorded and the *Hansard* version will be published on the committee website when it becomes available. This hearing is also being broadcast. Should you wish for some or all of your evidence to be heard in private, you must make that request to the committee, and the committee will consider the request. If you two at the table wouldn't mind making your statutory declarations.

**Ms KRISTY BOURNE**, SECRETARY, and **Mr BRUCE PATERSON**, DIRECTOR STRATEGIC LEGISLATION AND POLICY, WERE CALLED, MADE THE STATUTORY DECLARATION AND WERE EXAMINED.

**CHAIR** - Much appreciated. Deputy, would you like to make any form of opening statement before we move to questions?

**Mr BARNETT** - Yes, thanks very much, Chair, I would, with your indulgence. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear today. There's absolutely no more important role for government than ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and young people. The report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual

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Abuse in Institutional Settings absolutely found significant failures of past governments to act in the interests of children to keep them safe - and these failures cannot be repeated.

In response to the commission of inquiry report, it was accepted in August 2023, the Tasmanian Government's committed to the most expansive reform program in Tasmania's history, accepting all 191 recommendations. Since that time, we've continued to demonstrate that we are taking all necessary action to ensure failures of the past are not repeated. This included appointing eminent former Australian public service commissioner Peter Woolcott AO, together with the support of Radha Sharman, to undertake a thorough analysis of all actions by the Tasmanian government agencies in response to information and concerns about State Service employees and officers raised by the commission of inquiry.

Part A of the Woolcott report was released by the government on 4 November 2025, followed by the release of part B, which focused solely on the justice system, on 2 December 2025. The review has made 27 recommendations, several of which include sub-recommendations. The government's response to the Woolcott report was released on 26 March this year.

Committee members may be aware I recently released the Commission of Inquiry (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 for consultation. That draft bill also includes key amendments to strengthen information-sharing laws to support agencies to share information about child safety risks and reportable conduct more effectively, in line with the recommendations of Mr Woolcott's report. Consultation on the bill closed on Sunday 7 June and I anticipate tabling it in parliament in August.

My department has established and led two major multi-agency initiatives, the joint safety and accountability team and the joint referral review team, to identify all individuals of concern, assess current risk to children and young people, and ensure referrals to law enforcement and regulatory authorities. Through these initiatives, my department has reviewed thousands of documents, hundreds of allegations and notices, identified 217 individuals of concern, and ensured that all matters were formally referred for investigation or employment action.

All known risks to children and young people arising from the commission's work have now been catalogued and referred, with my department continuing to lead the implementation of reforms and safeguarding measures. This work has been reviewed by Mr Woolcott as part of his review, which has confirmed that all relevant matters of concern identified through its comprehensive analysis of all sources have been captured through the work of the joint referral review team.

I welcome today's hearing to discuss the important work taking place in the Justice portfolio to implement the recommendations made by the report. Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. Looking through the government's responses, it looks to me that about 13 of the recommendations have been allocated to your department for implementing. No doubt we will have questions that relate to some of those in due course during this hearing, and will identify which of the recommendations it relates to when we ask a question.



Just as an overarching question to begin, though. The intent, clearly, is that for a range of recommendations made in the Woolcott review, there will be ongoing oversight of implementation via the Implementation Monitor, who is doing his good work relating to the commission of inquiry recommendations also. In speaking with some DPAC representatives in the hearing earlier today, we are understanding that it is you and your department who are allocating which of these recommendations from the Woolcott review will be given over for oversight to the Independent Monitor. Can you talk us through that process and where you're up to in determining which of these recommendations you're referring to the monitor for oversight?

**Mr BARNETT** - The government certainly supports this recommendation in part, consistent with the requirements of the *Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor Act*. I can confirm, as stated in our government's response, that we will assign all recommendations from the report to the Implementation Monitor for oversight that are legally able to be referred. All recommendations assigned to the Implementation Monitor will be made public via the *Tasmanian Government Gazette*.

As stated in our response, only recommendations that relate to child safety and wellbeing are legally able to be referred to the Implementation Monitor, in accordance with section 13 of that act. The Government's been engaging directly with the Implementation Monitor in regard to which recommendations can be referred to him. I anticipate we will formalise those referrals in the very near future.

You've obviously heard from DPAC this morning. I am advised that they have been working very recently with the Implementation Monitor in that regard.

**Ms BOURNE** - Not too much more to add. As you've noted, we're in the final stages of working through that referral process, which has included direct engagement with the monitor and working very closely with DPAC as well as the head of the State Service and the chief reform lead talked about this morning. Obviously, our focus is on providing advice around the requirements under the act, noting that, as the deputy has said, section 13, read together with the monitor's functions under section 12, provides some guidance without explicitly defining what child safety and wellbeing means. But those discussions are progressing with direct consultation from the monitor, and we hope to be in a position to be able to finalise that in the very near future.

**CHAIR** - It's our understanding that the intention would be, while the monitor may not report on the referred recommendations in his annual report in September this year, there will at least be a clarity provided in that report on the recommendations over which he will have oversight going forward. Is that your understanding?

**Mr BARNETT** - Yes. That's the absolute very high level expectation that that'll all be sorted by September. I think I'll just confirm with the Secretary that that's her view as well.

**Ms BOURNE** - That is my view. I think it would be helpful to have that clarity for the purposes of that September report, and feel that we're in a good position to be able to meet that timeframe.

**Ms LOVELL** - Deputy Premier, I have a question about the recommendations in part B of the Woolcott review. Strategic Recommendation 1.1, which is in relation to reissuing the

model litigant obligations as directions to all agencies and instrumentalities, which I understand is supported. But part B, the review recommended establishing an office within the Department of Justice to oversight and report on compliance with the directions. This one has been noted. Can you expand on what 'noted' means? Is that a recommendation that you will be implementing?

**Mr BARNETT** - I can expand on what noting means. You've correctly noted our support for A in terms of reissuing the model litigant obligations as directions to all agencies and instrumentalities.

Regarding part B, the government's noted it, rather than supported it, because the proposal to establish a separate compliance office within the Department of Justice - and if I can explain a little bit. Compliance by agencies with the model litigant obligations is not optional. It is a legal obligation. So, in regards to the establishment of an oversight office, the advice from my department is that this would require the recruitment of a number of highly experienced and specialised legal practitioners with a specific focus on oversight of compliance with model litigant guidelines. It's not at this stage clear whether it is feasible, in the Tasmanian context, to establish a new office with that level of legal expertise for the task.

That does not change in any way that each government agency has a clear obligation to comply with the model litigant guidelines, and will be accountable for doing so.

**Ms LOVELL** - Further to that, if the decision - and understanding that that's still being assessed whether or not that's feasible, yes, I understand that it is a legal obligation to comply with those directions or obligations. But we have had this come up in a previous hearing and the Chair has asked in a previous hearing about how we know how well agencies are tracking against compliance with those guidelines and whether that's captured. The answer at the time was that that information is not captured. So, accepting that it's a legal obligation, how do we know if agencies are meeting their legal obligation if we're not tracking that and there is no oversight and reporting of that?

**Mr BARNETT** - I just wanted to make it clear that we obviously agree, in which we both agree in terms of the government agreeing with the model litigant guidelines should be reissued under the Attorney-General's authority. The obligations under the guidelines already exist and the department's revising the current framework.

Establishing a separate compliance office is a materially different proposal, so it would require - and I'll just list a few things -

**Ms LOVELL** - Sorry, Deputy Premier. Sorry to interrupt, but I think you've misunderstood my question. My question is: if we are to accept that that's still under review and it might be not feasible and all of those things, what else are we doing? What else is the Department of Justice doing to ensure that agencies are meeting their legal obligation? What oversight - In the absence of an oversight office being established, what oversight and reporting is there of those obligations?

**Mr BARNETT** - Okay, I'm with you. Sure. I appreciate where you're coming from and the specificity of your question, so let me address that. Responsibility, if I can just say, is shared. The heads of agencies are primarily responsible for the administration of the obligations within their agencies. The state litigation office is responsible for conducting the state's civil

litigation in accordance with the law, professional obligations, and the government's directions. Agency officers, providing instructions and exercising settlement authority, also have responsibilities. External practitioners acting for the state must comply, and the Attorney-General is responsible for the integrity of the overall legal services framework.

If there was a question in terms of whether there is currently any central oversight: there is a central legal coordination through Crown Law and the State Litigation Office. The Attorney-General and the Secretary, who's at the table - who I'll ask to add to this answer shortly - may also be advised of significant matters. However, Tasmania does not presently have a separate office dedicated exclusively to receiving, recording and reporting all allegations of model litigant non-compliance. I might pause there, if that's okay.

**Ms LOVELL** - If I can, just before you do pass to the Secretary - again, accepting everything you've said there, there's a shared responsibility to meet the obligations. Who is making sure that all of those people who share responsibility for meeting those obligations are actually meeting them?

**Mr BARNETT** - Okay. Thank you for the question. I think I've answered in part, but I'll just add to the answer. In terms of agencies, they're currently legally responsible for their own compliance, and they are for many other legal and administrative obligations. That does not mean there is no external scrutiny. There's courts, there's legal professional regulators, of course there's parliament, there's oversight bodies that may examine relevant conduct. And the department's considering how the relevant and how the revised framework can strengthen assurance and escalation without necessarily creating a separate office.

A lot of this is obviously operational and administration wise, and I think it would be helpful for the Secretary to speak into that space to assist the committee.

**Ms BOURNE** - Thanks, deputy, through you: as the deputy has said, in the absence of a separate office dedicated to that purpose, there are a range of other compliance activities, for lack of a better word, that occur that oversee compliance with model litigant guidelines. Heads of agency obviously have responsibility for their own compliance, as do courts, our legal professional regulators, parliament and other oversight bodies. The State Litigation Office still coordinates and oversees compliance with those guidelines by external practitioners. And as the Deputy has said, the commitment is there to review those guidelines; they haven't been looked at since the inception of the State Litigation Office. So, I think it's a really good opportunity to make sure that they're fit for purpose.

As we've talked about in other committees, we are considering how that revised framework can further strengthen the current assurance measures that are in place. An escalation point from the State Litigation Office or practitioners across the system is a complaint to my office. There is a really intricate relationship with the legal profession board, so where complaints relate to lawyers not necessarily, or allegedly, maybe not complying with their professional commitments, there's a very clear role for that board. But I think Mr Woolcott's review gives us an opportunity to further look at that compliance model that may not necessarily see the creation of an explicit independent office within the Department of Justice. Noting, as the Deputy has noted, there are difficulties that the service experiences already in attracting and retaining legal practitioners, and a focus on trying to resource our frontline legal practitioner support to manage demand -

**Ms LOVELL** - If I could ask then, perhaps, given that there are, you're saying existing compliance activities and people share responsibility for this, what information do you have, Deputy Premier, about how well we're tracking against meeting those model litigant guidelines? Is that tracked? Do you collect that information? How do we know that those compliance activities are working?

**Mr BARNETT** - Thank you for the question. I appreciate that, and I guess, through normal business practices, as I've outlined, there's a whole range of obligations for each agency head. In my space, as Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, I meet, for example, my Secretary on a weekly basis, where opportunities for raising any compliance or non-compliance concerns are available. I meet with, obviously, the Crown Solicitor, I meet with the State Litigator, I meet with the Solicitor-General. So, there's opportunities in all of those forums for feedback in terms of non-compliance, and if there were any, I would act on it. I'd ask the Secretary perhaps to add to that in terms of processes that are available, and I think we've touched on that to some degree, but perhaps the Secretary could add to that.

**Mr BOURNE** - Thanks, Deputy, through you. As you've highlighted, there's not an explicit tracker. That's something we've been talking about a lot of late, particularly since the provision of the Woolcott review with the Director of Crown Law, about how, in the absence of a new system, we can use current reporting requirements to try and better track that across the Crown - noting, as we've said, heads of agency have responsibility in that regard too. The new guidelines that the Deputy and government have indicated will be developed could potentially include provision around further reporting mechanisms, which I think would be a really integral part of those considerations. And how we manage sensitivities around legal professional privilege reports that go to the legal profession board, or need to be worked through, but certainly something that we're already considering about improving those systems.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Can I just ask a quick follow-up to that question? Thank you. Have any significant matters or examples of non-compliance with the model litigant guidelines been raised with either the Attorney, the Secretary or Crown Law or the State Litigation Office since they were reissued?

**Mr BOURNE** - Through you, deputy: not that I'm aware of, at this point in time. Certainly, as the Deputy's indicated, I catch up with the Crown principals on a regular basis, and they will advise me of issues or concerns that they may see or be aware of. Nothing explicit that I can report on at this point in time.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Anything implicit?

**Mr BOURNE** - Through you, deputy: no, not to the best of my understanding.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thanks for that. So just quickly, on the model litigant guidelines, you flagged that they are being reviewed. What do we know about the weaknesses within the current guidelines? How might they be strengthened? When are we likely to see the revised set of guidelines?

**Mr BARNETT** - I might just kick it off with that one. Thanks very much, through you Chair, for the question. It's a good question. Obviously, we'll be guided by current arrangements, but also by the Woolcott report and recommendations. So, this has been very useful for government. Obviously, I met with Peter Woolcott, and I want to put on the record,

again, my sincere thanks and appreciation for his very comprehensive and excellent, exemplary work that, together with Radha's support, has been made available to government, and to which we've now responded. So, we'll be obviously informed by that as well. I think they've made excellent recommendations which we'll now act upon. So, we'll be informed by that advice in terms of those recommendations, that are very profound and clear. I'll ask the Secretary to add to that answer.

**Mr BOURNE** - Thanks, deputy. I think fundamentally they haven't been revisited since the State Litigation Office was established, so that's fairly significant. Also looking at how you import trauma-informed practice principles, we're currently exploring in close consultation with the State Litigator and his office, whether we have two separate guidelines, do we bring them together? We do have a draft that we, subject to the Deputy's views, would like to release more broadly very soon for public consultation, noting that we're still in the final stages of seeking input from the State Litigator.

**CHAIR** - During this recent Estimates hearings I put a question on notice to you, minister, and your department provided information back. The question was around any data for the previous two financial years on complaints regarding non-compliance with model litigant guidelines. It was indicated in the answer that no complaints in either the 2024-25 or 2025-26 periods were made through the Department of Justice complaints framework.

The thing I wanted to follow up on was the next paragraph of the answer, which said:

The State Litigator has received correspondence in which it is asserted that aspects of the conduct of matters were not consistent with the model litigant guidelines. Often these concerns have, upon assessment, been misconceived or based on a misunderstanding of the operation of the guidelines.

That, to me, implies that there's an assessment process that occurs. Can you describe where that assessment process occurs and who undertakes the assessment of matters that are raised in that way?

**Ms BOURNE** - I wouldn't be able to speak to the assessment process. But referring back to my earlier comments about the integral role of the State Litigation Office in ensuring compliance with the guidelines, for both their own staff, agencies that provide instructions, but also external practitioners, which is a really key component of the existing framework.

But I wouldn't be able to speak on behalf of the State Litigator about the process that that office undertakes to inform that view as they will turn on the individual facts. I wouldn't be in a position to -

**CHAIR** - In a process sense, though, it would be the State Litigator in charge of that unit that would be the one who would make these assessments when matters are raised in correspondence asserting that potentially model litigant guidelines have been not complied with. So, there is an assessment process that's undergone there at that level. Is the expectation that that gets reported through in some way - for example, if there was a breach of the guidelines potentially identified in one of those assertions?

**Ms BOURNE** - Yes. Given that the State Litigation Office is at the forefront of the engagement with external practitioners, whether they're undertaking work on behalf of the

Crown or on the other side of the legal dispute, they would be at the forefront of receiving concerns that may be noted by external counsel or that they see.

From experience, where they are not resolved within the context of the management of that particular matter, where they may provide concern at a broader level in terms of practice that they're seeing, they may be raised from time to time in more of an informal way with either me as Secretary, potentially discussions that may be had with regular updates to the Deputy. But no, there's no formal escalation to me, other than through our complaints policy. But also potentially to the Legal Profession Board, where there may be a view formed that the behaviour that hypothetically may be identified as not complying reflects upon that particular practitioner's compliance with their professional obligations.

There could also be code of conduct matters, of course, depending on the nature of the alleged conduct, that may not relate to their professional duties, which would go to the board; that may relate to their actions as an employee of the state, which would then come to me.

**CHAIR** - It's relatively in-house in a way. The intent, as I read it, from the Woolcott recommendation, is that there's a slightly arm's length-removed way, still within the department, but that isn't involved in the litigation activity or the operation of the model litigant guidelines, that can do that assessment. If there's a way to consider giving effect to that without necessarily fully setting up a staffed unit, clearly, that's the intent of that recommendation, which I hope we'll see given effect to.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I think Mr Paterson has something he wants to add.

**Mr PATERSON** - Related to the Secretary's point, model litigant guidelines aren't - an issue in practice isn't necessarily a black-and-white position as to whether there's a breach. Indeed, some practitioners might take an incorrect legal position and the state isn't required to accept, obviously, legal positions that it thinks are incorrect or unreasonable assessment of damages, or improper demands, I suppose. Sometimes, a plaintiff might characterise a disagreement about, say, a legal position as a model litigant issue, whereas it is actually just a disagreement about legal positions. I suppose, depending on the nature of the issue, that's why - but where issues do go more to the substance of the model litigant obligation, that's where complaints can be raised in theory or with the legal regulator.

**CHAIR** - I accept and agree with what you're saying, which is why I think the idea of a slightly arm's-length way of assessing that was the suggestion that I read in there in the recommendation.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - In the Attorney-General's opening statement, I think it was, we were informed that thousands of documents had been examined, including files, and that 217 state servants, individuals of concern, had been identified. Is there any breakdown or update on where those 217 state servants are at in terms of ED5 process or any other process?

**Mr BARNETT** - I think you asked about trauma-informed approach earlier, Ms O'Connor. I just wanted to give you the heads-up that since the Commission of Inquiry report and recommendations, there has been much education, training and awareness of trauma-informed approach and how important it is across the State Service but particularly in our justice system, State Litigation Office and the like. I just thought I'd flag that up front.

In terms of the establishment, through my department, of the joint referral review team (JRRT) in 2024, it's a multi-agency team comprised of key Tasmanian law enforcement and regulatory authorities to review all section 34A notices reviewed by Tasmanian agencies, law enforcement regulatory entities from the Commission of Inquiry. As a result of that, my department reviewed thousands of documents, hundreds of allegations and notices, identified 217 persons of interest and ensured that all matters were formally referred for investigation or employment action, which is to your question.

All known risks to children and young people arising from the commission's work have now been catalogued and referred. The JRRT work has been reviewed by Mr Woolcott as part of his review, which has confirmed that all matters have been appropriately identified, catalogued and referred to appropriate agencies for action.

Mr Woolcott also recognised that the JRRT produced a material improvement in the detail, rigour and responsiveness of the State Service's handling of Commission of Inquiry matters. And, obviously, that's a continuous improvement going forward, but it was very encouraging to have that feedback. The JRRT demonstrates the value of a coordinated multi-agency review where information relevant to child safety and accountability is dispersed across different institutions.

While the project itself has concluded, the underlying accountability processes continue. Current information is maintained and published on the State Service Management Office through DPAC's monthly routine disclosures, which I draw to your attention, on the DPAC website.

**Ms BOURNE** - Thanks, Deputy. You've noted that, really, this is a matter for the Department of Premier and Cabinet, who publishes that routine disclosure, including detail around disciplinary actions taken against JRRT-identified individuals, including current state servants.

The only other thing I'd probably add is Taskforce Artemis, that specialist investigation team established by Tasmania Police to investigate historical and contemporary allegations of child abuse following recommendations from the Commission of Inquiry, also has a role to play. Our key role, and the incredible effort of people within the agency who established the JRRT coming out of the original JSAT immediately after the Commission of Inquiry, pulled together all that information to make sure that all the relevant bodies and regulators, enforcement agencies, were referred as appropriate. It's those entities that now provide updates in relation to the current status of those individuals who still remain.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Okay. Thank you for that, Secretary. So just at a high level, I don't have the DPAC disclosure log in front of me, but there's 217 state servants who've been identified as individuals of concern. Do we know how many of them are still actively working in the State Service? Or is that 217 individuals who are not currently working because they've been identified as individuals of concern?

**Mr BARNETT** - I'm happy for you to respond, but my understanding is the current publicly reported figure is 217 persons of interest on the DPAC website. I haven't got it open in front of me either, and it is updated regularly, but perhaps the Secretary might add to that.

**Ms BOURNE** - Through you, Deputy: I don't have anything further to add in addition to the 217 persons of interest. We can check that potentially, through you, Deputy, and if we can provide an update prior to the conclusion of the committee this morning, we can certainly revert back if we're able to find that specificity.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Yes, thank you, and even if it's not possible to bring the information back this morning, just to be able to provide it to the committee later would be helpful.

**Mr BARNETT** - Sure.

**Ms LOVELL** - Deputy Premier, if I could go to Strategic Recommendation 1.6, which is: ensuring the independence of oversight regulatory agencies. The recommendation is that the Treasurer's Instructions be amended to ensure that the Integrity Commission Ombudsman, Commissioner for Children and Young People implementation monitor do not have to or can obtain independent legal advice, and are not having to rely on the Crown legal advice.

Now, that's been supported in principle, and I note that the response there says that the government supports independent agencies being able to obtain independent legal advice, and that the option is already available under the Treasurer's Instruction FC-17 and FC-1. It's a matter for those independent oversight agencies to self-determine when and if they require independent legal advice.

Can you confirm whether, under those Treasurer's Instructions, that is a true self-determination or whether they need to apply for agreement or permission or seek any kind of exemption to be able to obtain independent legal advice?

**Mr BARNETT** - Thanks for the question, and thanks for noting our response of support in principle, and we do support the recommendation in principle. It recognises the importance of the independence for oversight and regulatory agencies. So, independent agencies already have the ability to obtain their own legal advice under the Treasurer's Instruction FC-17, which permits external practitioners to be engaged with the prior written agreement of Crown Law. The Treasurer's Instruction FC-1 also permits an accountable authority to seek an exemption for all or part of the Treasurer's Instructions, such as FC-17. However, this recommendation provides an opportunity to clarify and reinforce these arrangements, particularly in relation to the application of the Treasurer's Instructions. So, ensuring that oversight bodies can obtain independent legal advice supports confidence in their impartiality and institutional independence, and the Department of Justice will consult with the independent statutory officers on the changes proposed by Mr Woolcott as part of the recommendation.

I think maybe the Secretary might want to add to that part of the answer.

**Ms BOURNE** - Thanks, Deputy, through you. As you've said, TI FC-17 already provides the flexibility for external counsel to be sought. The department is not aware of any entity explicitly asking for it; that would be a matter for individual entities. Whilst there is provision for that exemption to be provided, I think the recommendation provides us with an opportunity to look at how we can potentially, in consultation with Treasury, of course, ensure that the guidance within the Treasurer's Instruction is clear, potentially narrowing that universal referral requirement, being explicit about the type of advice that an organisation is seeking, which, as the Deputy has said, we do hope to soon formally consult with independent statutory officers to seek their views and their experience on the current system.



**Ms LOVELL** - Thank you. If I can just go back to my original question and just to confirm that what you've said in your answer, Deputy Premier, they can do it, but they do require prior written agreement of Crown Law or to seek an exemption? The oversight body can't decide themselves that this is what they need to do and just go ahead and do it - they have to get written agreement or seek an exemption. Is that correct?

**Mr BARNETT** - Well, the way I think expressed it, and again, I'll be corrected by the Secretary, in terms of an oversight body simply deciding to engage any lawyer it chooses, the body decides whether it requires legal advice and whether independence is necessary. And where FC-17 applies, the engagement must still occur through a lawful mechanism, and that might involve Crown Law engaging the practitioner, for example, Crown Law authorising direct instruction, or an exemption or variation under FC-1.

I'll just go to the Secretary -

**Ms LOVELL** - So, there are steps that need to be taken -

**Mr BARNETT** - Can I just pause? I did ask if the Secretary could just add to that answer or confirm or otherwise. That's my understanding.

**Ms BOURNE** - Thanks, Deputy. That's my understanding as well, that there's a process. So the independent agency makes a determination, ordinarily would advise the Solicitor-General that they've made that determination, and the Solicitor-General consents, for lack of a better word, to the engagement of external legal advice. And the department's not aware of an instance where that consent, again, for lack of a better word, hasn't been provided. But that's our understanding of the process. Of course, there is the ability for the TI to be carved out, effectively, by the Department of Treasury and Finance, depending on the circumstances, then an independent organisation may put to Treasury on a longer-term basis, as opposed to a case-by-case request for advice

**Ms LOVELL** - Just to be clear, Secretary, if I can go back to what you were saying before, you're consulting with those independent oversight bodies about this and whether further clarity is needed?

**Ms BOURNE** - Yes, through you, Deputy: that's right.

**Mr BARNETT** - Yes, that's right.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Clarity and flexibility possibly, too.

**CHAIR** - Just to follow up on that, you said, for want of a better word, 'consent' from OSG. So, is there a circumstance under which that consent might not be given and if so, what would that circumstance be? Just that the Woolcott Review has made this recommendation for a reason. And when we had a hearing with Peter Woolcott and Radha Thomas to discuss it, one of the things they picked up on - and this is where I think Ms Lovell's question was going - was that in the government's response to their recommendation - and this is documented in the government's response document - it says:

It is a matter for those independent oversight agencies to self-determine when and if they require independent legal advice.

That was the government's comment there. When we spoke to Mr Woolcott and Ms Thomas in the hearing, they had interpreted that to potentially be a shift where there wouldn't have to be a threshold test, basically, where the entity came to ask permission. In fact, Ms Sharma, just to be clear, so I'm not verballing her, from the transcript, said:

I would say that they are required to seek an exemption. That's a threshold step. What we see in terms of the shift is the language that says it's self-determination.

So, i.e., they don't have to seek an exemption. So, they were noting what they thought, separate to what they'd originally observed about a threshold step, that there was now a shift, and they could be self-determining when they needed this advice. But from what you've just said now to us, it sounds like that's not the case. It'd be good for us just to really clarify what the situation is right now.

**Mr BARNETT** - I think, if I can put it in these words, certainly as a government we recognise the independent oversight bodies, and they must be able to obtain genuinely independent legal advice. And that's, at the moment - if I can explain the Treasurer's FC-17, and I'll just read it to you:

The accountable authority must not directly engage external counsel or commercial legal services without the written agreement of Crown Law.

That's why we support the recommendation in principle and we agree to the intent. That's why the Secretary's indicated we are now going to consult with the independent agencies on the best way to progress this recommendation, which we support in principle.

The in-principle support relates largely to the fact that the existing arrangements, under the Treasurer's Instruction FC-17 do not impose a prohibition on external or independent legal advice for independent statutory officers. That's why the Secretary will be consulting with the relevant bodies before determining the final model. Of course, the final model is not here yet, but it will be coming and we're obviously happy to make that available.

**CHAIR** - The Woolcott Review, with this recommendation, wasn't implying that there's a prohibition on them using it. The recommendation, from what I can clearly read, is alluding to the fact that the Treasurer's Instruction allows them, but puts a threshold test there to get permission, essentially, from Crown Law. So, the recommendation is about removing that threshold test. No-one has suggested that there's a prohibition on them engaging external counsel, just that there's this threshold test, and the recommendation is to do with removing that threshold. Nothing that you've said here today or described indicates that you support that in principle. Can you confirm whether you support that in principle as the recommendation?

**Mr BARNETT** - I think I've indicated that, as a government, we do support the government, and the government does recognise that independent oversight bodies must be able to obtain genuine independent legal advice. That's why we support that in principle.

But to get to the conclusion, to make that work, we have to - and the Secretary is committed to consulting with the relevant bodies on the best way to word the final model. That's my best summary, but I'll pass to the Secretary to add to that summary.

**Ms BOURNE** - Only to be really clear, as has been said, when FC-17 applies, the engagement needs to occur through a lawful mechanism, which may involve the Crown engaging with the practitioner, authorising direct instruction or providing that exemption.

One thing that the agency's really keen to explore further with statutory independent officers is, at what point, potentially, is that initial threshold step not required, pertaining to particular matters of law or advice that they're seeking advice on. And whether or not there are core legal issues pertaining to matters of the Constitution or work health and safety law, for example, that may be best placed to sit within coming from Crown Law, so that there's consistency and those sorts of things. That's what we're working through now.

**Mr BARNETT** - Yeah. Does that make sense, Chair? It's obviously acting in accordance with the law in terms of their independent agency. I think that's something we have to work through. We will consult through the Secretary and the independent agencies and land on the wording of that. And, as I say, that'll be into the - something that we can make available once that's consummated.

**Ms LOVELL** - If I could ask just one more question on that, Deputy Premier, just to be absolutely clear: it sounds to me like what you're saying is that you, as the Attorney-General, are at least open to a model where these independent oversight bodies can obtain legal advice without having to seek an exemption or consent, or permission, or whatever it is - that they are truly able to self-determine that that's what's required and seek that advice. Is that correct?

**Mr BARNETT** - That's correct in principle, subject to the independent agencies acting within the law, within their purview, within their legislative remit. That's one way to put it, from me sitting here. I'll see if the Secretary's got anything to add.

**CHAIR** - We've probably largely covered it. It sounds to me is there's a process in train here where there's consultation happening. It'll be of interest to us to check back with you down the track after that process and follow up on where the response to this recommendation may land. Thank you for the information on that today. We will move to another area.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I want to step back a bit in a way and note that the Commission of Inquiry, at its heart, found that there were significant cultural issues within government agencies that led to children and young people not being safe. The Woolcott Review also identified cultural issues within agencies. Perhaps you could provide some observations on whether you think that this process of implementing Commission of Inquiry recommendations, responding to the Woolcott Review and, indeed, the Weiss review, have led to any discernible cultural improvements within government agencies.

**Mr BARNETT** - Thank you for the question and it's a very good one. The answer is yes. I think I made reference earlier, since the Commission of Inquiry report and recommendations of some years ago now, we have conducted a very, very substantial reform agenda. Frankly, I think it's one of the biggest reforms in Tasmanian history, where across-government changes have and are being made - support not just for the 191 recommendations, but in terms of culture, which is picked up on in the report.

You asked a question earlier about being trauma-informed. I made a reference in one of my answers, at least, to that as an example. There's been education, training, awareness across government on the importance of being trauma-informed in the way we operate. This will all be reflected, of course, going forward in the model litigant guidelines. I've been to a packed-out reception room at Parliament House with state servants where there was a briefing, training, education on coercive control. I know you know how important that is, and we've got legislative reforms in that space coming forward in the not-too-distant future.

The government's response in terms of routine disclosures would be another one - the DPAC website, which we made reference to earlier.

There are a range of cultural reforms taking place. It does take time, as you understand, but I'm pleased and proud of the work that's been undertaken.

**Ms BOURNE** - Certainly, speaking on behalf of the Department of Justice, I think absolutely yes. Without speaking for the head of the State Service, who I think outlined in her contributions earlier today the work that's being led by her and her agency really is permeating across the service. We talk about it a lot. I think it really has meant that each action we take, whether that's internal-facing or how we deliver our services now, a core focus of how we deliver, define, work with our staff, employ our staff, has a child safety and wellbeing focus.

Particular to the heart of Justice, obviously, is our Commission of Inquiry response team, who did a lot of work with children and young people coming out of the commission that now really permeates through the work that we do to make us much more trauma-informed. A very recent example is the young people panel that we have established as we recruit a new commission for children and young people to really make sure that the views of children and young people are central to the decisions that we make around informing advice to government around the recruitment to those key positions.

Obviously, there's still lots more work to do through our ongoing training and making sure that we acknowledge the prolonged impacts of child sexual abuse and trauma in the people that we serve, but also our staff. That's where we're at, and continue, I think, to see the benefit of ongoing implementation of Mr Woolcott's recommendations to improve our business.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That's really encouraging to hear. Is government getting feedback from the Implementation Monitor and the Independent Regulator that confirms evidence of cultural shift across agencies?

**Mr BARNETT** - Maybe if I kick that off in terms of a response: first of all, the government's accepted all of the 191 recommendations, as you know, many of which relate to the need for cultural change. And as you know very well, we've got an implementation monitor, Robert Benjamin, who is doing an excellent job, and I meet with regularly as well, at least from time to time. I know the Secretary and others do as well. He has a job to do and provides his reports to parliament and the public arena as well. I meet with Louise Coe, the Independent Regulator, from time to time, and again, commend her to this committee and thank her for her service.

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I think that's probably a quick summary. I'll ask the Secretary to respond. I've also now got an answer to your earlier question regarding the 217 persons. I can give that to you at a time convenient through you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We will finish the topic we're on and then we'll come back to that answer.

**Ms BOURNE** - Thanks, Deputy. Factually, the Implementation Monitor has reviewed, accepted and endorsed all of our completed recommendations, and through ongoing discussions with Mr Benjamin, we certainly get feedback in terms of how we're progressing. I'm probably a bit biased in terms of that. And the relationship we have with the Independent Regulator, obviously, is one where our services are subject to complaints and ongoing regulation. But it's a really productive - at arm's length, of course - relationship, where I think both regulators are fulfilling their functions with the view to assist us to improve how we deliver services. That's a really good place to be.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Now, would you like to provide that answer, Deputy?

**Mr BARNETT** - Yes, happy to. The advice is that the most recent routine disclosure made by DPAC regarding the JRRT matters was published on 30 May this year. DPAC has also reported that of the 217 persons of interest identified through JRRT, 24 individuals are current State Service employees. The most recent routine disclosure made by DPAC regarding JRRT matters was published at that time, 30 May.

Of the 24 current State Service employees:

- Ten individuals: no breach determined from preliminary assessment or ED5 process completed and cleared to return to duty;
- Two individuals: breached determined and other sanction applied and returned to duty;
- Ten individuals: currently suspended; absent from workplace with active ED5 investigation underway;
- Two individuals are not a current employee at time of allegation. Matter reviewed by appropriate regulatory authority.

Then I have advice that says for further details on whether those individuals are in child-related roles, I would have to refer that question to the Department of Premier and Cabinet, and specifically the State Service Management Office.

There is also advice in terms of a bit more of a breakdown of the 217 persons of interest identified. I'm more than happy to send that to the committee during the day and also note that it's on the DPAC website.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - Thank you, Attorney.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for that. Now Ms Rosol.

**Ms ROSOL** - Thank you, Chair. I just have a question that kind of continues on from what we were talking about with culture, but it comes out of Part A and the Strategic Recommendation 5.2, which is to do with enabling the sharing of information across law enforcement, regulatory and other agencies. We heard from the Independent Regulator in February that she had concerns about the impact that the culture of departments was having around sharing of information at that time. This recommendation specifically goes to legislation and barriers with legislation. Could you give us an update on the review and if you've identified any legislative barriers. If you have, what progress have you made around amendments and what kind of timeline you have for those, please?

**Mr BARNETT** - Thanks very much. It's quite an expansive question in different parts, but in short, in terms of interagency information sharing, the government supports recommendation 5.2 to strengthen information sharing across agencies in relation to child sexual abuse matters.

Obviously, I can speak within my portfolio area in terms of Justice, and I think Part B in particular. I think you asked a question in relation to Part A, but in terms of my department, it's undertaking this important work to identify legislative barriers and progress amendments as required to enable this reform, and work in this context is already progressing. I've made mention in my opening remarks to the Commission of Inquiry (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill 2026 and also proposed amendments to the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004* to strengthen information-sharing laws, to support agencies to share information about child safety risks and reportable conduct more effectively.

Enhanced information-sharing will reduce systemic gaps, improving risk identification and assessment and support timely and effective responses across law enforcement, regulatory and other bodies. It'll also support earlier intervention and more coordinated responses, strengthening protections for children.

Having said that, I'll just check with the Secretary, if you'd like to add to that answer.

**Ms BOURNE** - Thanks, Deputy, through you: I can also pass to Mr Paterson if there's anything further he'd like to share with the committee around the current draft Commission of Inquiry bill that proposes amendments to the PIP act (*Personal Information Protection Act*). I'd probably note at a very high level, I think work to date hasn't identified explicit legislative barriers, although clearly, as we're progressing reform to the PIP act that will clarify where information should be shared, particularly where it relates to the wellbeing or potential harm to children and young people. But there certainly is, as Mr Woolcott has suggested, a great deal of uncertainty, I think, particularly amongst state servants and myself from time to time, about the interpretation of a range of information-sharing provisions that exist across a huge number of pieces of legislation that we manage and implement day to day. I think this can cause or contribute to people being cautious or potentially sharing information inconsistently, which is where, I think, there's great benefit not only in legislative reform, but also potentially on further advice or guidance that we can share to make that task easier for public servants in particular, who are working with this information on a day-to-day basis.

Through you, Deputy: Mr Paterson, I don't know if there's anything else you wanted to add.

**Mr PATERSON** - Thank you, Secretary. I'll just add a little bit more detail, which is that the COI in this bill, that's just recently concluded consultation, explicitly addresses a couple of Woolcott recommendations about information-sharing. One was there's an existing exception in the *Personal Information Protection Act* to share information, such as preventing criminal offences and detection of criminal offences, but it was limited to sharing it with law enforcement agencies. And the draft bill followed Mr Woolcott's recommendation to allow that sharing to happen with any State Service agency. But more importantly than that, a really important reform is a secondary Woolcott recommendation to create a whole new exception for the sharing of personal information that's basically for the purpose of lessening or preventing reportable conduct or reportable behaviour. So, that's a new exception in the draft bill that really clarifies the current expectation, really, that that is a priority example of when the information should be shared to prevent those kinds of behaviours in conduct and harms to children.

**CHAIR** - Can you point us - excuse me to interrupt - to the Woolcott recommendation that that relates to, just so we're really clear which one we're talking about? I note these sorts of sharing-of-information legislative reforms come into Strategic Recommendation 6.1 and 6.3, I can see there.

**Mr PATERSON** - 6.3 is the one I -

**CHAIR** - Is the one you're referring to?

**Mr PATERSON** - Yes, that's the more specific one as to -

**CHAIR** - So, that one, because in the government's response document, it doesn't indicate; it says changes to the PIP act are being considered to give effect to it. But you're saying that's in the current legislation that's just being consulted and hopefully will be progressed soon.

**Mr PATERSON** - That's right. In effect, it's still under consideration since it hasn't got to final Cabinet tabling approval. But, certainly, that's the intention as to how to address that matter.

**Mr BARNETT** - Yeah, we absolutely support the 6.1 recommendation. That's very clear, and we've got work underway to progress that.

**CHAIR** - Yes, I noted that in the document here from the government's response, it states how that's being progressed, and 6.3 didn't state the particular way forward for that one. It was good to clarify that is actually being progressed.

To follow up, 6.2, which is also relating to legislative change to the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People, the government response said it will be considered to give effect to this recommendation. Is there a particular timeline involved there, or is that work underway in any sense currently?

**Mr BARNETT** - Certainly, we support the recommendation in principle. The RWVP scheme performs a critical protective function that screens applicants, continuously monitors registered people, prevents people who pose an unacceptable risk from engaging in regulated activities with children and vulnerable people.

Three distinct reforms come out of the recommendations: strengthening the statutory standing of the registrar; introducing structured expert scrutiny and advice; and increasing public and parliamentary reporting on the scheme's performance. The recommendation provides an opportunity to strengthen institutional governance and decision-making. It also supports greater accountability through advisory input and public reporting.

These objectives are supported in principle, as any amendments will be considered carefully to ensure the integrity and effectiveness of the existing regulatory framework. The reform must be coordinated with the significant expansion and modernisation of the scheme already underway, including replacement of its registration system and enhanced information sharing. And, of course, this has been raised at SCAG (Standing Council of Attorneys-General) as well in terms of the protection of children. I'll see if the Secretary wanted to add to that.

**Ms BOURNE** - Only to note, as you've indicated, that there's currently significant legislative reform, or a change and reform program around the RWVP scheme, particularly as a result of national reforms that are coming out of the Council of Attorneys-General to support mutual recognition of checks across jurisdictions, as well as ongoing work to progress local expansions to the scheme, with the introduction of new regulated activities and cohorts for registration.

We have started consideration and preliminary work around the Woolcott recommendations, and started scoping what legislative change will be required. Without overcommitting the agency or wanting to speak for the Deputy, I would anticipate that those changes would be looking at being consulted on in the first half of 2027 as we look through the policy and organisational components of some of the recommendations.

The expert advisory group is something that we are also exploring, given that there are already provisions under the act around the establishment of an advisory group. We're looking at finalising, or progressing discussions, I should say, around draft terms of reference and potential governance arrangements for the Deputy's consideration this year.

That's a really rough timeframe of what we're working on at this stage. The thinking is certainly happening in relation to how we can give effect to what Mr Woolcott has recommended.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm just wondering how this support in principle for these reforms to the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People scheme align with - and I don't have the budget papers in front of me, but I do remember that across the forward Estimates the working with vulnerable people registration scheme has a cut to its funding. How do you progress recommended and necessary reforms to this important scheme for keeping children and young people and other vulnerable people safe, how do you align that with the fact that there's a significant cut to the scheme across the forwards?

**Mr BARNETT** - Maybe if I jump in: it is a priority for government. I think you're talking about the cut across the forwards relating to the completion of the IT work. The Secretary can speak to that. It's more of an operational matter.



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It is a priority. I think this has been raised at SCAG. As I said earlier, it's got to be consistent as much as possible with the national approach to protect children. You've seen the publicity in childcare centres and the like across Australia. It's taken very seriously by my attorneys-general across the country.

But the Woolcott recommendations we do support. It's a matter of working that through, consulting on that in the first half of next year, which I think the Secretary indicated to answer the Chair's earlier question on timeframes. It's actually quite complex and detailed work, but we do support it and we're getting on with it. We're actually progressing that. But it is quite complex.

The budget you referred to relates to the IT project concluding. I might pass to the Secretary.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - I'm happy for you to pass to the Secretary, but is it your contention that the cut to the Registration to Work with Vulnerable People scheme is only about the completion of an IT project and there hasn't been an efficiency dividend applied to the scheme?

**Mr BARNETT** - Let's just pass to the Secretary - my understanding in terms of the completion of the IT work.

**Ms BOURNE** - The IT project completion component is a significant portion of the drop-off over the forwards. Without having the budget paper in front of me either, there is a component of that forward Estimate funding that will include a contribution to the general agency operational efficiencies, which will apply across the agency, while we also work through other strategic reform projects to enable us to meet our operational savings targets.

There is some fee revenue, own-source revenue, that the scheme has which gives them some flexibility as well. But we are really in the middle of working out how we not only meet our operational efficiencies, but ensure that we do that in a way that means we continue to give effect to reform, and how we use internal resources to do that as well. But there is a drop-off over the forwards -

**Ms O'CONNOR** - And some of it is an efficiency dividend on the scheme?

**Ms BOURNE** - That's correct.

**Ms O'CONNOR** - That's regrettable.

**Mr BARNETT** - I should note that you would have noticed, and I hope you've noticed, the public announcement we made around volunteers having access to the registration for free. And I do a little tribute to our volunteers around Tasmania and alert them to that opportunity.

**CHAIR** - Certainly, we all salute our volunteers around the state. I think they've had access to that for free for a while, so it's good to see it's continuing.

**Ms ROSOL** - Slightly tangential, but I often have people come to me about RWVP. They have concerns about some of the roles, both professional and volunteer, that aren't covered by the scheme. For example, that might be some patient-facing roles in hospitals such as allied health, sports coaches, that kind of thing. What consideration do you give to reviewing

the roles that are covered by RWVP? Do you have any plans for expanding that to different roles?

**Mr BARNETT** - I'll pass to the Secretary in a moment. It's more of an operational matter and, of course, a matter for the registrar who's independent and has an independent role.

As you know, there's been ongoing work in terms of the Registration for Working with Vulnerable People. That works ongoing. We've had recent questions similar to what you're alluding to from the real estate sector. The answer is no; there's not an intention to amend legislation to progress that at this stage. Obviously, any child-facing roles as the key component. But having said that, it's operational more, so I'll pass to the Ssecretary.

**Ms BOURNE** - Thanks, Deputy. As you've said, it's a matter for the registrar, in many respects, other than to note that the coverage of the scheme itself has changed over recent years, and as groups are brought in and new categories of cohorts added to those who require a check. And where the department, on advice from the registrar, sees an opportunity to potentially advise government about future cohorts or new cohorts to be added, we certainly would provide that advice. So, it's not turned off to any future expansion, noting the significant work, both policy and legislative, that the scheme is facing at the moment predominantly as a result of really significant changes happening at a national level. But very much open to ongoing dialogue with community about the coverage of that scheme, subject to, obviously, government endorsement of that.

**CHAIR** - I would like to circle back to one thing to link back to the first question I asked around some of these recommendations will be referred to the independent monitor for ongoing oversight of implementation. You mentioned that all that are legally able to be will be referred. The question I have, then, just to bring us to a close, is around any that are the responsibility of the Department of Justice that aren't referred to the monitor for that ongoing oversight and reporting on. How will the department be reporting on the implementation of those recommendations in a way that's public and accountable?

**Mr BARNETT** - Secretary.

**Ms BOURNE** - Thanks, Deputy, through you: through existing structures that we have, the way that we manage and continue to manage our response to Commission of Inquiry recommendations is through a governance structure that, effectively, sits with the agency executive. The reporting mechanisms that we comply with as set by the Office of the Implementation Monitor are endorsed by me and advice from our Commission of Inquiry Response Taskforce. I do see once there is a final determination around what sits with the Implementation Monitor and what doesn't, so to speak, that will build upon that existing framework within the agency so that they require - they're allocated to the particular part of the agency that will be the sponsor, so to speak, with a reporting structure back-up through my agency executive, ultimately to me as head of agency. And we have a fairly rigorous approach with regard to outstanding recommendations around Commission of Inquiry, and I'd like to see that continue, as well as keep the monitor informed of those, even if he doesn't explicitly have responsibility for them.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. That explains that internal process, but in terms of external visibility and accountability, how would the public or the parliament then understand where

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things are at in terms of implementing any recommendations that haven't been given to the monitor for oversight?

**Ms BOURNE** - Through you, Deputy: I think I heard the head of the State Service talking this morning about the implementation plan that's currently under development and we're feeding into that body of work. Without speaking for her, I anticipate there will be some public-facing reporting function like we have already on the Keeping Children Safe website. And there would be absolute engagement from the Department of Justice to do that and replicate that, in some way, on our own website.

**CHAIR** - That would extend to these recommendations that may not be given to the monitor?

**Ms BOURNE** - That's my intention and my understanding.

**CHAIR** - Great. Thank you for that. Now, mindful of time, I think we will bring our hearing to a close. Thank you very much for the time provided today, Deputy, to you and your staff and the departmental staff as well.

As I need to say, the evidence you have provided at the hearing today is protected by parliamentary privilege. I take this opportunity to remind you that any comments you may make to the media or others outside this room, even if you repeat what you've said here, will not be protected. Do you understand that?

**WITNESSES** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. We hope that you have a good rest of the day and a good weekend. Thank you for your time.

**The witnesses withdrew.**

**The committee adjourned at 11.58 a.m.**