



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B**

Hon. Jacquie Petrusma MP

**Monday 6 September 2021**

### **MEMBERS**

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Jo Palmer MLC

Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Chair)

Hon Jo Siejka MLC

Hon Rob Valentine MLC

Hon Josh Willie MLC

## **IN ATTENDANCE**

**Jacquie Petrusma**, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence Minister for Parks

### **Prevention of Family Violence portfolio**

*Department of Communities Tasmania*

Michael Pervan - Secretary

Melissa Gray - Deputy Secretary, Wellbeing, Strategy and Engagement.

Mandy Clarke - Deputy Secretary, Children and Youth Services

Pam Honan - Director, Youth and Family Violence Services

### **Police, Fire & Emergency Management portfolio (including State Fire Commission)**

*Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management*

Darren Hine - Commissioner of Police and Secretary of DPFEM

Donna Adams - Deputy Commissioner

Scott Wilson-Haffenden - Acting Deputy Secretary

Adrian Bodnar - Assistant Commissioner

Jonathan Higgins - Assistant Commissioner

Dermot Barry - Chief Officer

Bruce Byatt - Deputy Chief Officer

Jeff Harper - Acting Deputy Chief Officer.

Andrew Lea - Director State Emergency Service

### **Parks portfolio**

*Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment*

Tim Baker - Secretary DPIPWE

Jason Jacobi - Deputy Secretary

Louise Wilson - Deputy Secretary

David Reid - Acting Director (Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens)

Stuart Fletcher - General Manager (Land Tasmania)

Tim Grant - Valuer-General

Michael Giudici - Surveyor-General

**The Committee met at 9 a.m.**

[8.59 a.m.]

**CHAIR** (Ms Rattray) - In the interests of being super-efficient, minister, and the time being one minute to 9 o'clock, I would like to announce that we're ready to broadcast, thank you, Shae.

A very good morning not only to yourself, minister, but also to my team at the table, who I will introduce:

From my right, we have the Honourable Josh Willie, the Honourable Jo Siejka; myself, Tania Rattray; the Honourable Rob Valentine, the Honourable Rosemary Armitage, and the Honourable Jo Palmer. Our secretarial support is Julie Thompson, who will be assisted by Natasha Exel, and we have Shae on Hansard.

We will open minister for you to provide a brief overview. Minister would you introduce your team at the table.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Madam Chair, I'm delighted today to introduce Darren Hine, Commissioner of Police and Secretary of the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management; Donna Adams, the Deputy Commissioner; Scott Wilson-Haffenden, Acting Deputy Secretary; Adrian Bodnar, Assistant Commissioner; and Jonathan Higgins, Assistant Commissioner.

It's an absolute delight and pleasure to be here today, as Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, and I feel very honoured to have the responsibility for this portfolio.

First of all, I'd like to thank and acknowledge all the members of Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service career and volunteer personnel, as well as the State Service staff who support them for the incredible work they all undertake to keep each and every one of us Tasmanians safe each and every day. Our Emergency Services workers are there when we need them most, and this Government is committed to supporting them by providing contemporary, fit-for-purpose equipment and facilities, and programs that support their well-being.

As the COVID-19 pandemic has continued, so too has the Government's response, and under our Emergency Management arrangements, Commissioner Hine, as the state's Emergency Management Controller, has responsibility for coordinating the whole-of-government response to the pandemic. This is an enormous task for him, as well as for our Deputy State Controller, Donna Adams; and for all of their hardworking and very committed team, I thank all of those involved.

**CHAIR** - And we endorse those thanks.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - To assist, this Government is investing \$6.5 million in a new, state-of-the-art State Control Centre, which would be operational this year to provide our Emergency Services personnel with the equipment and space they need to plan and respond to emergencies. To support this, we're also providing \$900,000 to establish a permanent multi-hazard intelligence team which will work from the State Control Centre to plan and provide rapid incident advice response.

This Budget also provides significant funding across the forward Estimates for bushfire and flood prevention. Since 2014, we've invested \$55.5 million through the Fuel Reduction Program, and this Budget provides additional funding to continue this program. We also are providing an extra \$2.5 million for our Red Hot Tips program, \$1.379 million for the Australian Fire Danger Rating System, and funding towards the roll-out of enhanced mission-critical equipment for volunteer brigades. There's funding for new-generation defibrillators and also funding to establish a dedicated team to recruit and support our volunteers across the state, as well as funding towards both the Railton and Latrobe flood-mitigation works.

We're also providing for an additional 50 police officers across the forward Estimates, to bring the total to 308 under this Government. This will take Tasmania Police to the highest establishment it's ever had: 1428 police officers. We're also providing substantial funding to employ eight additional State Service employees in various support roles, \$20 million towards a new police station in St Helens and the Bridgewater Police Station, \$3.6 million for a southern-based Special Operations Group facility, funding towards police house upgrades, funding towards our Country Police Station Relief Policy, as well as funding to Emergency Mental Health Co-Response Team in southern Tasmania. This Government is also delivering our nation-leading Health and Wellbeing Program for our well-being support unit, with funding of \$3 million per annum. All of these initiatives are part of a wider package of measures that are delivering our plan to keep Tasmania safe. Thanks, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I do have one question in your overview, which is around the relief for the country policing aspect. Can you expand on how that's going to actually benefit the community?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. The commissioner and I a couple of weekends ago with Colin Riley, the president of the Police Association, released that policy, and it's -

**CHAIR** - Usually only have to ask, minister, and they fly in front of you, those leaflets.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I know. Pretty amazing, actually. I'm pleased to say that the Budget provides \$10.6 million in funding towards the Country Police Station Relief Policy. We know that Tasmania's one of the safest places in which to live, and our crime rates are reflective of this, but what it does - this policy provides extra response and service provision for our country, remote and rural communities, especially communities like your own, Chair.

What it does is it ensures a consistent state-wide approach to relieving our police officers, especially if they need to take long periods of leave, whether it's sick leave or holiday leave, and it also helps support the health and well-being of our hardworking police officers. Now, Tasmania Police has 25 police stations across the state that are deemed rural or remote, including Richmond, Nubeena, Dunalley, Orford, Triabunna, Swansea -

**CHAIR** - Gladstone.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Bicheno, Oatlands, Liawenee, Bothwell, Kempton, Maydena, Hamilton, Bushy Park, St Marys, Fingal, Dover, Geeveston, Cygnet, Woodbridge, Rosebery, Zeehan, Waratah, Strahan, and Alonnah.

At these police stations the police officer works a set roster, with a minimum of 23 eight-hour days in a five-week roster cycle. This is about making sure that those police officers do get the relief when they need it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, it's a five-week roster, was it?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. Five-week roster, with a minimum of 23 eight-hour days in a five-week roster cycle. This helps to manage both expected and unexpected absences to the operational area, and it better supports our police officers' mental health and well-being.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Good news. Also, I omitted to congratulate Donna Adams on her appointment as the deputy commissioner. Congratulations. I know that you were acting in that role for some time, and the committee offers their congratulations.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - A very well-deserved appointment, I might add.

**CHAIR** - Absolutely. So any other questions, members, in overview?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I don't think mine would be an overview.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I could put them in overview, but I'll leave them if it's easier, if you say so, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Let's get into the first output group, which is public safety; and it is support for the community, 1.1.

**Output Group 1: Public Safety**  
**1.1 Support to the Community**

**CHAIR** - Minister, I have some questions around the Mowbray recreational hub project. I'm just interested in where that particular project is, is Tasmania Police still committed to the hub? What does that commitment look like, and what is Tasmania Police's vision for the hub? What benefits do you see for the community there, certainly in crime reduction? I think that's probably enough to start with, minister.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regards to the Mowbray hub, are you talking about the PCYC there?

**CHAIR** - The intention was to move the PCYC out to the Mowbray hub. That's my understanding, my information. I'm just interested in where that initiative sits. I believe there was some federal government funding to support that, and my information also tells me that the Launceston City Council is very supportive of that initiative.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I will ask the commissioner to provide further information on that, because he would probably know where it is right now.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you, minister, and thank you, Chair. As you know, PCYC - and I'll ask Mr Higgins to expand further on it, but PCYC - in Launceston, we know where the current building is, and that actually is -

**CHAIR** - Prime location.

**Mr HINE** - It serves all of Launceston. No matter where the location is, it's a matter of serving all of Launceston, because it does need to look at at-risk youth right across Launceston. As you know, it's an ageing building - where it is at the moment - as well. So there was some work done in relation to moving it and to see if there's other alternative buildings, and it was out at Invermay - or further out there as well. Mr Higgins has some further information -

**CHAIR** - Sort of almost Newnham, isn't it? Is it?

**Mr HINE** - Yes. In that area. Certainly, it's between the City of Launceston and the federal government - state government who were looking at that new building. But Mr Higgins has some more information on that.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Thank you, commissioner. So the current site for the PCYC has been as it is for since the 1960s, and it's a very much ageing site. So the opportunity to be part of the greater hub is particularly important for Tasmania Police, to be able to bring youth services together from the Tasmania Police side, but also there'll be - my understanding is others from education and other youth - non-government and government services that are in Launceston.

By doing this, if we were to move to a hub in the northern suburbs of Launceston, it would give us better collaboration, coordination across these youth services, and perhaps we'd put our Youth Crime Action Unit up there as well, as part of that process. It's very much in its infancy at the moment, although I understand that sites are being looked at by those who are involved in the hub project itself. It's certainly something that Tasmania Police wants to be part of.

**CHAIR** - Right. So there is a full commitment from Tas Police to continue to work on that initiative?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes, there is.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - As Mr Higgins has outlined, yes. I have to say, yes, it is a very old building. I went to the Launceston PCYC back in 1971, Chair, when I was five. So it's a very old building. When I was up there a few months ago, it looks worse - definitely a lot worse. So it is time.

**CHAIR** - I have a supplementary from Ms Siejka and then Ms Armitage.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Not a supplementary.

**CHAIR** - Not a supplementary. Thank you. Ms Armitage, is there something on this particular -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Not on the supplementary, no.

**CHAIR** - Right. All right.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It's on community policing.

**CHAIR** - All right. I'll just ask another question in regard to the additional 20 police officers over the next four years. That was last year. So are we on track to deliver the -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. So those 20 police officers were for the Special Operations Group, and they were to be recruited over the four years. However, it was also when they were announced at the time that -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Not on the supplementary, no. On community policing.

**CHAIR** - On community policing?

I will just ask another question in regard to the 20 police officers the additional police officers over the next four years. That was last year. Are we on track to deliver?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Those 20 police officers were for the special operations group to be recruited over the four years. However, it was also when they were announced at the time that their roles were to be part of their response to COVID-19 and that is the focus of those police officers as they're recruited to help with COVID-19, but the Commissioner I'm sure will provide extra information.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister. The short answer, yes, we're on track and obviously we need to adjust as we go along about what separation rates are in recruiting those additional police officers. So the short answer is yes but obviously we need to modify if attrition rates increase or decrease as well.

**CHAIR** - Supplementary?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. You mentioned SOG and you mentioned those operations. In terms of the COVID-19 and the army coming into assist, how do you do that - where's the boundary of operation there? Can you explain that a bit to us, in terms of how police are dividing their duties compared to the Australian Army's duties, just for the record?

**Mr HINE** - Thank you for the question. I have to say that the military and the ADF have been absolutely fantastic support to Tasmania Police and the community. As you know, last year when we first went into our stay-at-home orders, the ADF assisted us in checking those people who should be staying at home, and now the ADF is assisting us in providing security at the hotels. So it's under the auspice of Tasmania Police for the security of the hotels, and they assist us in providing security at the hotels.

**Mr VALENTINE** - But they're not acting as a policeman, if you like, at that point? Obviously they're just providing security services. Is that right, minister, through you?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The ADF you're talking about?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So the ADF, as the Commissioner explained, is to do the roles as outlined.

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**Mr HINE** - Exactly right. In relation to providing security, they have no powers but operate under the auspice of Tasmania Police. They are doing an absolute excellent job and the support from the ADF has been fantastic. As you know, there was a number of people flew in from London last night and they were assisting the security at that hotel.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So they report directly to police as opposed to the ADF?

**Mr HINE** - Yes. Obviously they've got their own structure but they work under the directions of Tasmania Police.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay.

**Ms SIEJKA** - I apologise if this question's not in the right output area but I understand there is an election commitment to the Police Association around the Police Powers Act. I just want to know what the status of the Bill was and what's the timeline for public consultation?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The Police Powers Act actually comes under the Attorney-General, so the question is really for the Attorney-General. As you can appreciate, there needs to be a separation between the person who makes the legislation and those who enforce the legislation. We're very committed to legislating the Police Powers Act to consolidate the powers of police officers and particularly the power to arrest a person. That project is being led by the Department of Justice. Of course, this department has been very much involved but it's a big project. It's been overseen by a steering committee, including senior executive members of the Department of Justice with Police, Fire and Emergency Management and Communities Tasmania is involved in it as well.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Varied timeframe -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It's been set by the Department of Justice because it's being done in conjunction with Communities Tas but the next stage is a proposal paper which will be released to seek community and stakeholder feedback. I believe that it might have been delayed due to COVID-19 and the Department of Justice's focus being on a lot of other emergency legislation and OPC as well has been heavily involved and having to do other things. But yes, definitely we want to see it happen.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Won't forget that, thank you.

**CHAIR** - One to follow up on Thursday.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes, I'll make a note.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I have more questions if we're going to staffing after -

**CHAIR** - I'll go to Ms Armitage and then I'll come back to Mr Valentine and then to Ms Palmer.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - My questions are a fair bit on staffing as well. Back in February 2020, minister, the President of the Police Association and you agreed to safe staffing levels for the seven 24-hour police stations in the state. Noting that Tasmania's police current staffing



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is 1363 officers, is Tasmania Police currently achieving the 44 first responders at those stations to respond to an incident at one time and if not, why not?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Tasmania Police is very much looking at the safe staffing levels. It's been identified for 24-hour stations across Tasmania. That's been successfully implemented at Burnie and Glenorchy police stations on 1 July.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So we have 44 currently?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll have to ask - yes, we have the 44. It's being -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are you sure that 44 are working at the moment?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll ask the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you, minister. The safe staffing levels were introduced over a period of time and the stations - if Bellerive was to commence on 1 July 2022, Bridgewater 1 July 2022, Burnie 1 July 2021, Devonport 1 July 2022, Glenorchy 1 July 2021, Hobart 1 July 2022, Launceston 1 July 2022 and I'll hand over to Mr Higgins in a minute.

In relation to those stations: at Bellerive it's a supervisor and four constables; Bridgewater is a supervisor and four constables; Burnie is a supervisor and four constables; Devonport is supervisor and four constables; Glenorchy is a supervisor and four constables; Hobart is two supervisors and seven constables; and Launceston is two supervisors and eight constables. Mr Higgins can actually go into a little bit further detail about where we are in those ones to do with July this year.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, that's fine. To confirm that 44 will be fine. If you could elaborate a bit further?

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes. Those two stations at the moment are hitting the mark at over 90 per cent of the time. So they're supplemented from outside stations at the moment as well, including their own staff that they have there but they both have their full allocation of staffing from the 125.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - A further question if I could. Is Tasmania Police contemplating transferring members from the Districts Road and Public Order Services to those 24 hour stations, to ensure the achievement of the 44 first responders at those stations are ready to respond? Is that where or are they where some of the numbers are coming from? Will they be coming from the Districts Road and Public Order Services? The minister might be -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, the determination for where police are located and how they are allocated is the Commissioner, so I'll ask the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister, and I'll hand over to Mr Higgins -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Sorry, just robbing Peter to pay Paul, that's what I'm looking at.

**Mr HINE** - As I said, I'll hand over to Mr Higgins but basically we're not taking any additional numbers out of the district. Those numbers stay there and if you go back a number

of years, we used to have separate traffic sections and the vast majority were on the watches. We're not taking any numbers away from the districts. How they do their work within a district to support this is another issue, so I certainly want to take away that misconception that we're taking any numbers away from the district. Overall the district allocate those numbers. So in relation to the specific question, I'll hand over to Mr Higgins.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Before you answer could I just elaborate a little bit further. So Launceston, for example, has 29 Road and Public Order Service personnel, I think. So are you proposing to move 12 of those to achieve the safe staffing levels, noting that Tas Police have more police than ever before, and the remainder will be focused on traffic enforcement. I'm asking that because looking at the recent University of Adelaide's tender for automotive safety research, their recent review of road safety strategy, they have put some criticism in that document for traffic enforcement in Tasmania. If you're taking 12 of those officers to actually go into the stations - so, just give you a little bit of a background to my question.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Through the minister. In 2012 we actually brought together, as it was, the Public Order Response Team and the Traffic Branch and we did that because of the downsize that we were having at that time, the austerity measures with the global financial crisis. Since we've increased through that and you highlight there in the reports that you're talking about.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS** - It's time now to re-focus on traffic with a dedicated traffic branch. In doing that, and also looking at restructuring Road and Public Order Services, which was essentially thrown together in 2012 to bring those resources together. By going to a more dedicated traffic branch, including the Road Safety Taskforce Teams which is funded out of MAIB, we feel that we're better able to do that. Currently, the districts are looking at those models and how they'll sustain that with their safe staffing levels, particularly with all the other 24 hour stations that are required to do that from 1 July 2022.

In bringing staff from potentially Road and Public Order Services, perhaps Newnham and Ravenswood and using those stations for other police services as well, we will be able to provide those greater numbers on the watch, somewhere like Launceston, where the minimum staffing is two sergeants and eight constables. It may be that they have two sergeants and 12 constables, so therefore they're able to perform that greater range of functions while providing that flexibility and fatigue management for staff as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. One last question on the 24-hour stations if I could, Chair. With Tas Police having more officers than ever before, currently is it 1363, how is that

**CHAIR** - The member's done her homework, minister.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I don't know about my homework.

**Mr HIGGINS** - It's 1428 actually.

**CHAIR** - I was going to say I thought it was 1428.

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**Ms ARMITAGE** - Actually I'll leave that till later because that's a different area. I'll go back because otherwise I'll get into trouble. No, no, I've got one question but I'll get into trouble if I ask this one now. The Chair will slap me.

**CHAIR** - It's Monday, you might try.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, I'll keep that for another line item.

**CHAIR** - It's Thursday when it gets difficult.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are there measures in place to potentially have members at 24 hour police stations limited from attending mandated specialist group training? When we're talking about the 24-hour police stations, which I was talking about initially with the first responders, are there measures in place to potentially have members at 24-hour police stations limited from attending the mandated specialist group training.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Training for police officers is a very important component of the ongoing professional development and I'm sure that the commissioner can add to that.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister, and thanks for your question. I'll go to Mr Higgins in relation to further expand on it but you maybe hitting on our fatigue management policy as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr HINE** - That is under development. We've developed that in association with the police union as well. That is out for their consultation and so we're waiting for their feedback. But fatigue management is an important issue. We're certainly working on it. We haven't ruled anything in and out and we've got a policy. We're developing that. We're waiting for the consultation, so Mr Higgins might have some more to add.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Thank you. Through the minister. In reference to the limiting attendance to the specialist training, I'm aware of western districts, when they were looking at some challenges at Burnie at the time. That's not an ongoing concern because specialist training is particularly important for Tasmania Police and to be able to keep those capabilities going at the national standard, so we're able to respond when necessary. That -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So those first responders will have the ability particularly to attend.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes, they will.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'll let someone have a turn. I do have lots more questions, Chair.

**Ms PALMER** - Yes, thank you, Chair. Minister, can you outline what funding is available for the Health and Wellbeing Program and what is the Health and Wellbeing Program delivering?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The Health and Wellbeing Program is a very important program. On Friday we will launch the Program Strategy with me and the Commissioner and our New Chief Officer Dermot Barry who we will be able to welcome to the table soon, Chair. We want

the new Health and Wellbeing strategy as well as - and I'd like to table if I can all these other great resources that the Health and Wellbeing Unit for police officers has produced. There's actually good things in here for us all to read on stress and switching off -

**CHAIR** - I'm not surprised, if you've got some handouts.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - And stress burnout and trauma, trauma and PTSD and critical traumatic incidents, managing reactions. There's a whole body of work that the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management has done in regard to making sure that our first responders, as well as their families, get the help that they need when they need it. Because we know that the nature of the job that the people, whether they're our - they're actually employees of the Department or they're our volunteers, we have about 5600 volunteers across Fire and SES, they see situations every day that you and I just couldn't imagine. Of course, their families also can be impacted by that as well.

So the Health and Wellbeing Unit, initially back in 2019 we funded the unit with \$1.5 million. We have now doubled that to \$3 million per annum, and what it involves is that the family member, a volunteer, somebody who works for the Department can go online and do a health screening through My Pulse, and they'll come up either green, amber or red, and it can indicate to them if they then need to get further support. We have psychologists, counsellors, wellbeing support workers across the state that they can access, and a panel of providers, so that our emergency personnel and their families get the help they need when they need it.

It's a great program, and I want to commend the Commissioner and the wellbeing unit under director, Matt Richmond, because it's a fantastic program, and it is nation-leading. You and I can take part in some of the resources on there. But it's a fantastic resource, and I would like to table these documents.

**CHAIR** - And those specialised services are readily available. I know how difficult it is to get into those specialised areas just for general public. So are they readily available to police officers and their families?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In fact, we advertised for a panel, and we got a good response. Across Tasmania, our people who are psychologists, counsellors, peer support workers see the importance of us having a mentally healthy as well as physically healthy workforce, because mental health and physical health go together. It's also about reducing the stigma associated especially with mental ill health. We know that one in two Australians across their lifetime will experience mental ill health, so this policy is about reducing the stigma and making sure that our employees and their families come forward to get the help when they need it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I have a follow-up question, supplementary on that. Last year I asked similar questions on this group. So it's self-assessment only; there's no mandatory assessment with this? You wonder how many people are likely to actually assess. Who sees the results? If they come up green, or they come up orange, is that something that someone else is actually going to see? So that if you go on and you self-assess yourself on this, and you come up orange, for example, is that seen by the department? So, are you likely to do it, or is there some mandatory - particularly for people that, across the board - would make it safer for people more likely to do it?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - If there is a critical incident, the employee or the volunteer is contacted and supported through that. But when it does flag up, I believe that it is actually then the wellbeing unit is notified. But I'll hand to the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister, and thanks for the question. This is an absolute number one priority for the organisation. We need to look after our people, so that our people can actually look after the community.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Could let me know the activities and type of things they partake in, with this Pulse -

**Mr HINE** - More than happy for, as you said, to - the minister said to show you through that afterwards. But it's an absolute, I believe, nation-leading program. To answer your specific question, there are - once you do the screening process, and if you come up amber or red, we don't get to hear about it, and neither we should. It is totally confidential. But you will get a phone call offering counselling services within that short period of time. So there is that ability -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So it doesn't limit your advancements, that you're not going to be afraid to do it, because you think someone in the organisation is actually going to know that you've come up amber, and all of a sudden you might be a marked person.

**Mr HINE** - No. In fact, we are working really hard, and each and every one us, when we do our station visits, have a common message, as in, mental health is absolutely not - shouldn't be stigmatised, and it is absolutely no barrier for you to continue on. In fact, there's some great stories within our organisation where people put their hand up, get the help they need, and continue on with their progress.

We do not know who comes up amber or red, and neither we should. We don't know who's actually getting assistance, as they should. There are some areas that - what we class as high-risk, and therefore they do have mandatory checks; so, for example services, crash investigation, those sort of areas. We're continuing to do further research, to make sure we do support people. But the clear message is, there is absolutely no stigmatism. The more we talk about it, the more we normalise things, and the more we say, 'It's okay not to be okay,' so people do get the help they need.

We should be asking those questions all the time, 'Are you okay,' and be prepared for that answer. But categorically there is absolutely no stigma, and we're continuing to talk about it. As the minister said, we've got a strategy that we've launched. We've got panels of experts that are assisting us as well. There is a lot of research going on around the country. As you know, Beyond Blue did surveys, and some of those statistic that came out of that were quite frightening. So therefore, it was really pleasing that the government has committed \$3m a year to continue to assist us.

And we've got a health and wellbeing area, and we've even gone to the stage where we've moved it outside of the police precinct into another building, so people don't get to see who is going into the building. It's an anonymous building. People can go in there and get that help. We've replicated that in Launceston and the North West Coast as well.

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**Ms ARMITAGE** - So you don't believe you're relying too much on this Pulse? So what else are you doing for mental issues, to prevent mental health - apart from the self-assessment with Pulse?

**Mr HINE** - Thank you for that question. It's a great question, and we should -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, our police officers, as we always say, they're the people that run in where we're running out, so we do need to look after them.

**Mr HINE** - Exactly right. Some of the Beyond Blue statistics actually found about 74 per cent of police officers that responded had been to a critical incident that absolutely affected them, and so -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So, mental health-wise, apart from Pulse?

**Mr HINE** - We're ready for response. We know that physical wellbeing assists your mental health wellbeing, so we have run some programs over a three-month period where people can actually go to a gym at our cost, and we've had a huge take-up with that. Over 1000 people have actually participated in phase 1 and phase 2, and nearly 700 people in phase 3. A lot of those people continue on, because there is an absolute clear link between physical health and mental health, and I know, around the table, we all do our bit to make sure - for example, I go to the gym every morning, to make sure.

There are a lot of people around - everyone around the table does the same thing, because we know that stress and those things go together. We've also got critical incident stress management teams. In the last financial year there was over 328 critical incidents which were responded to, and over 2200 individuals were contacted by our CISM team as well. So that assists, and again, there's been various events recently where even I get a call, because I reach out to people to make sure they're okay.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So how many people would you have on workers comp at the moment, and particularly on stress leave? Do you divide it up when they're on -

**Mr HINE** - Yes, we've certainly - and I'll go to Mr Wilson-Haffenden for the exact figures. But can I say, overall, the people that we have on PTSD - and we've got presumptive PTSD as well - whilst we do -

**UNKNOWN** - Sorry, did you say -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Presumptive?

**Mr HINE** - Presumptive.

**UNKNOWN** - Presumptive. I'm sorry, I misheard.

**Mr HINE** - Sorry, it's my pronunciation, no doubt. So I would actually rather people come forward and get the help that they need. And this is part of the reducing the stigma. So rather than actually say, 'Yes, we've got a number of people on PTSD or mental health issues,' I'd rather people come forward and not be worried about what our numbers are. Because part

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of this is reducing the stigma. So whilst we do have some people - and Mr Wilson-Haffenden will come to the numbers - I'd much rather have the people come forward and get the help they need. So if I can go to Mr Wilson-Haffenden.

**CHAIR** - Mr Willie has a supplementary before we get those numbers.

**Mr WILLIE** - I was just going to add to the member for Launceston's question. It might be useful if we could have, say, three years' worth of data, of workers compensation claims, and also the number of stress leave claims, and also perhaps the number of discharges for health reasons over that time as well. Happy for you to take that on notice, but you might be able to -

**UNKNOWN** - Maternity leave is an interesting one, too.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, and maternity leave. You might be able to take that on notice, with the three years, but you might be able to provide the current year's data.

**CHAIR** - So what answers do we have, and what we haven't got, that's what we'll take on notice. So thank you.

**Mr HINE** - I'll go to Mr Wilson-Haffenden for the exact numbers on -

**Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN** - Thanks, Commissioner. We've got figures as at 30 June 2021 for our open workers compensation claims. So as at 30 June 2021, we had a total of 175 open workers compensation claims. Of those, 48 related to TFS workers or volunteers; 109 related to police officers, including eight who had retired or resigned; 17 state service employees; and a further one retired, resigned employee. So that's a total of 175. Of the 109 police officers, there were 33 off work as at 30 June 2021. Thirty-seven were under workplace restrictions; 31 were on normal duties; and, as indicated, eight retired/resigned.

**CHAIR** - Do we have the previous -

**Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN** - I don't have the previous figures in relation to that, because that is at a point in time - what we can provide -

**CHAIR** - We are happy to take that on notice. The honourable member indicated that.

**Mr HINE** - So we'll take the three-year average over - in relation to maternity leave, that is another section of leave as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - Just to clarify, not the three-year average; each year.

**Mr HINE** - Each year; so if we take that on notice. But maternity leave is certainly a different category, and so it should be -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, that's fine.

**Mr HINE** - But just to reiterate that I'd much rather people come forward to get help they need. We absolutely make no stigma on the people that do come forward and get the help that they need.

**Mr WILLIE** - And just through the minister -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Are you still on that area? Because I'm still on that area, too.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So just in regards to the 33, I just want to say that it is just 2.5 per cent of the workforce, too, just to put it in context as well.

**CHAIR** - Yes, all right. Mr Willie.

**Mr WILLIE** - I was just going to ask whether stress leave was counted as a different category, or whether that's in the workers compensation claims.

**CHAIR** - Sorry, I missed that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Just whether stress leave is counted as a different category, or whether that's counted in the workers compensation claims. And if it is counted as a different category, can we have that data too?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - While you're actually doing that, I'm just wondering how - if you can say how many are receiving mental health treatment funded by the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, and not in the workers compensation space.

**CHAIR** - I think we have two questions going here at once.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, they're both similar.

**CHAIR** - Let's answer one first.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Can we just have the first question, please?

**Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN** - So if I can answer - we have a distinction between mental health claims and physical claims under the workers compensation. So I noted, of the 175 total claims across the whole of the department, broken down, 81 of these relate to mental health, and 94 are physical health matters. So of those mental health, there is a proportion of those which relate to PTSD, and a proportion which relate to other mental health issues.

So, of those, we identified 40 per cent relate to illnesses such as anxiety, depression and adjustment disorder, whilst 50 per cent have post-traumatic stress disorder as a confirmed diagnosis, and 10 per cent are awaiting medical confirmation of their diagnosis. In regards to the PTSD, as the Commissioner noted, there's been a strong approach for us to encourage people to proactively come forward and identify where there are PTSD matters. We have seen across the past four years an increase in PTSD claims. So in 2016-17, that was at 4, and 2018-19 that was 13; 2019-20, 24; and in 2020-21, we had 20 PTSD claims.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Now, has that answered your question as well, member for Launceston?



**Ms ARMITAGE** - I was wondering, if it can be estimated, how many are on mental health treatments that are not under workers comp.

**Mr HINE** - If someone doesn't put in a claim, we won't know.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - What would be the longest? I mean, funded by the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, assuming you do have people on mental health treatments that are funded by your department but not coming under workers comp. I'm just wondering if you could estimate how many officers you might have in that category.

**Mr HINE** - If someone doesn't put in a claim, we won't know about it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Right. So you actually haven't got any, then - you're saying, that you're funding, that are not covered by workers comp.

**Mr HINE** - I'm just not - if someone doesn't put in a workers comp claim, then I'm not sure how we would actually get to know - and how we would fund it. The Deputy Commissioner might know a little bit more.

**Ms ADAMS** - We do provide support to people through the wellbeing support program. And that could be from just catching up for a coffee, just to check how somebody is actually going -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But not funded through a treatment plan.

**Ms ADAMS** - Not through a treatment plan, no. But there is obviously wellbeing support officers that will provide support, but somebody may not actually have a workers compensation matter.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - What is the longest - the person that's been off the longest on workers' comp, particularly with mental health, can you - or how many - do you have any idea of that.

**Mr HINE** - I will hesitate to answer that, because I don't want to identify people.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, no, I don't want you to identify anyone either, but I guess there are people who have been off for a long time.

**Mr HINE** - Yes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regards to that, we are trying to reduce the stigma of mental ill health and it was big focus of our mental health and wellbeing strategy, and the concern that we have is that we don't want people to be seen. If they've got a mental ill health to be seen as worse than if you've got physical ill health. So, that is why in the department we're trying to make it that if you come forward with a mental ill health issue, you will be looked after as much as you would have if you'd had a physical injury. That's why we don't like to make it sound that this is not a good thing to have.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Absolutely, and I guess my point is more that we should be looking after these people, and are they looked after in a satisfactory manner. That was why the questions regarding self-assessment as opposed to mandatory assessment, are people looking

after themselves, and it's not an obligation on Tas police to make sure that they are looked after and they are taken care of if they have mental health issues, because we know what a stressful job it is. I'll let someone else have a turn.

**CHAIR** - So I was going to say, there is no question, that's just a statement?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Do you agree?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Certainly can appreciate officers being in a circumstance where they feel, you know, that they're being relied on and they must - it must be really terrible sometimes for them to be able to handle that circumstance. I'm going to a slightly different topic here, but it's in relation to mental health, and that is, as a result of the COVID-19 situation that we've all been through, is the force able to identify any escalation in the number of cases that you're attending, or events that you're attending, that actually involve somebody who has a mental health issue? Do you keep any metrics on that at all, and can you give us some understanding as to how that is, you know, going over this really difficult time that everyone's going through, and no doubt there are a lot of people that have got mental health issues.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll let the commissioner provide further information in regard to people having mental ill health. Part of the reason why this government is establishing and putting forward \$5.1 million for a mental health co-response team in which we'll be working with Ambulance Tasmania as well as with a - probably a registered nurse who is a psychiatric trained registered nurse for when we go to attend those sort of incidents where somebody is suffering from mental ill health that we'll have a co-response team to be able to look after the person who is suffering mental ill health better and to provide a different response model. But in regards to the actual numbers -

**Mr VALENTINE** - I was going to say, it's a great initiative. Congratulations on that initiative.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, it's an initiative that's used in another state and we just think it would work very well here in Tasmania.

**Mr HINE** - Can I just reiterate that it's quite an exciting project that will ultimately assist the community suffering mental health, so we commend the Government and we'll work really closely to maximise how we can assist those members of the public suffering from mental health.

**CHAIR** - Is there any data?

**Mr HINE** - There is data, but it's over the last 18 months, and I'll go to the deputy commissioner in a minute to add to it. So we do have data about concern for welfare. We've actually swapped over. The most calls for assistance from Tasmania Police used to be about hooning and traffic offences. It is now swapped over into concern for welfare, and we've certainly seen an increase during COVID-19 because people are suddenly, you know, being concerned, and so they should be, about one another. So we have, over the last number of

years, and it's - concern for welfare is taking up a lot of police time, rightly so as well, where people are looking out for one another as well.

The deputy commissioner might - and I don't have the numbers actually on me. We'd have to go through our ESCAD database to get the exact figures, but I'll go to the deputy commissioner.

**CHAIR** - Is that something that the member would like at a later time?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I just want to get a feel for what's happening out there.

**CHAIR** - You're not necessarily looking for numbers?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'd like numbers just to be able to measure I suppose how COVID-19 is impacting on the community out there. That would be important information to have.

**Ms ADAMS** - Thank you, through the minister. The Co-Response Mental Health program, which is modelled on the ACT program called the PACER Program. It's an excellent initiative where police, paramedics, and mental health nurses actually work together as a first responder to people who may be in need of support, and in an - I guess an opportunity to actually try to divert these particular individuals from having to go through the hospital system. I'm on the steering committee for this particular initiative, and at the moment, we're building the framework around how the model will actually be deployed.

We're looking to go live in January 2022, and what we would hope to see is that if the model is a success, there will be a number of people that will be able to remain in their own homes having received the appropriate treatment so that they don't need to burden the hospital system. But the expertise of having those three specialist in one response being able to go someone's home I think is an excellent model and it's being demonstrated in ACT to have significant success in being able to provide the necessary support for people who may be suffering anxiety, depression, and a whole range of social issues where they really don't need responding police officers. They actually need some mental health support.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thanks for that. It would be good to have some idea of numbers. If you've got numbers in relation to that, the number of events that you're attending that require assistance in the mental health space, that's basically the question.

**Mr HINE** - Over a three-year period, with maybe just an ESCAD -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Three-year period, fine, just to see what that escalation is, if you like. Yes, if there's an escalation. And it leads on to my next question, really, is -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I've got a question on mental health. Are you still on mental health?

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is to do with mental health.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's all right, well I won't -

**Mr VALENTINE** - In the sense of remote policing.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's all right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And I think of -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We can come back to mine in a minute.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I think of the likes of - you know, you talk about Dunalley, and being a Dunalley boy, I'm interested in staffing and those sorts of things down there, and Nubeena. When those sorts of - when those remote officers actually encounter something like this, what support is there for them to deal with somebody who might be at, you know, Stormlea or somewhere really remote who's got a mental health issue. How do you work with that under this scheme that you're talking about? Is it a statewide thing? Is it only for major metropolitan areas? How does that operate, minister?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Initially, it's to be rolled out in southern Tasmania and - because it's a trial for two years to see how it works, so it will be rolling out in southern Tasmania with the co-response model, and so it's been in conjunction with the Department of Health, to trial it and see what the results are before we then look at taking it statewide.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So they would possibly work with [TBC 09.48.40] service or something in that area to assist them in a circumstance like that? Is that what would happen?

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, that's exactly what would happen. There is an operational response model when police officers get called out to those situations, it is under that circumstance there is a two-person response and quite often it might be with the local ambulance situation as well, and it's about assessing the situation from a police and from a health aspect of what's the best treatment or model for them. But as you said, that's - as the minister indicated that first model or pilot will be in southern Tasmania.

But our police officers are well versed in the country stations. They do know their people they're dealing with, they know their community, they know the situation they are possibly going to, but it is a two-person response. They know the local GP, they know the -

**Mr VALENTINE** - I was going to say, is the GP involved?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, and it's about making sure the right people are involved who respond to that person that is suffering from mental health issues. If they need more resources, obviously they'll call for more resource to assist them as well, and we know mental health in the community is a big issue. Our people are well versed, well trained in how to deal with it and this model is really exciting. We've seen how it works in other states and we're really excited about providing a better and greater assistance to the community through this co-response model.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Wellbeing support comes under the department of Police and -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - There's the health and wellbeing strategy that I spoke about earlier, and we have a wellbeing support unit.

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**Ms ARMITAGE** - Funded by the department of Police and Fire?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, that's what we doubled our funding for. So it was \$1.5 million, it's now \$3 million per year.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, that's fine. Don't you have members who are actually being funded out of that that are not on workers' compensation with mental health issues? You said before that the department was not paying for anyone to have any mental health treatments. My understanding is that you have quite a number of officers who are not on workers' compensation that are being funded out of the wellbeing support. Would that be the case?

**Mr HINE** - You're actually right in that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Paying for psychologists?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, we pay for psychologists. For example, if someone goes through the -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So mental health treatments?

**Mr HINE** - So mental health treatments. I thought your question was about those who are actually on workers' comp.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, not on workers' compensation, but who are being funded by the police.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, we definitely have people who are provided assistance if they're not on workers' comp. I thought your question was about -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No.

**Mr HINE** - those on PTSD.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No.

**Mr HINE** - But those suffering from mental health issues do get support through -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But while we're on PTSD, and I understand that there's an increase, do you have any reason for the increase on PTSD? I understand that there's more acknowledgement of it and we're discovering it more, but do you have any understanding of why it's happening more? Accidents and incidents have always been serious, or is it just that more are showing up?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, this Government also introduced presumptive PTSD legislation because we -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes, I understand that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - and that is why it's a good thing. We wanted people to come forward if they had PTSD. We want people to get help as soon as they need it, when they need it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I understand that. But is there an understanding of why it's happening and becoming more prevalent? Is it because of an increased workload? Particularly, I ask about the 24-hour stations, the workload there. How are we checking how much work these officers are doing? Is there someone checking the workload and comparing it with the amount of PTSD that we're having more cases, but the workload obviously is increasing for the officers. I'm just wondering what the department's doing, or how they're looking at it.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - We actually see it as a positive that people are coming forward and the getting the help they need when they need it, because in the past they didn't. I suppose what I'm talking about is stigma reduction. We don't want people to think that if they've got PTSD they don't come forward.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So it is very important for us.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But I'm asking about an unchecked workload. Do we check the workload of officers, particularly at the 24-hour stations?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - That's why we brought in the 24-hour police station policy. We brought in the country relief police station policy. We're bringing in the fatigue management policy. This government will be putting on an extra 308 police officers across the state, so we are doing a lot to ensure the mental health and wellbeing.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I look forward to checking next year to see if we do have the 44 across the state for the -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, 44 have graduated during this year -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, no, I mean the -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - that have already been allocated.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I mean the 44 - yes, to see if they are actually in those stations. I've got more questions, but I'll let others -

**CHAIR** - Thank you. How many of the graduates, of the intakes, do you have like a - what percentage of ones that don't make it through to the end of the 31 weeks. Do you keep some statistics on that, minister?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, we definitely do. We've got a graduation this Friday. We do know that out of some courses, people get through various stages of the course where they come to the realisation that policing is not for them. I must admit that I'd much rather people put their hand up during a recruit course to say, policing is not for me, rather than put themselves into a profession or a career that they are not well suited to, and we definitely do get some that don't graduate or drop off during the course, which we've had for many, many years, some courses more than others. But again, I congratulate them to put their hand up to say, you know what, policing is not for me.

**CHAIR** - So you don't have any numbers?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, definitely every course we have numbers of how many started and how many graduate.

**CHAIR** - Right. Are they available?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, definitely.

**CHAIR** - I'm happy to take that on notice. Last three years.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Last three years.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr HINE** - No other questions?

**CHAIR** - 1.1, community policing? This is obviously the biggest area.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - We could ask them all during it, really.

**CHAIR** - Well, we won't ask everybody's questions, I doubt. But there's always other opportunities.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, just in relation to the port operations that used to be called the port - I think -

**UNKNOWN** - Public order response things, yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. What's the circumstance there these days? Is that still operating, or is there no need now because of the reduced amount of activity that happens around the waterfront because of COVID-19 or can you just give us an update on that?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So, are you talking about marine policing.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No. It's called PORT.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The Public Order Response Team.

**CHAIR** - I note in table 8.3 is a supplementary on page 233. The incidence of public order incidents was 14 841, 2018-19; 2019-20, 15 241. So, do you know whether we're on track to be increased or decreased for those public order incidents?

**Mr HINE** - Thanks for the question, and I will hand over to Mr Higgins in a minute. As we explained before, as in during the global financial crisis, we had a PORT team and we had a traffic team; we joined those together to actually cover not only traffic issues, but public order issues. We've still got that combined team and they look after mainly entertainment areas.

**CHAIR** - There's not much of that going on.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's what I'm saying. I think it may well have reduced its impact.

**CHAIR** - Footy is about all you can get around this place.

**Mr HINE** - Salamanca seems to be very busy as well, and there's where some of these things - and it is about the entertainment precincts, that we do get some of the issues, and we have noticed - and a lot of the other states have actually noticed increases in public order issues because people have been feeling it during our stay at home - they want to get out. Obviously, when they get out, there is some various issues that police have to deal with.

**UNKNOWN** - Mind you, we haven't had the protests so much as on the mainland. Touch wood, he says.

**Mr HINE** - Thankfully we haven't, and we haven't had the lockdowns of other states. Thankfully everyone is working really hard. I'll hand over to Mr Higgins to give us some more commentary around public order issues in the entertainment precincts.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Thank you. Through the minister, public order incidents have increased this financial year and there's 17 847. A large number of these are actually not in entertainment precincts, as rightly pointed out, because there are various restrictions and have been over the past 12 months. They're noise complaints. They're large increases -

**CHAIR** - People are partying at home.

**Mr HIGGINS** - People are at home.

**CHAIR** - I know a street somewhere close to me that's probably got a lot of those.

**Mr HIGGINS** - So that's been the big change. The difference with the Public Order Response Team is that the road and public order team, when it was merged together, have that capacity now. By putting the numbers back onto the watchers, they'll have that capacity and that surge capacity on a 24-hour basis which is particularly important in all our 24-hour city areas.

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you very much, Chair. Minister, I wanted to ask about Crime Stoppers. Can you outline the funding that is available for Crime Stoppers in the budget and what will that funding deliver?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, Crime Stoppers for 25 years now has operated in Tasmania and it provides a very important avenue for people to report crime and to assist police to identify offenders. It's a trusted information service for people wanting to share what they know about unsolved crimes and suspicious activity without saying who they are, because you can make a report to Crime Stoppers anonymously.

It is an independent not for profit registered charity which works closely with police, media and the community to help solve, reduce and prevent crime by collecting information, and they have achieved great results, whether it's in cross-border crime such as illicit drug manufacture, importation and distribution, wanted fugitives and illegal firearms. We're encouraging people to share anonymously what they do know.

We recognise the important role of Crime Stoppers which is why we are providing them



with \$100,000 over the next four years just to assist them with delivering their education programs and their innovative programs such as Bikelinc which will assist Tasmania Police to return stolen bikes to their owners, and Bikelinc is a real-time search feature that easily links bicycles with their owners and it's been designed to connect a community of bike-minded people and help reduce bike theft. It's great for cycling enthusiasts because they'll be able to check if bikes are for sale, which is their bike, and especially if they've reported them as lost or stolen.

**CHAIR** - They're expensive items these days, minister.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - They are.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Supplementary Mr Valentine, then Ms Armitage, and then we're moving on to 2.1.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's about Neighbourhood Watch. I'm interested to know how much support Tas Police give to Neighbourhood Watch these days. It used to be quite a significant amount of support. I think they still produce newsletters, but can you give me an understanding as to what is happening in that space and how many groups that Tas Police may be providing support for in terms of Neighbourhood Watch.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I did meet with the chair of Neighbourhood Watch recently - Mr Edwards - and we had a really good chat about what they're doing. I first of all commend the work of Neighbourhood Watch. Under his leadership he's certainly doing a lot of wonderful things in promoting Neighbourhood Watch and reinvigorating it and helping us to - yes - bring along the general community in making sure - raising awareness.

I think we have 38 Neighbourhood Watches across Tasmania. Well, I know what he said to me. I think there was about 20 down south, 14 in the northern district, and four in the western district. So, I'm not sure if that's where it stands over time, but I know that he has said that he is very excited because he actually had a couple more coming on-board when he came to see me that time. I don't know if they fluctuate, but I know he's certainly doing a lot of good work in reinvigorating more Neighbourhood Watches around the state.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are they still producing newsletters on behalf of each of those groups?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - He brought along newsletters for me and he says that he puts them together and he's got a few other volunteers that put them together, so yes, he definitely brought me along a lot of printed material.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The answer is the department helps to fund the printing of that? Who's providing the funds for that?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll have to ask the commissioner for that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thanks, minister. I have to commend Mr Edwards who, as the minister said, was the former commander, and he's certainly increased the number of Neighbourhood Watch groups. He's very active in the area. They produce newsletters, but he's also looking at electronic means as well. We did support them through \$15 000 a year. We've upped that to \$20 000 a year because we do see the benefit of Neighbourhood Watch as

well.

We have a liaison officer who works with Neighbourhood Watch to support them as well, as well as we supply an office space for Mr Edwards as well. They are doing really good work. Mr Edwards is - they had a really good foundation. He is now taking it even further. Our local police officers get involved in Neighbourhood Watch as well.

We did have a lot more, but obviously when crime reduces, the need for a Neighbourhood Watch reduces, but now they're getting involved in various activities as well, and they are increasing, and I commend the work that they do. Crime Stoppers does as well. So, they are doing a great job to support the community.

**CHAIR** - Ms Armitage; second-last question.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. My questions to the commissioner are relating to the April 2021 corporate performance report. So, going back many years and -

**CHAIR** - How many? If it's more than 11 the commissioner can't answer it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It's not more than 11. In the Tasmania Police corporate performance reports, the northern district compared to the other two geographic districts and, more importantly, Launceston division compared to the other 12 police geographic divisions, has the highest victimisation rates and also numerically the highest incidence of crime across many crime categories and associated decreasing clearance rates.

I think the former member for Windermere, Mr Dean, used to call it Little Chicago. Now, I've never gone that far. I don't particularly like that heading. However, for example, in total offences, serious crime, home burglary, business burglary and stolen motor vehicles, we have the highest incidence, but I also note that our uniformed police patrol hours are down. This is - and I'm not looking at the three-year average; I'm looking at the actual, that the northern district is down 9233 hours, that - whereas offences against the person at public places. So it's total offences, serious crime, robbery, offences against property, home burglary, business burglary, motor vehicle burglary, stolen motor vehicles.

**CHAIR** - This has probably wandered into 2.1.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It's still community. I'm not actually looking at the -

**CHAIR** - Let's finish it, then.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - All right. So, my question is - it's acknowledged that the police officers in the northern district are working extremely hard, and it could be argued that they're the hardest-working cohort of officers in the state. What is being done by Tasmania Police to shape change to reduce these systematic high rates of victimisation and incidents of crime in Launceston?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I thank the member for her question. I note that you have an April report. I think June's has come out - I signed it off on late Friday night after I read it, but -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Okay, yes. Has it improved greatly?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So, I think it's up now. Launceston is actually improving. In fact, crime in Launceston has fallen by 18 per cent since last year overall. So, it's a bigger reduction than crime decreasing state level.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Still too high.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The reduction by 18 per cent since 2021 is bigger than the reduction of crime at a state level in Launceston. I commend the efforts of the northern district because Commander Wilkinson has certainly done a lot of good work up there in having a big focus on crime, whether it's been on the firearms taskforce or other initiatives, they've done a lot of good work. So, serious crime has reduced, incidents involving firearm use have decreased. Total offences are down 18 per cent in Launceston; serious crime is down 2 per cent; public place assaults are down 7 per cent; offences against property are down 21 per cent; home burglary are down 20 per cent; and motor vehicle burglary are down 38 per cent; and stolen motor vehicles are down 16 per cent.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Is this three years to date, though, or is this current?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - This is against last year. Current.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'm wondering how much higher we were. You're saying how much we've come down as opposed to the state wide, but I'm guessing the question is how much higher were we than the state wide initially, but that's fine. I'll actually compare because I can ask some more questions on the floor.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I just want to commend the Commander Wilkinson -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Absolutely. I think all the commanders -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - and everyone else because I think they've done an outstanding job and these are great statistics where they've actually done a whole body of work in making sure that residents of Launceston - and I was born in Launceston.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I understand that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - My mother still lives there, but better they live in a safe environment.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I do ask questions state-wide, but Launceston is of particular interest to me.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - And understandably so.

**CHAIR** - The member is passionate about her community. Minister, before we leave this area can I get you to publicly commit to the Mowbray recreational hub project, that it will stay on track and there will be dedicated personnel focused on that initiative?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I commit to raising it with the local members for Bass to ensure that that happens.

**CHAIR** - I think the Premier and Treasurer and Minister for Finance and - the feds have already supported it. The council supports it. Just needs Tas Police on-board.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I commit to raising it with them.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

## **2.1 Investigation of crime**

**CHAIR** - Now we'll move to 2.1 which is investigation of crime. We did touch on some of those figures, but that was just the northern-based figures.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, the monthly corporate performance documents highlight increased response times to critical incidents in rural areas when responding to public calls for help. What's the reason for the increased response times to critical incidents in rural areas when responding to public calls for help?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll ask the commissioner to answer that question.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister. I'll hand over to Mr Higgins in a minute. Rural response time has increased. The median response times from 30 minutes to 32 minutes between 2019 and 2021 as well. Across high-priority incidents it's increased from 26 minutes to 31 minutes. There are a number of factors in relation to that, including have an operational response model. For the high incidents or high-priority matters, there has to be a two-person response as well. For the officer's safety as well as community safety as well. And also the government's commitment of \$10.6 million for the relief policy through rural and country police stations will assist this to make sure we've got the officers in place as well. So I'll just hand over to Mr Higgins to add to that as well.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Through the minister. So, there has been a change in systems in 2017 to our new - which is now not new - in 2017, our -

**Mr HIGGINS** - No, no, not all. These aren't all critical incidents. Not every job that a police officer goes to will be a high priority as such, so there is a range of different factors. Some of the changes have been in relation to our dispatch systems as they are now and the median grade we're looking at there. Others in relation to rural will be in relation to the multi-person response that we now make sure our members adopt for their own safety and to enhance the service delivery to the community as well when they do that. Some of the increase in time to get to a particular incident may be because they're actually teaming up before they actually go to the job.

**Mr WILLIE** - Is it due to police needing to go home - go from home to the police station to collect equipment and gear and obviously meet up with other staff? Is that part of the delay?

**Mr HIGGINS** - Absolutely, some of it could be. That tends to be a call-out, it's in the middle of the night and after hours where there are actually very few jobs actually called in at night time. So, on the very rare occasion that may be the case. That's for our members' safety to ensure they have the right equipment and they get it from the station as opposed to home. We're not having firearms at home, which could be readily accessible by the entire family as

such. We want them to make sure they have their equipment they need before they go to the job but they're able to safely get it to actually attend to that job.

**Mr WILLIE** - Through the minister again. That's a rare occurrence or is it happening often where police officers are having to go to the station on the way to a job?

**Mr HIGGINS** - For a call-out in the middle of the night? No, it won't be rare. They will need to go to the station to get their full equipment.

**Mr HINE** - But I think the question is how often do they drive to go to an incident the -

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mr HINE** - That is a rare occasion but I've publicly stated to our police officers, I'd much rather them go to the police station, get their full accoutrements and to join up and plan how they're going to respond, to make sure that it's the safety of the police officers but also the safety of the community. But we don't hear of too many instances where they actually have to drive past a situation to get their accoutrements before they can come back.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, the commissioner talked about policy to address this. When will we start to see a change in the response times?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regards to the country police station?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The policy's enacted now so we've already launched it, it's fully funded across the forward Estimates, so the policy's in place. Hopefully in the future you will see reduced response times but it's fully funded.

**Mr WILLIE** - We're not seeing it.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It's fully funded across the four years.

**Mr WILLIE** - My question's not about the funding. It's about the response times and the outcomes that you're hoping to achieve from the funding.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The outcome would hopefully be reduced response times but this Government has funded the policy, \$10.6 million across the forward Estimates. It's a policy that came to us from the commissioner and the police association and we've been delighted to provide funding for.

**Mr WILLIE** - If I could move to another topic before -

**CHAIR** - I've got my supplementary on firearms before I go to that next area.

**Mr WILLIE** - The supplementary on this, yes, okay.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I always assumed that officers would have a firearm safe at home to keep their firearm in. Officers have to leave them at the station, they don't have a lock-up safe

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at home just for a quicker response, particularly those officers that are on-call 24/7 that might have to go out. I guess it's a thing about having to go back to the station, that they can't go straight from home. Is there a reason that they don't have a firearm safe at home to actually lock it away?

**Mr HINE** - It's actually illegal for them to take it back under the act, so I can't allow them to do it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Right. No, no, that's all right.

**Mr HINE** - So, like everyone else, they have to abide by the act and the safe is at the station. We are looking at how do we increase the officer's safety whilst at home. Having a firearm at home is under discussion but we certainly don't condone it. They're not allowed to have a firearm at home, for various reasons, and some police officers I've spoken to don't want a firearm at home because they've got families. They have to have a loading and unloading bay as well, they have to store their ammunition in separate safes, so it's not as simple as putting a gun in a safe. You've got to unload it safely as well and, you know -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We've all known of the officer who shot himself in the foot.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, I won't comment on that one. Again, it's about officer safety and we want to make sure our officers safe at home when they're off duty, especially in rural areas. You know, we're certainly continuing to look. We've just implemented a program about putting up security doors for them. Looking at cameras, so they can understand who's at their door as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, that's fine. Officers don't particular want them. I didn't know whether they would have preferred to have them at home in a safe, that was all.

**Mr HINE** - Some do, you know, some would prefer that but again -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But it is the act.

**Mr HINE** - I've got to look at what's the act, what's the best way to keep them safe. As I said, we're looking at various security measures around their country homes, including doors, cameras, those sorts of things.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Because people know where they live, yes.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, that's right. They're local police officers so we want to keep them safe and there's different opinions as well but we've got several factors that we need to consider.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, that's fine. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - As a Joe Citizen, when they're off duty, are they allowed then to own a firearm that's not related to their work?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, they have to apply under the act like everyone else.

**CHAIR** - I was going to say, it'd be a disadvantage otherwise, particularly if you live in a country area.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - But they still have to do their own firearms course, like as in the course that you and I have to do to be able to use a firearm.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Sorry, can I just follow up on that question. Under the act, can an officer actually have a firearm at home when they're on-call?

**Mr HINE** - Short answer is no.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Okay. I thought that they actually could.

**Mr WILLIE** - Do they need a firearm to respond to every incident?

**Mr HINE** - Under the Operational Safety Policy, they need to have all their accoutrements including a firearm before they respond.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So the 28 isolated stations, they're on-call, they can't have a firearm at home under the act?

**Mr HINE** - Some of the houses are very close to the station and therefore the firearm is stored at the station with alarms and with safes and all those of things.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'll just have to check the act because my understanding was that when they were on-call they could store a firearm at home.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Willie, you had another area of investigation of crime.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, I'm just interested in the impact of COVID-19 on offences against people and property, whether we're seeing any trends. Obviously, there's been restrictions of movement between borders so that might have an impact on drug crimes and other related crimes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The overall rate of crime in Tasmania I believe has decreased by 13 per cent over this last year, but I'll allow the commissioner to provide a more fulsome response.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you for that and if you're referring to last year during the stay-at-home, there was definitely a decrease of people moving around, therefore a decrease in crime and a decrease in every offence.

**Mr WILLIE** - It's more a question around the general environment now, in terms of border restrictions and the risk of an outbreak, whether that's having an impact and people's livelihoods obviously being impacted at the moment. Whether that's having an impact on crime rates.

**Mr HINE** - I suppose crime rates have definitely come down. We've got the lowest crime rate we've had in eight years, whether it's - I think it's a combination: whether it's good policing, good community involvement, COVID-19, all those things are having an impact.

Some areas around the country and the world are having an increase in crime as well, but there certainly is a decrease in crime overall. It's the lowest we've had in eight years. COVID-19 has changed the way we do business, not only from a policing perspective, as we know from a community perspective and, you know, we've got up quite a number of police officers every day involved in policing COVID-19.

For example, we have the security at the various hotels where we lead the security arrangements. We have police officers dedicated when planes land to make sure they supervise people at the airports when they come into the state. We have police officers involved in checking on those who are doing home quarantine as well. We've got the COVID-19 coordination centre where there is a number of police officers there dealing with exceptions to go to the Deputy State Controller. It has a massive impact on policing, how we investigate crime. But overall, crime is the lowest we've seen in eight years.

**Mr WILLIE** - In terms of the police being deployed for COVID-19 related reasons, are they public order officers? Is that where they're being redeployed from? Of that division?

**Mr HINE** - Overall, yes. Those RPOS units are going to the airports but there is a number of different resources that are pulled together to support the hotels and doing home quarantine checks. Overall, it's fair to say that's where they come from as well. We've got those numbers we have to support in the 24-hour stations. We continue to support that but it is about prioritising your resources to make sure we do what happens right across the state. Total drug offenders are down 11 per cent as well. We are seeing a change in the way crime is committed as well. The general answer is yes from RPOS is probably where the majority of the people are coming from to help police COVID-19.

**Mr WILLIE** - Another question on this.

**CHAIR** - One more and then I need to go up the other end of the table.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. I'm interested, minister, in crime detection strategies and how the police force keeps up with current technologies of the encryption devices and a range of other things that criminals are using to conduct their business, and what communication you have with interstate jurisdictions and even overseas, and how you stay on top of that?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I will allow the commissioner to provide more information in a minute but just what I've seen in the short time I've been minister is the use of drones as technology for family violence victims to help download the information off their phone to help to see if there's tracking and spyware. We're spending \$46 million to update police systems through Project Unify but the department is very much intelligence-led policing now and we're very much embracing the latest technologies.

We're also investing an extra \$4 million into CCT cameras too, which the police are using and of course they've got the body worn cameras which I must say in my Minister for Prevention of Family Violence role has provided very important evidence for when victims/survivors have to help the victim survive enough to go to court because the evidence can be so graphic when it's seen on the body worn cameras. No, they're very much embracing modern technologies but I'll handover to the commissioner.

**CHAIR** - That seemed a fairly thorough answer. Is there anything else to add?



**Mr HINE** - There's not actually a lot to add.

**CHAIR** - In a very succinct manner.

**Mr HINE** - I'll try. Back in 2018 we did a Capability Review and the Capability Review is about looking over the horizon, not only in a short period of time, in the longer period of time so we could actually identify some of the challenges that we are facing right across the world. There was a number of issues. Cybercrime we know is increasing, we have to make sure that we're protecting the community. A LinkedIn partner with our agencies across the country and New Zealand, whether the Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, the ANZCTC and a number of other agencies, and Mr Higgins sits on many of those committees as I do as well.

The Capability Review identified several issues and so we formed the Crime and Intelligence Command. There's a commander there. They look at child exploitation, they look at cold cases, they look at serious fraud and e-crime as well and they're very, very busy and you know they've had a number of successes as well. Whether it's drug importation, we know the dark web facilitates a number of crimes as well, and again we need to keep track of that. Out of the Capability Review it's looking about a two-tiered police model, about, you know, it's going to the private sector universities, to get our forensic people from there, as in for computer forensics. Police officers can do their policing model and we can get experts to assist us in forensics capability.

We have looked over the horizon, we need to continue and we're going to update that with an investment by the government as well, to see other issues. You know, we've plugged a number of gaps with the government's commitment, whether it's Unify with the \$46 million, with a new - over half a billion dollars in radio technology as well the government's invested, the Crime Intelligence Command. We're going to review that in the next number of months to see where our gaps are continuing. I'm sorry, it was a little bit longer but it is such a complex issue and area that we are committed to work with the government to make sure we keep Tasmania safe.

**CHAIR** - All very important. Thank you.

**Ms PALMER** - Minister, we touched on the crime statistics in northern Tasmania, specifically in Launceston, but I'm wondering if you can outline the details of the crime statistics for Tasmania for 2021?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I thank the member for her question. As we've already said, total offences recorded and cleared across Tasmania has decreased by 13 per cent, which is an eight-year low. But in the interests of transparency, there is one statistic that has alarmed me, as Minister for Prevention of Family Violence and Minister for Women, and it's an increase in sexual assaults has been recorded this year, which is of significant concern as well to the commissioner and Tasmania Police.

We believe that everyone has the right to live in an environment free from sexual assault, and I'd like to recognise the fact that we've had victims and survivors come forward to report these offences; many are historical in nature, but many have occurred in the past year as well.

It's also coming in an environment where we've had Grace Tame, Brittany Higgins, the Me Too movement, as well as increased attention because of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, which has resulted in increased awareness of sexual assault and reporting.

But the statistics are that 453 people did experience sexual assault, and some of these were decades old as well that have been reported. What we know is that one in five women will experience sexual assault and one in 16 men will have experienced sexual violence in their lifetime. I believe that there's still an underreporting of statistics. While there's been an increase, we still believe that there is an underreporting of statistics.

Like with mental health, we want to reduce the stigma of reporting sexual abuse, so that we can return the power from the perpetrators to the victims. It's through victims coming forward and reporting sexual violence that police can investigate, prosecute and hold offenders to account, potentially preventing further harm from occurring within our community.

In the meantime, Tasmania Police, in conjunction with other agencies, has been providing advice to the Premier on how we can better respond to and investigate sexual assault in Tasmania, through a multi-disciplinary integrated approach. We also have our Safe Homes, Families, Communities action plan. This year we're investing \$4.12 million to provide services to those who experience sexual violence, and that is for victims experiencing sexual violence, whether it's historical or recent claims, as well.

Tasmania Police is working with the Australia Government and other state and territory governments to establish a coordinated and consistent approach to prevent and better respond to child sexual abuse as well. I noted that Grace Tame, on the weekend, also said that she was going to be working with the Australian Federal Police and also wanting to raise the issue of child sexual abuse Australia-wide as well.

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - I've got a question, just in regard to the country station relief policy. When that officer is away, with the extra funding, will that mean that that position is backfilled and there's no absence during that time?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - With the country police station policy, we're providing \$10.6 million over four years to provide relief for -

**CHAIR** - Yes. So there'll always be relief at those stations when the -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - If they're on extended leave or if they're on unpaid parental leave or if they're just sick for a day, no, it won't be, but if they need to go to the academy for a week or something, they have training -

**CHAIR** - Right. That funding will cover that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - That's the policy. Is that - yes.

**CHAIR** - Right. The firearms department, minister, hasn't always been a complementary area, if you might, around the turnaround in that area. I'm just interested in have you got some

figures on, when there's a request into the firearms department, how long that request takes to be addressed.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - As in regards to getting a licence?

**CHAIR** - Well, anything to do - getting your firearms back - anything to do with the area that they cover.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Usually, if they've had their firearms removed, it's for a reason why.

**CHAIR** - Yes, I understand that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So there would be a process that they would definitely have to go through in regards to returning a firearm, especially if it's been removed due to an act of family violence or -

**CHAIR** - Yes, I understand that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So that's a process there. Firearms licences - it's an extensive process for a reason, to get a firearm. It's because you need to have eligibility checks, written application and -

**CHAIR** - I understand the process. I have been through it with my constituents many times.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - And I've been through it myself. But I think it's a robust process for a reason.

**CHAIR** - So some time frames?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Do we have any statistics? Time frames?

**CHAIR** - We don't.

**Mr HINE** - Can I say -

**CHAIR** - Complaints, then, to the department?

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, the Government's allocated \$46 million for Project Unify, and that will actually include having a new firearms processing system as well, so people can go online, and they actually reduce the time to process licences. We're really pleased about that. That will actually fix some of those issues. There are a number of firearm licences within the state: there's over 144 000 firearms registered in the state and over 35 000 licence holders.

I have to say, the Firearms Services are doing an excellent job in really challenging circumstances. We know when the licensing years come up that it increases the workload, and they're working extremely hard. We know it's a difficult area as well, but we're looking forward to this new database and the new system to help streamline those issues. Some of the queries we get are quite complex.

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**CHAIR** - When is that new system going to be online?

**Mr HINE** - We are actually in the development stage as we speak.

**CHAIR** - So that's quite a while, then.

**Mr HINE** - The technology, I'd like to say, is really easy to put it in place, but the design phase has commenced. We started negotiations with a service provider as well, and that's one of the first cabs off the rank. That's probably not the IT term for it, but we're certainly working hard to make sure that -

**CHAIR** - It's on the priority list.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. Within that \$46 million, yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Cyber security.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, not so much cyber security, but social media. Obviously, in schools and the like there have been programs in the past that have shone a bit of the spotlight on problems and issues of people being harassed over social media. Do you have any statistics on any of your activity in that area? Whether it be offences committed, prosecuted or whatever. Can you give us an understanding of that? Obviously social media is becoming very much the way people communicate these days. The opportunity for crime, if I can put it that way, in that space is, I'm sure, growing daily. I'd really appreciate some figures around that if you have anything that you can share. I've look through the corporate support performance and I can't see anything in there particularly for social media.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regards to charges that are made by Tasmania Police against people with social media? Because -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. Harassing others or -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. I know schools are doing a lot in regards to eSafety and the eSafety Commissioner is doing a lot of work. Nationally, the eSafety Commissioner and the Australian Government would be doing legislation - I think that comes in soon - to address these sort of issues. I'm not sure if the commissioner has any further information.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you. And it's a really interesting question and a good question in today's society. We -

**CHAIR** - They're all good questions here. Thank you.

**Mr HINE** - I'm so sorry. Yes, they're all good questions, and it's -

**CHAIR** - No favouritism.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I don't know that I'd go that far for me.

**Mr HINE** - But it's a really interesting topic. I'll go to Mr Higgins in a moment to expand on it, but we've seen social media it's - quite often in the media, it's about how social media is

used to harass, bully, threaten. No doubt, as members of parliament, you've probably experienced it yourself, where people get behind a keyboard and -

**CHAIR** - Sadly.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, family violence. I suppose that's a different area that we're going to go to.

**Mr HINE** - But, again - sorry, you hit on a very important point: how it can be used for not only crime but family violence. Child exploitation, we know social media can be used for that. Grooming. So between ourselves - and we work very closely with the AFP - they have sophisticated systems there. If you look at - with the ANOM system that the AFP - had a major sting and charged a number of people - thankfully, none in Tasmania, but a number of people across the world, where people were using social media encrypted communication channels. So it is definitely an issue.

One of our best defences against social media is education. We have various advice from the eSafety Commissioner that puts forward about how to deal with these things. Laws do need to keep up with some of these issues as well, and that's always under development as well, but we see some absolutely shocking instances of bullying. No doubt you have experienced it yourself, which is where you're trying to help the community but you become threatened by - and some of the process on the mainland - my counterparts on the mainland, from the commissioner's point of view - they give various stories where police officers go to protests, protecting the community from unlawful protest, and, next thing, those police officers are targeted on social media, their children are targeted on social media, their schools are targeted on social media. We've certainly seen some instances of that in Tasmania as well. It's certainly an area where we all need to work together for -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Any numbers, commissioner?

**Mr HINE** - I could break it down on a number of charges, but, again, it's in the AFP as well. Mr Higgins might be able to explain a bit further.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes. Through the minister. So it is a wicked problem, for want of a better term, in relation to the greater social media, an example of which is - I said an online-facilitated sexual assault working group, which is in relation to dating sites and so forth, which is an area which our youth use, right through to adults, of course, and how we're actually able to best help the community in that space, to protect themselves and others.

Certainly, public awareness and those sort of programs are key to it, because the sites we're talking about are not Australian-run. They're international conglomerates that operate them; they have very different rules across all sorts of different countries, and it becomes very, very difficult to get information from any of these. So as far as getting statistics about how we tackle this, I don't think we'll be able to break them down to a site or a social media; it won't be how we capture it in that space, but we certainly can look to see what is reported nationally, which may help answer your question further there.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I was wondering whether there are any local statistics, in terms of people actually being arrested because of their activity online, with regard to harassment and the like. We don't have any figures in that space?

**Mr HIGGINS** - We will have instances where that has been used, particularly in the family violence space - more so, but if it's, for example, a youth on youth, with harassment, no, there won't be any charges. It'll be dealt with in a completely different way, through a diversionary process. It won't be captured under that. We won't be able to pull the data to actually demonstrate that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regards to the youth on youth, the schools are taking a very hard line on it. They've put together resources and done a lot of work in this space, alongside with the eSafety Commissioner, and it's something that the eSafety Commissioner is doing a lot of work in regards. So we're very conscious of it.

**CHAIR** - We can follow up on a question tomorrow, then. I'm going to Ms Siejka now.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Could I just -

**CHAIR** - Supplementary there?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Just with the online bullying. What is the department doing about online bullying of their own staff? Is there -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Of their own staff?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes. Is that an issue? Have you discovered that's an issue?

**CHAIR** - What, officer to officer?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll have to get the commissioner to answer that.

**Mr HINE** - I'm not aware of an officer to officer - bullying one another and using - there is a social media policy about how police officers use social media.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Or social media to officers. Either or both. So there's not that. How do you protect your officers from outside online bullying?

**CHAIR** - Wrap them in cotton wool and don't put them out on the job, I expect.

**Mr HINE** - Look, it is a difficult situation. I know the situation you're referring to and, of course, we provide support and advice. I'd love to be able to say we can stop it. It's very difficult to stop it as well, but we certainly provide support. I know the effect it does have on people in relation -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Their families as well.

**Mr HINE** - Their families as well. The simple advice is not to look at it, but, of course, we know that's not easy either.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We always look. Or someone tells us.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. And people think they're doing the right thing. You know, people would let you know that something is being said about you on social media - and they'd much rather not know as well, but people think they're doing the right thing. We have certainly -

**CHAIR** - So it's not just in your role either.

**Mr HINE** - No. Exactly right. I'm sympathetic to everyone around this table and this room. Kids - I've seen it where kids absolutely have been so cruel to one another.

We have developed a policy about if we become aware of where a police officer is being bullied, threatened, harassed, we will then take it to the platform and try to get it removed. If we can't do that then we'll take other actions as well where we can. I'd like to say it's easy, and if we can identify a person, we'll actually go and see the person as well.

I know the effect it has had on many, many people as well. It's still an area and that's right across the world everyone's dealing with. Again, you know, you look at around the world where politicians are being targeted and they've tried to stop it as well. That's an area we need to continue to work at to try and prevent and have various strategies, but it's a difficult situation, I totally agree.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, final question, Ms Siejka.

**Ms SIEJKA** - The conversation occurring around the child abuse investigation has just reminded me that I wanted to know the answer to this question. Given the number of state service employees that have been stood down as part of the commission, or you know, head of the commission of inquiry finishing their work, I wondered if there were any internal policies, or any protocols that had happened as an interim measure, noting that the commission will probably make a range of recommendations, but just whether or not you'd already started some of that work if you'd been alerted to the need for changes, and you'd acted on them.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - You're talking about across government in regard to, or?

**Ms SIEJKA** - Whether it's within the department or across government, it's obviously going to bring up a lot of changes that probably need to be made, and I'd just wondered if you'd already started that work ahead of the report findings, or the commission findings.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I commend Tasmania Police, because they've done a whole body of work in regard to this, whether it's working with Communities Tasmania, whether it's working with vulnerable people's check. This Government takes a zero-tolerance approach to allegations of child sexual abuse in Tasmania, and definitely across the Tasmanian State Service. In regard to what's being done this year, we heard the police led historical complaints review process, and the commissioner of police has been providing advice in a new structure to coordinate investigations involving allegations of child sexual assault or abuse, and they've initiated a review into the handling of the Griffin matter, as well as broad information, sharing investigative guidelines, practices, and training, and they've also worked with Communities Tas, but I'll get the commissioner to add further to that.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister, and I've always taken the approach that where we can learn something from a situation, and we can improve, we'll always take that opportunity in relation to child sex abuse. We have yet again done that. I'll hand over to the deputy in a minute. We have done a lot of work. We've got a team working on these issues whilst we're assisting the commission of inquiry, and we're really cognisant of what's going on there. We've also changed a number of processes to again, make sure we're a learning organisation so we can assist the community. I'll hand over to the deputy commissioner to add some more.

**CHAIR** - Is there anything else to add, deputy.

**Ms ADAMS** - There are a couple of things that we've done in this space through you, minister. As the commissioner says, Tasmania Police is committed to a reflective practice, and we were very keen to ensure that we reviewed and then implemented the necessary changes from our own review of the Griffin matter. The recommendations and changes that we have made, we've got new business protocols between our department and the Department of Justice that govern the working with vulnerable children checks, and how they're actually managed and the prioritisation that's placed on those particular checks.

We've also consolidated all of our investigative guidelines into a contemporary package for our investigators. And our investigators have received training in relation to that particular package. We've also worked with communities Tasmania to review the memorandum of understanding between Tasmania Police and child and family services. This particular MOU now makes it very clear what the responsibilities are between each agency so that there is no opportunity for information to slip through the cracks, in terms of how we might manage situations between the two departments.

As the commissioner has also said, we have the historic review team in place, that also includes some professionals from communities Tasmania working with Tasmania Police, as part of - not only as part of the review process, the team has actually looked at best practice models for investigating child sexual abuse, and we'll be putting forward some recommendations to the head of the state service and the commissioner for briefing to the minister and premier in relation to a best practice model moving forward for child sex abuse.

**CHAIR** - Now moving to 2.2, Poppy security.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Sorry, quick question before we go -

**CHAIR** - I don't think we've got time for anything else, unless it's short and sharp both ways.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'm sure I could make it short and sharp. First, just going back to the bullying, is it possible to have a copy of the policy? I assume you've got a policy on online bullying.

**Mr HINE** - We've certainly got some guidelines that Mr Higgins -

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes, the policy itself is a draft policy, it's currently with the police association and has been with them for some months awaiting feedback.



**Ms ARMITAGE** - Okay, and another really quick one, thank you. With the additional COVID-19 work that our officers are doing, what tasks are Tas Police not doing? What's gone in order to pick up all the slack that they've done with COVID-19, particularly work in the hotels and other work that they had to do. What's missing out, is that why random breath testing has been slashed, as has been reported in the media?

**CHAIR** - That actually would go to traffic policing.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Okay, I'll leave that with the traffic then.

**CHAIR** - So get ready for traffic policing.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, 2.2 Poppy Security.

## **2.2 Poppy Security**

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you very much, Chair. Poppy security. There's only been a small change in the appropriation for this output when compared to the Estimates provided in last year's budget papers, it was about \$3000. You mention in the performance information on page 235, it's got the performance figures there. It's a bit difficult to work out how many hectares are actually sown. Like you do it per thousand hectares' sown, do we know what the number of hectares actually is, state-wide, can you give us that?

**Mr HINE** - The hectare zone in 2017-18 was 12 718, and the hectares harvested in that same year, 11 949.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's 2017 or 2018?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, 2018-19, hectares sown was 10 447, and the hectares harvested was 9786. 2019-20, the hectares sown was 11 017, and harvested was 10 909. In 2020-21, hectares sown was 9809, and the hectares harvested 8202.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's very good. It's stated in the description for the output that security results in a reduction of the number of diversions into the illicit market. Can you provide information on how much diversion into the illicit market occurs, and the extent to which diversions have changed over recent years?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, and I'll hand over to - sorry.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Through you, minister. I always forget to say that.

**Mr HINE** - Apologies minister. In relation to capsules stolen, and this has been fluctuating as well, and I'll go through if you're happy over the same period of time, capsules -

**CHAIR** - Do we need way back? Do we need that far back?

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, just the last couple of years.

**Mr HINE** - Okay, I suppose it's from 2019-20, capsules stolen is 1957. 2020-21 was 5245. Capsules recovered 2286. For 2019-20, there was none recovered last year.

Interferences - there were nine in 2019-20, and 17 in 2020-21, hence the larger number. There was one person charged in 2019-20, but no persons charged in 2020-21.

**CHAIR** - So you didn't find the person, or persons in 2020-21?

**Mr HINE** - No, that's right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Given that it's pretty low rate of capturing people doing this, can you advise why the actual data for 2020-21 performance indicator is not yet available? That's at page 235. Surely it is a low interference rate, and in previous years you've said six detections in 2018-19, and nine in 2019-20, and that's from the Poppy control board annual data. So you know that control board costs about \$1.1 million a year to run, you'd think it'd be a pretty trivial task for the agency to provide the numbers in a timely manner so that performance could be assessed, one would expect.

**Mr HINE** - I will go to Mr Wilson-Haffenden in a minute. Yes, normally it's due to timing of Budget papers from Treasury, it's just normally a timing issue, nothing else.

**CHAIR** - Even though we're later in the year?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, and just because it's later doesn't mean to say some of the Budget papers - I'll go to Mr Wilson-Haffenden.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In the meantime, Chair, it does say on page 235 that actual data will be published in the agency's annual report, which will be published by 31 October 2021. So believe it or not, the process for the Budget started a few months ago.

**CHAIR** - I understand, but they weren't printed yesterday.

**Mr HINE** - Has that answered your question, Mr Valentine?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I suppose, yes, it has. It's been difficult times; I know it's difficult for everybody, but it just seems with such a small number -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regard to poppy, I do notice that I've got that 130 grams of poppy product was recovered. Maybe we could explain what poppy product is versus poppy capsules. That was the previous year.

**CHAIR** - No, this is poppy products separate measure to this.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's in the annual corporate performance report, July 2021, is that the one you're looking at?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - No, just what we're talking about before was capsules stolen and capsules recovered. Separate to that, which is reported in a different area, is poppy product and 130 grams of poppy product was recovered.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Through the minister, poppy product would be the breakdown of a capsule with the seeds, for example, or it could be a tar that's made out of it when it's being cooked. With the thebaine crops that are now in place, the actual ability to divert them into a

different market is extremely difficult, because the old morphine crops could be changed very easily, whereas the thebaine crops have far too many steps and complications for them to actually be able to be used. This is a really important step that was made a number of years ago to increase the safety to people who felt that they would jump over the fence and try to create a drug out of something that they can't.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's a very toxic product, isn't it?

**Mr HIGGINS** - It is, thebaine crop if they do choose to break it down, and boil it, and drink it, it can kill them.

**CHAIR** - That has happened.

**Mr HIGGINS** - It has happened.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's right. It's interesting that when you look at that corporate data, the corporate performance report for June 2021, that all of those capsules that have been stolen have been in the south, nothing from the north or west. Obviously, there's not too much grown in the west, but in the north, I think there's a fair few poppies grown in the north. It's interesting that there aren't - is it just a matter of there aren't enough resources on the ground to detect this, or? It just seems odd that all of those stolen poppy capsules are in the south.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Through the minister, most people who choose to do this know that there is no value in them actually going into a crop and getting a thebaine crop to make a drug out of it. When we do have diversions, it tends to be by people - because they can't do anything with it, it tends to be odd people that maybe have moved around the state, or are unaware, and still try their luck at actually making a drug that they can use. Now we haven't had any deaths for a number of years now in relation to poppy capsule diversions, which is very important to note, so there are poppy crops grown right around the state, so northwest, north, and the south, also, but it would actually depend on the person that's actually doing it. So in this case here it could be the fact that the individual, who hasn't been detected by the police, is based in the south.

**CHAIR** - My question, if I might, relates to information to visitors to our state. My information is that most of the people who like to hop over the fence are often international visitors who want to take a photo, and get in amongst the pretty poppies, and then think they'll have a souvenir as well. Is there any work with, coming into Tasmania, informing those people that, you know, that they must read the sign. Those crops are not to be accessed and they're certainly not to have a photo opportunity or take a head.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, it's important to also realise that the poppy industry is managed through the Poppy Advisory and Control Board which is overseen by the Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and the Environment. Tasmania Police do liaise with them during the growing season but does play a limited role in poppy security because it is the PACB who is responsible for determining the security measures to be employed by growers. The PACB issues the licences to the growers, so as I said, the security measures aren't to be by the growers.

**CHAIR** - Tasmania Police is left to actually play a role, so I mean they're seeing the end result, but certainly I'll take that up at another place, but there's certainly opportunity I believe

to better inform those people who are not necessarily looking to do damage. They just think it's a photo opportunity and a souvenir opportunity, more often than not.

**Mr HINE** - You raise an important point and with the international borders being closed for some time, but I'm well aware of those tourists that have jumped into the paddock to take a photo which is - you know, whether you're trespassing for a start. So certainly, understand what you're saying and maybe into the future when we hopefully open up our borders again, we can further educate all tourists about (a) the dangers and (b) the protocols.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you have any information from hospitals or other sources of how many people have been admitted with suspected opium ingestion in Tasmania? Do we have a handle on that? Those that have fallen victim to ingesting the product which is a very powerful product.

**Mr HINE** - We don't get called to drug overdoses for a start because of the protocol with Tas Ambulance and ourselves because we want people to get the help that they need. If there is a death obviously the coroner reports on that. I can't remember of any instances where it has been reported to us. But we're really careful about having that information because we want people to get the help they need and not be worried about police getting involved if they have had a drug overdoses or a serious adverse reaction.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Clearly education is the key. I noticed in 1920 there were 2296 poppy capsules stolen and I believe this year 2286. That's up from 1058 in 2018-19, so someone's not getting the message. What's happening in that education space to educate people that these products really are dangerous?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I was a registered nurse when I used to work at the Launceston General Hospital during poppy seasons we'd sadly have young people every year who would who would tragically pass away from liver and kidney failure. It's definitely something that when I went through high school we used to have the drug squad come to our school and educate us.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you do that now? That's what I'm asking.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Is it time to go back?

**Mr VALENTINE** - What's happening from police perspective in terms of educating people in that regard?

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, I'd say yes, we have an ongoing assistance with the education and to actually inform our community. We do have someone sit on the advisory board as well, as well as the signs and educating the community, and before the growing season, to make sure we get the message out there.

Sometimes the message gets lost, as you know, and some people just don't want to get the message anyway. So again, it's education in a lot of the things the policing does, we don't want to be the ones - the ambulance at the bottom of the cliff. We certainly want to be at the top to prevent as well. We'll continue to work with the the Education Department and the

advisory board to continue to get this message out because, as you said, I think we can all recall some really tragic events where young people have died as a result of this.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you for that, minister.

**CHAIR** - The time being 11 o'clock, I will go to 2.3 Fishery Security. Thank you, Ms Armitage.

### **2.3 Fishery Security**

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I note that a number of marine offenders from 2018-19 financial year to 2019-20 has dropped. Can you give an indication about the numbers of offenders for 2020-21 and do you have any idea why the marine offenders might have dropped for the previous year? Do you think it is related to COVID-19 and the fact that people can't fish for that second half?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regard to enforcement activities, vessel inspections at sea, in 2019-20 were 4306. In 2020-21 it's 5556, so there's been more vessel inspections. In regard to marine offenders detected in 2019-20 it's 1135. In 2020-21 it is 1208 but keep in mind that there were more vessel inspection at sea, nearly 1200 more in 2020-21 but maybe more people are behaving themselves for the decrease in numbers detected.

In regard to vessel patrol hours, in 2019-20 there was 6834 patrol marine and rescue services and in 2020-21 in regard to marine rescue services there was 6337 hours; and in regard to district marine services in 2019-20 there was 603 versus in 2020-21 in 608.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - In addition to the detection and management of the marine offences, how does the department manage prevention of marine offences?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I might go the commissioner for that one.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you. I will ask Mr Bodnar to swap over with Mr Higgins as there is a preventative process about dealing with the industry to make sure the industry understands what we do and part of it is about enforcement as well. We play a role as well - as DIPWE well plays a role in relation to, not only recreational fishing but also commercial fishing, but I will hand over to Mr Bodnar to go through about the prevention and then the enforcement aspect.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you.

**Mr BODNAR** - Thank you, through the minister. I think as a commissioner was talking about, part of that is through the stakeholder engagement with the various fishing bodies and also through DIPWE and the other aspect of it is through enforcement. As the minister highlighted there with the number of vessel inspections at sea for 2020-21 compared to the previous financial year, we've seen an increase of 1200 additional inspections. Clearly what we've been able to do through those inspections is get out and sell the message and articulate some of those laws and help educate and guide people as well. I think that's one of those key critical things we've been able to do, even though we've seen a reduction in some of our vessel patrol hours primarily due to COVID-19 in the community.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Fewer people are actually out there on the water?

**Mr BODNAR** - Fewer people out fishing as a result of COVID-19 and obviously there's weather impacts which ebb and flow as well, I think, as we probably all know.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think many people couldn't travel a certain number of kilometres from home. I know that happens in Launceston so they couldn't get to the water.

**Mr BODNAR** - That's correct, yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you.

**Ms PALMER:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you outline the details of the funding which is provided for the larger vessel replacement program and what benefits will this funding provide?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I congratulate and thank our marine police officers because they undertake a very important role as we've heard. There are 32 police attached to marine and rescue services and they are statewide. The 2021-22 Budget provides additional funding of \$2.8 million towards the large vessel replacement program. This takes the total Tasmanian government's investment to \$24.6 million for the program since 2014. They've now signed a contract with a boat builder Park Marine in December 2019 for the design and construction of a new 12 metre fibreglass fast response patrol vessel to replace the PV *Dauntless*. It is undergoing sea trials at the moment and training will be undertaken soon and it will be used by Tasmanian police by the end of the year. It will have no relationship with PV *Fortescue*. We don't want to replace the errors of the past.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You want to avoid the errors of the past you mean.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, we don't want to go down that track again. There's been a lot of work that has gone into these new vessels to make sure that they are fit for purpose for Tasmanian conditions with the construction layout and technical equipment required and a need for fit for purpose operational vessels. The government was pleased to provide the extra funding.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Supplementary Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just for the record, where are they being constructed?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Harbour Marine located at Mornington. We received the tender in December 2019 for the design and construction of the new 12 metre PV *Dauntless*.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you, minister.

**CHAIR** - If there are no further questions, I will move to 2.4, Support for Judicial Services and I intend to break in eight minutes for morning tea. Thank you, Ms Siejka.

## **2.4 Support to judicial services**

**Ms SIEKJA** - I want to follow up on an issue that's come up in previous years around prisoner transport. I understand there was a vehicle for transporting prisoners - a trial to be proposed for transporting prisoners over longer distances in regional and remote areas, I think in relation to specific safety issues that you'd had in Queenstown and Burnie. What is the status of the trial and whether vans are going to be provided for all the identified routes and what sort of time frame and budget allocation is there for this to happen.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. I know that the department has been undertaking a body of work in regard to prisoner transport and making sure that the vehicle is fit for purpose. I know that a long-haul prisoner transport van was custom made and successfully trialled in early 2021 and has recently been approved for implementation within Tasmania police. There is one van currently being utilised within the western district and another two vans due for delivery in November 2021. I am not sure if the commissioner's got further advice.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister. We have been working closely with the police association on this issue as well. In one of the issues we also identified, in Queenstown we have upgraded the cells and continue to upgrade the cells so we don't have to actually transport people to Burnie when we don't need to as well, and also utilising the video facilities to communicate with the court. But on occasions we do need - and I will hand over to Mr Bodnar in a minute - to transport people to court over long distances. So that was the concern raised with us and a legitimate concern about how do we transport people in a van safely. I will hand over to Mr Bodnar.

**Ms SIEKJA** - Long distances yes. Mr Bodnar.

**Mr BODNAR** - Thank you, commissioner. Through the minister. As the minister's spoken about we did undertake a trial earlier this year in relation to the long-haul prisoner transport vans. So that trial commenced in the western district and we trialled a van through Devonport and Burnie for the purposes of transporting prisoners over long distances. From there the particular van that we trialled was sent through to St Helens as well, so we could broaden the scope of that trial and look at the transportation of prisoners from St Helens through to Launceston as well.

As a result of that trial, we sought feedback from members that had actually driven the van and had been exposed to the use of that van throughout those two policing districts. Following on from that with the feedback and consultation and the concept around the long haul prisoner transport van was then referred to a group known as the vehicle reference committee and that's a committee that was implemented around September last year to make sure that when we're looking at introducing new vehicles into our fleet and having consideration of the requirements under the Work Health and Safety Act when you're looking at introducing new plant and equipment, we're engaging and consulting broadly.

We went through that process. It was then considered by the vehicle reference committee going back about two or three months ago now, and then a recommendation was made through to my office that we actually look at implementing some more of these vans into our organisational fleet. What that means is that in addition to the van that we currently have in the western district, we've ordered an additional two vans. One will go to northern district for use for transporting prisoners and a second one will go to western district. Ultimately, we'll end up with three long haul prisoner transport vans in the organisation where they are most needed.

As part of that process as well through the vehicle reference committee, there was the appropriate engagement consultation with the districts concerned. Also, the Police Association of Tasmania and were also supportive of the introduction of these vans as well. I'm actually quite comfortable with the process that we've been through to get this really good outcome for our members and also the community.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So how do you access the passengers in these vans in terms of level of comfort, you know, I don't know how else you can describe it but no doubt it is very important that they're -

**CHAIR** - How much they complain?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, not so much how much they complain but I mean, we've seen examples on the mainland obviously in hot environments and those sorts of things. In terms of air-conditioning, air flow through the van. You know, how do you assess that aspect?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I believe there are guidelines and policies in place to ensure that safety and wellbeing of the remandees, is that right?

**Mr BODNAR** - I can't give you the specifics around the actual criteria we've used to, I suppose, enhance prisoner comfort. But we're quite mindful of the fact that we've got an obligation, when somebody is in our custody, and they're under arrest, and we're transporting that person, there is a clear obligation on us to look after that person's welfare. That includes checking on the people by seeing what they're doing, making sure that they are secure in that environment, and things of that nature.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm thinking of, you're transferring people down through the Elephant Pass or St Marys Pass, very difficult circumstances there. Twisty, people get thrown around. Are they in actually secured seating, single seating, with seatbelts? How are they carried in that regard?

**Mr BODNAR** - I'll have to take advice in relation to the seatbelts, but one of the reasons this issue first raised its head, I suppose, was a number of years ago, through a coronial inquiry in relation to the death of a prisoner being transported; not by our organisation, but by another organisation. That was, I suppose, the key impetus behind looking at what we could do to further enhance the safety of people in our custody. Undoubtedly, the safety, security, and the comfort of prisoners is something we've taken into account. But again, the key thing is around also the safety and security and the comfort of our people as well, as they are on these long-haul prisoner transports.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The nature the van - can you tell me what the seating setup is?

**Mr BODNAR** - I can't tell you specifically. I would have to take some advice in relation to the back of the van for prisoners.

**CHAIR** - All right, thank you. We'll take that question on notice, if you might, minister.

**Mr HINE** - Can I add to that? It's a pod that's been developed from the mainland, and there is the seating arrangements. It's a tight fit, but it's meant to be a tight fit. I think there is



a seatbelt available for the person to use. But it's got to be adjusted, so a person can't do harm to themselves.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I appreciate that complexity.

**Mr HINE** - Also there is air conditioning through it, because many years ago we never had the air conditioning, and so we fixed that. There is CCTV in the back to watch them as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I appreciate that.

**Mr HINE** - So actually it's a module that's been developed for other states, and we've used that module as well. I'm more than happy to show you. Come and have a look at it at some stage.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I just want to make sure that the passenger is taken care of.

**Mr HINE** - It's definitely taken care of. Of course, when people are violent, we've got to take that into account, to get them safely in there, and to make sure their care and safety, as well as the police officer's, is taken care of as well. So that has been through the assessment process, as well as the design rules that we have to follow in Tasmania, too.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - So is that enough response? That cancels that question, minister?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, I think that's enough.

**CHAIR** - The Tas Police support for the Burnie court -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The Department of Justice - \$13.1 million is in the budget for Department of Justice, and that's now - the Department of Justice - and I'd like to acknowledge the fact that Retired Police Association, retired police officers are actually helping out with that initiative.

**CHAIR** - So that frees up police for general policing, and that's making a big difference, so thank you.

I watched the clock for four days here. So, I'm watching now, 11.15am. We will suspend the broadcast for morning tea and resume at, promptly, 11.30am. Thank you. Cup of tea is just outside, I believe. Thank you, everyone.

**The Committee suspended from 11.14 a.m.**

**The Committee recommenced at 11.28 a.m.**

**CHAIR** - Welcome back, minister, and I hope everyone had an opportunity to stretch their legs and grab a cuppa. And I believe that before head onto 3.1, which is Traffic Policing, there is something that the Commissioner would like to clarify.

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, just a couple of issues. First of all, in relation to police officers taking firearms home in country stations, some police officers will have the correct licences but they won't have sanctioned, from a policing department, are safe. So for one's who have got the correct licences, they would be legally allowed to take them home, but a policy issue is no, they can't take them home because you've got to have unloading and loading facilities as well. I just want to clarify that.

And the other thing Mr Valentine asked about, the concern for welfare calls over the last couple of years. If I can read that into *Hansard*:

Concern for welfare in, in 2018-19, we had 8400 calls for concern for welfare. 2019-20 was 8800, and 2020-21 was 9500.'

So the concern for welfare includes mental health, those situations. So over those three years, there's 26 000 disturbances. There was 18 000 in those three years and traffic offences, hooning and those things, there was 15 000. So over the last three years we've seen the concern for welfare. So thank you for allowing me to clarify those two issues.

**CHAIR** - All right, thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So that's probably not needed as question on notice now. Thank you for that, Commissioner.

**CHAIR** - Just let our secretary know that that question that was previously asked has been now answered, so thank you. And now I'll move to 3.1.

### **3.1 Traffic Policing**

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, minister. Noting the recent University of Adelaide Centre for Automotive Safety Research Review of Road Safety Strategy in Tasmania, how does the current approach alleviate the criticism in that document for traffic enforcement in Tasmania?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regard to road safety?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. We're talking about traffic policing, so road safety would be applicable.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I might hand over to the commissioner, because he might be aware of the report.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. No, thank you for that, and we're certainly aware of the report and I'll hand over to Mr Higgins to go into -

**CHAIR** - That's two handballs.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We have a football team here.

**Mr HINE** - I don't know what to comment on that, Chair.

**CHAIR** - You don't need to.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Probably safer not to.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, you're probably right. Road safety is obviously an absolute critical function of policing and traffic policing. We do know we have an unacceptable loss of life on our road and we know we have an unacceptable serious injury situation as well. We know education plays an absolute important role in road safety, as we know road infrastructure and enforcement play an absolutely critical role as well. We also know that police officers who normally would do traffic enforcement have been certainly involved in COVID-19, and the report that you stated actually went back before COVID-19 as well. So to give greater explanation, I'll handover to Mr Higgins.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Thank you, through the minister. Road safety for Tasmania Police is across all our uniform members. So whilst we have our road and public health services and our road safety task force within that, all our uniform members are actually able to, and do, undertake road safety and outputs are quite remarkable considering that I have up to 80 people a day at the moment doing COVID-19 duties as well. So that just puts in perspective how - what an incredible workforce we actually have in this space.

Whilst education is a key to our road safety strategy and our partnership, and I represent the Commissioner on the Road Safety Advisory Council, our partnership there and the educating approach, we align our Tasmania Police messaging with the Road Safety Advisory Council messaging as well, in line with our campaigns. Now, you would have noticed over the last year, if I talk about the last year, we have - and there was a question about random breath tests, I think, earlier as well, so I'll tie that into one.

Random breath tests is a large static site as a strategy we've used over many, many years. It did change through COVID-19, and it changed because the requirements we needed to put on our people to actually set up a site and be COVID-safe; COVID-safe for themselves, for the drivers they were actually intercepting, and for the lines of traffic, neither was tenable at that stage to actually do that. What we actually do is a targeted approach and we're targeting the fatal five. Now, the fatal five, the importance of that is you can see that our outputs have been very similar with a substantial decrease in the number of random breath tests.

People are out there drink and drug driving. There's been more drug drivers captured. Does it mean that there's necessarily more in the community? No. It means that we're targeting it better with the change in legislation a couple of years ago. We can do a roadside test as opposed to taking someone back to the hospital, which could take some hours to actually do in that actual process.

Whilst I have said that all members undertake that, they - most of our uniform vehicles in the, say, 24-hour stations, the country stations, all have the radars with them. So the laser device with them. They can capture - they're a speed detection device. They also do their targeting through policing of the driver behaviours that we clearly find unacceptable in our community.

Now, if we move to our actual road and public order services as a whole and the outputs that we expect as a community. In that space, I can say that our road and public order services have achieved far greater outputs that I think the community can possibly imagine, considering they have been at the airports across the state. So Burney, Devonport, Launceston, Hobart, and

the Spirit of Tasmania twice a day as well doing duties at those to protect our community safe from COVID-19. So it just shows, if you look year on year, how exceptional the outputs have been. But the simple fact is, it's not changing driver behaviour as we should expect in the community.

**Mr WILLIE** - Through the minister, part of that would be presence too, wouldn't it? Obviously 80 police officers a day is significant. That's a presence that's not on our roads. I know anecdotally, you see less police around at the moment, just in my own observations.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes, through the minister -

**Mr WILLIE** - So it's got to have an impact, doesn't it?

**Mr HIGGINS** - you have a greater understanding now how, as a state, we're using our police force to do a number of activities, and COVID-19 is the number one activity for the state at the moment. Our other outputs that we have to keep the community safe, we balance those across all our police officers to be able to perform those functions.

**Mr WILLIE** - The performance measures were mentioned. Is there an explanation why drink driving and drug offences were combined in this year's budget?

**CHAIR** - Page 236.

**Mr WILLIE** - Page 236 in the performance information. There's a footnote.

**CHAIR** - Yes, I've got it down.

**Mr WILLIE** - Footnote 3, performance measures, drink driving offences and drug driving offences have been combined to create a new measure.

**Mr HIGGINS** - All right. We can separate those and give you the statistics on those if need be.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm interested in why they've been combined.

**Mr HIGGINS** - We're looking at that as one of the fatal five, the drug and drink driving as one component there and felt best reporting in that manner.

**Mr WILLIE** - That might help the committee if you could split the data.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I can give you the figures if you want the -

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - drink and drug driving. So with drink driving offenders in 2020-21, it was 1599. In 2019-20, it was 1543. And then for drug driving offenders in 2020-21, it was 2660, and in 2019-20 it was 2658. So it has gone up in both of those measures for 2020-21 versus 2019-20.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. We were talking earlier about the district road and public order service, and I note that in Launceston you have 29; is that right?

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Is it true that it's proposed to move 12 of those officers to achieve the safe staffing levels, and the remainder will be focused on traffic enforcements? So is that true that 12 of those from the 29 will actually go into the safe staffing? So how do you think that will affect the on the road and the traffic policing?

**CHAIR** - Is the minister happy to answer?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Sorry, minister. Yes. Sorry.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Just in regards to Launceston, 15 of our recent graduates in June actually went to Launceston to - as new police officers. So Launceston has had a significant boost in police numbers in June with 15 new graduates.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, that's fine. I'm just talking about the repos and whether 12 are being moved into the safe staffing levels now that will affect the traffic policing.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I was just making the point that -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes. No, no, I understand that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - their numbers have increased.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But I'm just talking about specific areas.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you, and I will hand over to Mr Higgins as well, and I think it's important to note, if we go back 10 odd years ago, or before 2012, we had a separate traffic area and we had a port area and we had a uniform area. And so with the safe staffing levels, we do have to move some resources back into the 24-hour uniform response area, and they can still do traffic policing, public order policing, and general duties policing, so they are still available to do the overall policing, so we're not dropping down the number. But we're also looking at having a greater emphasis with - what we used to do is in a traffic area, highway patrol area, whatever we're going to call it, to concentrate fully on that. So whilst we're not reducing any numbers at all, we're actually, through the government's investment -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So it's not reducing the numbers focusing on road fatalities and serious injury crashes?

**Mr HINE** - Over the years, we've actually increased the focus, you know, whether you're a uniform section, whether you're a plain clothed section, everyone has a focus on traffic policing, and those ones moving back to support our agreement with the police association about safe staffing, they are still absolutely - one of their focuses is traffic policing, to make sure they look at traffic policing, making sure they look at community policing and public order policing, and we'll have a greater emphasis or a returned emphasis of a smaller section on traffic policing. But Mr Higgins might be able to add to that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes, through the minister. That certainly is an option at the moment that's been presented to me to consider, the 12 people coming out of the northern outposts. Likewise in the south here, there's options that I'm considering in relation to the numbers that may need to come back onto Bridgewater, Bellerive, and Hobart.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think Launceston's been understaffed for a number of years, haven't they?

**Mr HIGGINS** - No, I wouldn't - I disagree with that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Right, okay.

**Mr HIGGINS** - I think that it's - I think you mentioned earlier that Launceston are the hardest workers in the state. I disagree. I think that we have an incredibly hardworking police force across the state.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'm not saying they're not hardworking. I'm just saying whether we have enough.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes, I do. We've increased numbers over the last few years as well. So in bringing these people back, so I think it's been a myth that the road and public order services just do traffic work and that the bringing together of the public order teams and the traffic teams in 2012 brought the capability under one group, and at that time it was under one grouping because of the measures in place at that particular point in time. So there are some that do traffic. The road safety task force funded by MOB is dedicated to traffic, and as are some of the other teams as well.

But by refocusing and actually having - let's call it a traffic branch. It may be called something else. A traffic branch. We feel that through myself and the operational commanders we'll be better placed to actually increase that high visibility on the roads and on the - so people can actually see them on the - see our vehicles on the road and our police on the road so we provide that level of deterrence that maybe we're seeing at the moment with our statistics as they currently are.

So in doing this though, we're actually going to increase the number of people on the watch shifts, on the 24-hours. So they will be - have greater capabilities to do public order events, road safety as well, and provide -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So they're your first responders?

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes, as are the road and public order services.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - All right.

**CHAIR** - Is the member finished?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So with 44 officers on duty at any one time from the current 1362, so why is there a need to move the repos members across?

**Mr HIGGINS** - In February last year, we entered into an agreement, and there was permission instruction for the safe staffing levels, which was the number one priority for the police association at the time. And in that, the police association decreed that there would be two and eight per shift. We agreed with that, and to do that staffing, whilst also being able to maintain a level of flexibility for the staff who were in fatigue management and leave, courses, do specialist training, we need more than the current staffing that was allocated there.

By increasing the staff from road public order, the unit in Ravenswood, and putting them under that - the one banner in Launceston watch, in this case - this is happening in the other 24-hour stations too - we'll be able satisfy that instruction that we have and keep out people safe.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Because it's 44 across seven stations, isn't it? It's just across the seven stations, the 44?

**Mr HIGGINS** - No, it's not just 44. So it's two sergeants, eight constables in Launceston, it's one and four at each of Burnie, Devonport, Bridgewater, and Bellerive, and Glenorchy; and two sergeants and seven constables as the minimum staffing on Hobart watch.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - As Jonathan just mentioned the drink driving, could I just add a little question there? Because he did mention it.

**CHAIR** - I'll come back to that. I'll come back to the member for Launceston.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm interested in some of those major traffic accidents that happen, whether or not police do any analysis of wire rope barriers. It's obviously an area that a lot of motorcyclists have a difficulty with, and I've got to declare, I'm actually one of those, but I don't spend as much time on the road these days, on a motorbike. But, yes, so is there any analysis done as to whether or not they are effective? We see some advocates for their removal writing to us, saying they're not effective, and this is why. I'm just interested to know what your feelings are in relation to their effectiveness, and what you've found, minister.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I thank the member for the question. The wire rope barriers are a matter for State Growth and the Minister for Infrastructure. They have their data on those sorts of statistics.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I appreciate that, but in accident investigation, obviously police are involved in accident investigations, so I'm just interested to know what their findings might be in that regard.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll pass it to the commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you, minister. I'm not sure if you saw on the media and YouTube the other day where a mainland vehicle actually took out a heap of wire ropes, where that would have definitely been a fatality. It was captured on a vehicle's CCTV, or its -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, I saw that. Someone said that that was actually for the purposes of providing a video, and it was an orchestrated event, rather than an actual event. I don't know what information you've got. Was it - I think even an Outlander or something like that, an SUV?

**Mr HINE** - It probably is one of the many demonstrations where the vehicle would have gone on the wrong side of the road by hitting the wire rope barriers, and that person was arrested as a result of it. Our accident or crash investigators investigate every crash, and they'll decide and put all the findings to the coroner. But I have to say, we have lots of different evidence where it has actually saved someone's life by not crossing on to the wrong side of the road. We know head-on crashes can and most likely will involve a fatality, and we've had some sad crashes just recently, where head-on has involved a fatality as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No one wants those.

**Mr HINE** - No. I understand, from the motorcyclist situation as well, very few people get up and walk away from a motorbike crashing into a wire rope. But our certainly anecdotal evidence, that our crash investigator and police officers go to, has absolutely prevented a fatality.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you have any statistics on motorcycle accidents and wire road barriers, where in fact someone has been seriously injured or indeed lost their life in Tasmania?

**Mr HINE** - State Growth would actually have those statistics, and would be able to pull those statistics out from a crash report provided either to the Coroner or through -

**Mr VALENTINE** - So you don't hold those statistics as a department?

**Mr HINE** - We would certainly have access to those statistics, but State Growth are responsible for collating those statistics.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So you can't provide us with -

**Mr HINE** - It's State Growth information, so it's -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, I realised that, but it's also investigative information that the police have, and I'm just wondering whether you collate it. If you don't collate it, then I suppose I'm chasing a dead-end burrow. But that's what I want to know; do you collate that?

**Mr HINE** - It's actually collated by State Growth. We put the form in, they collate it. We have access to it, but they collate it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - All right, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can I just have a follow up on the -

**CHAIR** - A supplementary.



**Ms ARMITAGE** - A supplementary. Would you consider the same result, though, from the concrete barriers? I have people coming to me as well, particularly motorcycle riders, about the wire - and the way I understand it, it's State Growth, but they say that the concrete barriers actually provide more protection. The same for cars. At the end of the day, it's probably cheaper, because it's there for longer, and it doesn't need the constant working on them. Would you find the same - if there was a concrete barrier, that it would provide the same protection for cars and particularly motorcycles?

**Mr HINE** - I think it's a really good question, and you're getting into an engineering type of field, which is beyond my expertise. But I suppose from a police -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They tell me they bounce off it, as opposed to hitting the poles.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, and I think that's an engineering type of aspect. I suppose my aspect is about having any sort of barrier, and the wire rope barrier - and I think it was Sweden that they were first trialled. It's about keeping two vehicles possibly doing 110 kilometre an hour, with the 220 kilometre an hour impact speed, where not many are going to survive, keeping those apart. Certainly, from our point of view, we have seen numerous instances where it's kept them apart, and therefore stopped a serious or fatal crash. In relation to a cement barrier - this is a wire barrier, and that's beyond my expertise, and that would be an engineering or State Growth -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, that's fine. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - So would the Road Safety Advisory Council look at that type of issue, wire versus concrete? Is that something that the Road Safety task force - would the member make a reference it to that committee?

**Mr HIGGINS** - I'm sorry, I'm not sure I understand the question.

**CHAIR** - Would the Road Safety Advisory Council look at the issue of wire ropes versus concrete, and if so, would member -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The Assistant Commissioner is actually a member on the Road Safety Advisory Council.

**CHAIR** - Would they look at that reference?

**Mr HIGGINS** - That would be a question for the road safety branch within State Growth - the secretaries and so forth for Road Safety Advisory Council. It is certainly things that are considered within that branch.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can I -

**CHAIR** - Supplementary?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. Through the minister - the commissioner just said that he had seen a number of examples where traffic had been kept separately. Have you seen anywhere it hasn't? I've heard some criticism that there is give in the wire, and that the oncoming traffic can actually go into the opposite lane.

**Mr HINE** - I'm not personally aware of any, but I've certainly seen - and we've all seen the YouTube clips where people have actually - with the momentum and the force have actually gone over. I know some are higher than others. So, again that's an engineering aspect, but no doubt there are examples where people - it hasn't had the full effect, but it certainly has had an effect.

**Mr WILLIE** - Just a follow-up question, minister. When you record a traffic incident, do you record if there was a barrier in place, and what the construction of that barrier was, and the contributing factors in the report?

**CHAIR** - You can say yes and yes.

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, the shorter answer is, yes, that's recorded on a form that is then given to State Growth for collating.

**Mr WILLIE** - And so that data is collated, and then used to inform infrastructure rollouts?

**Mr HINE** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - So there would be a document somewhere in government about the performance of those wire rope barriers?

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, definitely a State Growth issue, and a traffic engineering issue.

**CHAIR** - The member for Launceston, then Hobart, then we're out of this area. Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair. You mentioned previously, when we were talking about drug and drink testing, and just wondering about medicinal marijuana, how that affects - when you pull someone over. I know I've spoken to a number of general practitioners who are concerned about prescribing medicinal marijuana, because they're not sure it would be - with someone that's pulled up, that they've got it in their system. Is it provided they actually have a prescription, then they won't be charged for drug driving? Can they drive with it, because of a lower THC?

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, yes, you're exactly right. If medicinal cannabis is prescribed, that is a defence under the act. Therefore, you're not charged with drug driving. But the additional charge, if you are so affected by prescribed medicinal cannabis, or any illicit drugs, where it's prescribed -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They add a little bit to it.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. As in, so it's like anything; your medication might be prescribed to you, but if you're then driving whilst under the influence of a drug, as in, you don't have proper control of your vehicle, that is an offence.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So who would determine that? Because if they've got a prescription, and they say they've only taken what they were prescribed, and they're pulled over - so then the officer would say, 'Well I don't think' - make you do the - the walk the line, or whatever you do these days, or is there a test for how is in your system?

**Mr HINE** - You've actually hit the nail on the head, as in, you can be what we call drive under the influence of a drug or alcohol under the prescribed limit. So therefore, if you haven't got proper control of your vehicle, and that's the manner of driving or any witnesses, or when the person gets out of the car, how they're reacting as well. So that's all part of the evidence. But I think the shorter is, in relation to, if it's prescribed medicinal cannabis, by a GP, you cannot be charged. It is a defence under the Act. You cannot be charged with drug driving.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It would be an interesting one before the courts, won't it, when the first one gets up there. There was one more question, because you wouldn't let me ask it last time, that was in this area, and that was to do with the additional COVID-19 tasks that police are not doing now. I remember you saying -

**CHAIR** - And I did. I said, when we get to traffic -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That I could ask it. I'm just wondering, with all the additional work that they're doing - and we know the police are doing an awful lot of additional work, particularly with the COVID-19 hotels, and as you mentioned, down at the ports and everything. So what tasks are actually missing out?

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, basically there is - each district has the ability to task their various resources to do certain things and not to do certain things. It's a matter for each district to have a look at. For example, as we know, we had a taskforce set up in the northern district to look at fire arms control. So therefore, they took some resources off various areas to actually concentrate on that.

It's very hard to actually say, 'You're not doing that, and you're doing that,' because when someone calls up for police assistance, they need that police assistance. And then it's up to the supervisor to say, 'Sorry, we can't do that, because this is a higher priority job.' I understand the question, and it's something we continue to grapple with, but we certainly - from a district point of view, the district commanders could have greater emphasis on some things compared to others. But it comes down to the supervisory -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Working out which is a priority.

**Mr HINE** - What is a priority. As an example, if you're in a country area, and someone has had - we often letterbox stolen or damaged, and the police officer has other priority jobs, they can go there as part of the community reassurance, to actually visit the person.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In 2021, Tasmania Police actually detected 30 447 high-risk traffic offenders, which is 2447 more than was set in the operational performance target for the year. It demonstrates that they're on the roads.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It's a really important follow on from the marijuana one, just to ask, does the Department consider the current laws relevant, or will they be considering asking just to amend them in line with other states, where a prescription is not a defence? So, you're aware

that in some other states, a prescription for medicinal marijuana is not a defence, and you consider in Tasmania it is a defence, and you're happy with that, or will you consider asking Justice, depending on the charges that come up, or the amount that is detected?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So under the Controlled Access Scheme, changes to the Controlled Access Scheme have been made to be consistent with the models adopted in other jurisdictions. If a person is lawfully using medicinal cannabis under the CAS, then that person does not commit an offence in respect of driving.

**Mrs ARMITAGE** - No, but I'm just asking, because I believe that in some other states, they're now saying a prescription is not a defence.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, we've already made our changes to the legislation, so that's -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's how it is at the moment.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The Controlled Access Scheme has made it so it's not illegal to be driving with a prescription drug. However, if it is impairing your ability to drive, then -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But we are talking about medicinal marijuana.

**CHAIR** - The status quo remains.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - The member for Hobart, final question in this area. We're already 35 minutes behind scheduled time. Let's move it along.

**Mr VALENTINE** - All right, I get the message. I understand that it's possibly State Growth that has carriage of this, but you see traffic speed signs on all sorts of construction sites; after hours, 40 kilometres an hour, not a worker in sight. And people get very frustrated, and of course exceed the speed limit in the end. Do you have any involvement at all in terms of - you are the upholder of the - you've got to make sure the law is upheld? But are each of these signs that you see on highways where there's construction in place, are they legal signs? Do you know what happens in that space? Because a lot of people get a bit frustrated with that.

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, yes, I am. We've all seen those signs. And the first answer is, if it's lawfully erected, it's legal. We also liaise with State Growth, who then liaise with the contractors about signs. If our people see something of that nature, or we get a complaint, we then pass it to State Growth, who then work with their contractors to make sure that is reduced. Sometimes we also see - and again, this is a State Growth issue - we see signs where it's the condition of the road is why a speed restriction sign is up. If we're going to do enforcement of a work area around a roadworks which is - as we know, is really important.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, it is important. It's very important for the workers.

**Mr HINE** - Exactly. We're all in agreement on that. So if our people - when they do go and enforce those speeds they'll work with the contractor, make sure the right speed signs are up, and before they conduct those speed enforcements. But if we see instances, as you described, we will actually go to State Growth and they'll work with their contractors. I know

there's a really good liaison there or if we receive a complaint through the public we'll deal with State Growth who then have that really good relationship with their contract.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, that's all right. Just wanted to know whether Tas Police were involved, anyway. Thank you.

#### **4.1 State emergency services**

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Moving on now to 4.1: State Emergency Services. Thank you, Ms Palmer.

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, would you please provide the committee with details of the fire and emergency services volunteer requirement teams and secretariat.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Chair, just to interrupt, because the State Emergency Services also incorporates the Tasmania Fire Service, we actually need to invite more committee members to the table and do a switch in and out, please.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We have moved to output group 4. Thank you. There's a spare chair on the end if you'd like to bring one around or move one up slightly. We are practising some sort of social distancing, but it's not always easy to have it 100 per cent.

Thank you, minister. Would you like to introduce your team at the table.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Thank you, Chair. I'd like to introduce our new Chief Officer, Dermot Barry; Jeff Harper, acting Deputy Chief Officer; and Bruce Byatt, Deputy Chief Officer; and also Andrew Lea, Director of the State Emergency Service.

**CHAIR** - We'd love to offer our congratulations on your appointment, Dermot.

**Mr BARRY** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - All the best, and welcome to your first Estimates process. Good luck.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, he's done a fantastic job since he's arrived in the state, too. He's been exceptionally busy and, yes, budget in the first month.

**CHAIR** - Okay, thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So, thank you for your question. Tasmania can be very proud of the magnificent contribution of our emergency management volunteers and their dedication to what they do. We have about 5600 volunteers across TFS and the SES and I thank each and every one of them from the bottom of my heart. The last few months I've had the privilege of attending SES headquarters, regional headquarters. There are 600 SES volunteers across 36 volunteer units who respond to floods, storms, road accidents, search and rescue, and also the 5000 TFS volunteers that we have across 224 volunteer brigades right across Tasmania.

To support our amazing volunteers, we are providing \$2.4 million to employ staff to recruit, retain and support our volunteers, especially so that our volunteers are there to support their local, regional and rural communities across the state. These roles are being advertised

and there will be regional volunteers, stakeholder engagement officers in the north, south and north west. Administrative support and coordinator, but the most important thing about it is supporting our volunteers for strategy, training, recruitment and most important of all, of retention, and it just reflects the enormous value that we place in our volunteers, this extra support that we're providing.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Thank you. My question is around the recruitment and retainment of the SES volunteers, and I just - if you could give me perhaps some data around how many SES officers are recruited each year and how many of them are actually retained, sort of, after six months or after 12 months.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regard to SES volunteers, we have - there's about 600 volunteers and I'll ask Mr Lea if he can provide you with more answers to that question.

**Mr LEA** - Thank you, minister. Last year - over the last 12 months we recruited 114 new volunteer members and the average age of those volunteers is 45.6 and increasing slowly. I'm pleased to say that the percentage of female volunteers is going up. It's up to 32 per cent at the moment and we've got some strategies in place to build on that. Our target is to keep over 600 volunteers - active volunteers within our organisation. They do a fine job.

**Ms SIEJKA** - For clarification, I was keen to know how many - so, for example, those 114 new recruits, how many of those were retained after six months and 12 months, and if it's not possible to do it just now, perhaps looking at the previous couple of years as a comparison?

**Mr LEA** - All I can say at the moment is our - the number of our volunteers has remained fairly static at between 600 and about 650. Of course, we get an injection of volunteers after big events, of course, but natural attrition sees that drop down again to around about this level, so -

**Ms SIEJKA** - Is there any data kept on, sort of, exit interviews or anything like that for people that might sign up following something, like you mentioned, and then don't stay the course? Like, what's the process because I know it is - it's a challenge to retain volunteers.

**Mr LEA** - Yes. We don't do exit interviews with every person who leaves. We do with staff, but not the volunteers at the moment. What we do do is we survey the volunteers periodically to have a look at their motivations for staying and their motivations for joining, and that's remained fairly consistent over - or since 2002 when we started these surveys.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - We have more volunteers this year than what we did last year, too, and you have to also remember that because our volunteers live in regional and rural areas, sometimes the reason why a volunteer may no longer be a volunteer, that tragically they have passed away as well, so - because some of our volunteers that I've met around this state have been into their 80s and - yes. So we've got to remember sometimes the reason why there might be fluctuation is not necessarily that they've left; it's because they've passed away, too.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Minister, will any sort of data or this new body of work that's looking at the volunteer recruitment and having new employees - will this sort of aspect be incorporated into that body of work so that you have a better understanding of why people sign up and then, you know, can't stay for whatever reason? Is that something that will be considered?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - As I was just saying a little while ago, it's the \$2.4 million that we're putting in to support our volunteers in both the Tasmanian Fire Service, as well as the SES is there to recruit, support and retain our volunteers, and from the bottom of my heart I just want to thank our volunteers, and quite often in communities such as our honourable chair's, they're people who are often fire volunteers as well as SES volunteers, and some of them might have been ambulance volunteers, too. So it's - they do an amazing, wonderful work and we - our community certainly owes them a debt of gratitude, and that's why we want to put in place not only the \$2.4 million to support the volunteers in that way, but we're giving them also about \$500 000 a year grants program as well as \$2 million towards better personal protective clothing because we want to make sure that they have the right equipment and gear for the situations that they do face each and every day.

**Ms SIEJKA** - On the demographics that were mentioned about the - I think you said the average age was - yes, and of course, also that you just mentioned that older volunteers have probably given a lifetime to it as well. What were the age demographics across the age range across the volunteers and given that information, what are the expected retirements because there would be some people that have volunteered and stayed committed for a really long time in the old age group?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I can give you some demographics if you'd like.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So, in regards to the breakdown of number, age and gender of current SES volunteers as at 17 August, in the southern region there's 249 active members, 169 males, 80 females; the average age is 44.35 years and the average years of service is 8.65. In the northern region, active members - it's 187; of those, 142 is male, 44 are female; the average age is 48.7 years and the average years of service is 8.16 years. In the north west there's 186 members - active members; 112 are male, 75 are female. The average age is 43.59 and the average years of service is 7.37. So state-wide totals are 622 active members; 423 of those are male; 199 are female; the average age is 45.55 years and the average years of service is 8.06.

**CHAIR** - Can we have the Tas Fire Service as well or have they been a separate area? I think it's important. They're both, as you said, equally important and often have dual membership.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Do we know how many are both - the members of both areas?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - No, you're right. I'm just trying to we don't have the same level of data. I've got - the total volunteers for the state are volunteer fire fighters. Total volunteers as at 17 August 2021 is 4920. Of those volunteer fire fighters are 4000. Volunteer fire support is 920. It's 20 per cent female versus - and 80 per cent male. Of the volunteer - and the average age is 44.7 years for the total volunteers for the fire service. 111 have - of our volunteers across the state are both TFS and SES.

**CHAIR** - I just want to move to an area that's been raised with me around fire-affected areas, and the government promised some funding to improve communications, like for mobile and internet services, and this was particularly after the east coast fires. Are those programs or projects still in place or has the government taken a focus away? And we know the COVID-19 answer, but this is still an important area, particularly given the high level of fuel load that

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we have in our communities at this point in time. Some days I don't think it's stopped raining for weeks.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I know that we have in place the Tas Alert system, so I might hand over to our new chief officer.

**Mr BARRY** - I'll answer quickly the little bit I know about it, but I'm going to defer to one of my deputies, but I do know we have the Tas GOM project going on now which will establish a government radio network with significant enhanced capability for our volunteers not only where they have greater cover, but they'll be able to change between the P25, which is essentially digital-based radio, and also go to HF or VHF in different areas. Now, that'll work seamlessly, so they won't know, and that'll automatically default to whatever radio frequency they need to enable them to make better communications. But also because of the complexity of the system, it allows them to create sub-talk groups and things like this, so we can have better command and control at the scene of fire and other emergencies. The maps I've seen of the coverage when it's complete will give greater coverage for our volunteers as well. So when they're out in more remote and regional areas they'll still have that same sort of level of coverage.

**CHAIR** - Yes. You have two members of the Public Works Committee here, so they're all over it.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - We did the Tas GRN together.

**Mr BARRY** - We did. Three members.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - That's right. Former member.

**CHAIR** - But was there some additional information particularly around that Mangana in the Break O'Day area?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So just, Chair - just in regards, the TFS uses many different communication channels such as websites, social media, face to face, emergency alert messaging system, mainstream media and, of course, our national emergency broadcast, our ABC local radio. The TFS's website also has specific pages, including alert lists, alert map pages, firm at registered burns, evacuation centres, nearby safer places, fire boundary polygons and community protection plans. They're also going to be doing another upgrade of the TFS website as well, but there's lots of things that they are doing, but I'm not sure if Break O'Day Mangana -

**CHAIR** - Who will know the answer for sure.

**Mr HARPER** - Yes, about three or four years ago TFS initiated a connectivity program with our brigades, every region identified the high priority operational brigades where we can run operational teams to protect the community and set instant management teams up. So particularly in the northeast we have government Wi-Fi and installations at St Marys, Scottsdale, St Helens, Winnaleah, as well as improved Telstra connectivity through the northeast, and those programs are continuing to roll out around the regions on a yearly basis. The Commonwealth also runs a program where they've supported NBN connectivity in isolated areas, which we need in identified areas around the west coast and the southeast at the moment.



**CHAIR** - Minister, can I advise you that if there's a fire on the weekend there'll be no service in Winnaleah because Derby takes it all. There's some more work to do there, but that's not a question, that's a statement, so, we know we don't have those here, so. And also, I want to ask about the Red Hot Tips program, \$4 million in 2021, and \$4 million in 2021-22, so is that on target, if you like.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Red Hot Tips is doing really well, it's a government initiative that has been incredibly successful in engaging, educating, and supporting, and assisting our rural landholders, including farmers, to understand how to manage bushfire risk on their properties. It's a very important tool to do planned burning, and since August 2020, landholders under the initial 595 000 Red Hot Tips program have completed 197 planned burns, covering 4300 hectares of privately managed land, and six registration events are being held with 52 participants have attended burn plan training workshops, and seven demonstration burns have been conducted with 96 participants undertaking hands on planned burning, and due to its success we've now committed a further \$2.5 million to continue this great program.

**CHAIR** - Okay and will that amount add to the \$17.6 million that's been allocated to that program since its initiation.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - With planned burning and everything else we've put \$55 million towards burns costs in Tasmania since 2014.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms PALMER** - Minister, I wanted to expand on your comment just then and ask for you to outline some details about fuel reduction programs in Tasmania, and how it is keeping Tasmanians safe.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I thank the member for the question, we believe our fuel reduction program is nation leading, because it does take a 10-year blind strategic risk-based approach to fuel reduction. Last year we completed 188 fuel reduction burns across nearly 35 000 hectares, and on top of the \$55 million we've invested since 2014 we've also funded two new mitigation crews and 12 additional staff with the funding investment.

In this Budget we're providing a further \$2.5 million to support mechanical clearing, and the 2021 fuel reduction program is underway with 175 fuel reduction burns being undertaken as of 1 June 21, treating nearly 10 150 hectares with 56 of these undertaken by local government, private forest companies, and contractors. We have 200 more fuel reduction burns in the books ready to go if the conditions are right, but it's been going for seven years and it's done very well because over 1023 strategic bushfire risk reduction activities have been completed encompassing over 140,420 hectares with 25,868 of those on private land.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Another important area, you talked about the volunteers, can you give me some indication, if you keep data on those volunteers that access support for health and wellbeing, particularly where there's been perhaps issues around a particular brigade, or area, or group.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So the health and wellbeing material that I put on the table earlier today, our volunteers can access that health and wellbeing program, so they can do the MyPolls,

they can access all the materials through there, and if they need psychological or counselling services they can get that. They can also get nutritional services, they can access the same benefits of that program as a career firefighter, or as a police officer, so that is done through that program.

**CHAIR** - Do you keep numbers on those who access that?

**Mr BODNAR** - No that would be through Matt, unless -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I think that data is confidential because I think in the conversations that I've had previously with our deputy chief, the numbers involved, they don't like to outline the numbers because of the risk of stigma, because the numbers are very small, and we don't want to identify who the people may be, and the regions they are.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, that was the same answer we got from Tas Police, so I wasn't surprised, but you always need to ask it. So if there are no other questions in that area, I'll move to 4.2, which is the state security and rescue operations. So do we need to have any changes at the table or are people happy to sit around and stay around. I shouldn't say sit around, stay around. Thank you very much, gentlemen.

In regard to this particular area, and it's an important area, I note on table 8.6 on page 237, there's been a slight increase in the number of search and rescue operations, and I'm just interested in whether the 2021 target, and obviously it hasn't been updated because of the timeliness of the budget, did we have any updated figures on that, and also there has always been I think you could say some community discussion around whether people who get themselves into some of those situations should pay, or should fund some of these rescue operations, so again minister, I'm interested in numbers on track, and whether there's been ever some discussion with your government around some sort of contribution by those who need to access these services.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So the actual number of search and rescue operations in 2021 was 326 operations.

**CHAIR** - That's quite an increase.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - And the number of exercises managed was 14, and the total helicopter hours was 1120.

**CHAIR** - Slightly down, and the second question in regard to contribution.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Contribution, that would have to be a government decision on that one I reckon.

**CHAIR** - So has there been any discussions?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It's confidential, so I can't outline government discussions.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Have there been any discussions with that particular department around, I suppose, the impact that these additional number of search and rescue operations put on those departments.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - But I think it's the case that most people when they set out, whether it's on a bush walk, or in a boat, don't intend to ever be rescued, so it's something that, you know, I do a lot of bush walking and I carry, you know, my personal locative beacon, but it's something that I'd like to have the reassurance that I set off well equipped that in case I do have an accident and hurt myself that there will be somebody there to come rescue me.

**CHAIR** - And obviously the not quite as many total helicopter hours, so can we have a breakdown of what they are actually for, is that available or is that data that's not necessarily on hand and we take it on notice.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, we've certainly got through the minister those numbers available, and I'll hand over to Mr Bodnar.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Just a break down of what area, whether it's bush walking, boating, mountain biking, whatever that might be, thank you.

**Mr BODNAR** - I don't have those specific - down to that specific level at this stage, sorry, Chair, but certainly from a search and rescue, law enforcement, and flight crew training, Tasmania perspective, I can provide those figures to the committee now.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, I'll make a note of that.

**Mr BODNAR** - From an ambulance Tasmania perspective, 345 hours for 2021. Flight crew training, 273 hours, law enforcement, 80 hours. And then the search and rescue element that the minister spoke about, totalling 1113 flying hours.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you have any regional breakdown on that, out of interest?

**Mr BODNAR** - No I don't, at this stage.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So they could be coming from anywhere in the state, to say the royal for an emergency, you know, neurosurgery or whatever it might happen to be. Or do they go to the LGH as well as Northwest regional.

**Mr HINE** - That's definitely a question for ambulance Tasmania, they control where they go to, and due to the medical side of things, and we do the search and rescue side of things.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Any other questions members in this area?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well just in relation to staffing levels, how many of your staff are actually involved in that area, and the sort of training that you give them, and then I believe it's comprehensive and you might like to sort of inform us of that.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, we have marine and rescue services right across the state, and also, we have part time search and rescue people as well, and Mr Bodnar can go through some of those other aspects, but they are well trained, they have various training days, and they do an absolutely amazing job on a part time basis as well as a full-time basis. But can I say also the SES volunteers that assist in any search and rescue operation is an absolute must for us to assist our search and rescue, because the Tasmania Police has the primacy - sorry, Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. Keep them on the ground.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. So I can - I'm not sure if we've got the figures available now for how many search and rescue people are in Marine Rescue.

**Mr BODNAR** - We've actually got 32 people attached to Marine Rescue in the southern part of the state throughout southern Tasmania. There are search and rescue part-time operatives that work out of northern and western policing districts as well. So that's in a part-time capacity. In relation to the helicopter crew, we have 11 police members that crew the helicopter. They obviously undertake a series of competencies each year in relation to operations, such as night winching activities, helicopter water rescue activities, roping activities and things of that nature. There are certain competencies that our members must achieve, to make sure that they're safe. Ultimately, there are requirements, as we all appreciate, under the Work Health and Safety Act, to make sure that our people are given the right training to keep them safe, performing this significant body of work that they do in the community.

**Mr VALENTINE** - How many hours of training would a typical search and rescue person in the helicopters have?

**Mr BODNAR** - I'd have to clarify the exact numbers they have, but what I can say is there are a number of specific competencies that they need to achieve each year to make sure they're up to the standard required to operating one of those helicopters.

**Mr VALENTINE** - All right.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Move now to the capital investment program. The member for Launceston.

### **Capital Investment Program**

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair. I have a question with regard to the \$7 million for the refurbishment of the 43-year-old Launceston police headquarters. Just wondering where that's at. I know it's obviously behind schedule, but, obviously, it was announced to enhance community service delivery by modernising the facility to make it fit for purpose. So, minister?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. In regards to the Launceston Police Station, it's a \$7 million investment. I know in the Budget chapter that it does state that it might be pushed out, but we're actually going to be bringing it forward. So we expect that it will be finished, I believe, probably by the end of 2022. It's just quite a - a lot will be done, in regards to the Launceston Police Station. We'll be refurbishing the station. It's already provided a new lift, and it's going to be doing IT upgrades and a few other things there.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So does that money include maintenance and recreation upgrades as part of the \$7 million? Is that included in that?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - There's roofing works, mechanical services upgrades, replacement, rooftop generator. And I know that there's a few other things there too. So it's a -

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**Ms ARMITAGE** - I've got a list. Yes. But is there an annual maintenance program to do those normal things? So that \$7 million could actually be just kept for the enhancement? Practical enhancements?

**Mr HINE** - Yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So do you normally keep the annual maintenance program up, as opposed to, you know, the roofing and the other improvable - or other repairs. Should that not be coming out of a maintenance program, as opposed to the \$7 million?

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, and then to Mr Higgins as well. Yes, we do have an annual maintenance budget, as such, but compared to upgrading lifts, dealing with asbestos issues, making sure the roof is okay, they are well beyond the annual maintenance budget. The annual maintenance budget is about repairing plumbing, water plumbing, hot water cylinders - of that nature. So that \$7 million is a significant investment by the Government into refurbishing and, basically, making a lot of things that need replacing - as in, lifts - and we all know they are expensive - and roofs and most things. So it is an absolutely welcome investment in the Launceston Police Station as well. So Mr Higgins can actually go through a few other things - where we are at the moment.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So what you're actually doing with that \$7 million. And do you believe that \$7 million will be enough? And what's going to happen, actually, if it blows out? If the cost blows out, where will - you will find the extra funds?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I also meant to add that it was also providing a custody suite as well. So it is IT and upgrades, but -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But perhaps if Mr Higgins could just let me know what they are.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Through the minister. So the original scoping - I guess we'll call it a wish list that was done by northern district - was far greater than our budget would actually allow, and, you know, rescoping - we looked at the most critical things we need to do to enhance that station. So as the minister said, some of those things have included the lifts, which will be ordered. All the toilet systems to be done - all the toilet suites to be done through the spine of the building, which have original - they're very much original from when the station was built. And that's on each floor, so right through to level 2 in that case.

The custody suite itself will allow a - let's call it a sterile corridor, for want of a better term, that will go between - so people going to the remand centre can actually go to the remand centre without going through the police station. So just through a closed-in corridor to get into the remand centre for that side. The other side of the custody will be the charge area, the laneway where there's holding cells, the BAS - breath analysis rooms, and some changes to the customer service area downstairs on the ground level as well. So with the \$7 million, we're well underway with the plan in there with the architects, to look at a request for tender in the near future, and that will -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Did you say you're enhancing the forensic capability as well?

**Mr HIGGINS** - No.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think that was going to be part of the originally plan, wasn't it?

**Mr HIGGINS** - Some things that we looked at were forensics as well. We've looked a number of things, including prosecution areas and so forth as well, but we've looked at what our most critical areas are and to get the greatest enhancement for the staff with what's available.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Sorry, our projected finish time is likely to be -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The end of 2022. Yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - In 2022. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - All right. Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I realise we're short on time, so I'll -

**CHAIR** - Yes. So the member for Rosevears.

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you very much. Minister, can you outline the amount that is budgeted for the delivery of the Bridgewater Police Station and why this is important for this community?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I thank the member for her question. We are recruiting an extra 308 police officers to make it the largest establishment Tasmania's ever had, we need more room for our police officers too, to be accommodated in. In regard to the Bridgewater Police Station, this is a \$12.5 million project, and \$6 million will be provided towards this project in this Budget. This station operates on a 24/7 roster and has six sergeants and 33 constables, but they will be receiving an additional eight police officers, including two additional officers - so as well as two additional officers next year.

So that's going to be an additional 10 police officers that will be going to the Bridgewater Police Station, which is why we need to build a better and bigger facility than what is there now. The good thing is that the police officers that have already gone to Bridgewater have already had an impact on crime; crime has decreased by 9.1 per cent in the Bridgewater division in 2021, when compared to the 2019-20 data. So the new police officers are having a good impact there already.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Member for Hobart.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just a very quick one. Volunteer brigade equipment upgrades - do you have a list of where those upgrades are going to happen?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - We'll have to bring forward -

**CHAIR** - It's always a moving feast here.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. This is a -

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's like playing draughts.

**CHAIR** - We don't put the line items in order either. It's whoever prepares the Budget papers.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The question was about volunteer brigade equipment upgrades. Can you give us a list of where they're going to be upgraded?

**CHAIR** - We have \$2 million allocated in the Budget, over the forward Estimates.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Only just recently, that the acting deputy chief did meet with the volunteer brigades and to allocate the grant funding towards those volunteer brigades, because I saw them in Launceston before they had their meeting. But, yes, all the brigades can apply towards the funding. And there is a rotation that does happen with the funding for that, but I will pass it on to the chief officer.

**CHAIR** - So it'll be equitable across all of the brigades?

**Mr BARRY** - So, yes, is the short answer, but there's a committee that administers it. They meet and there's representatives from the different volunteer associations as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Across the state?

**Mr BARRY** - And they prioritise - yes. They prioritise how that money's going to be spent. But it is equitable, in the sense that all the volunteers have an opportunity to apply. And they do track who got what over the years, so they tend to try and share it evenly.

**CHAIR** - All right. So 2024-25, we'll see all of those brigades receive the necessary equipment.

**Mr LEA** - Through the chair. If it's operational equipment, that's provided by TFS. It's not through the grants program. The grants program gives them an opportunity to have additional items that they might need available to them. There's a pre-set list of those items that they can -

**CHAIR** - Like a new barbecue?

**Mr LEA** - They can have a new barbecue, if that's what they wish. That's then overviewed by that committee. So, very clearly, TFS provides their operational equipment necessary to do their job. This is about giving them an opportunity to do other things. That does include things such as radios and defibrillators, but also barbecues and -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Raising funds, no doubt.

**Mr LEA** - And other opportunities.

**CHAIR** - Yes. But it's the come and try days.

**Mr LEA** - Yes.

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**CHAIR** - Unless you're going to have a barbecue to entice people - you're not going to get me to turn up without a barbecue.

**Mr LEA** - So, through the minister, some have bought fridges.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Chair, just to add further information, the grant program - because there's 224 TFS volunteer brigades, a notional maximum of \$7700 per brigade over the four-year program is used as a guide. So applications can be submitted also as joint or single applications and considered by the grants committee. And in the SES, the 36 SES volunteer units can apply for a grant of \$8000. So -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just want to get a list.

**CHAIR** - Yes. And we're fully supportive.

**Mr BARRY** - And just to add to the minister, if I could - but we also make the effort to reach out to brigades who don't make submissions, to find out whether, one, they're just happy and they're not intending or, or some aren't so sure of the process or how to do it. So there's a proactive part to it as well, to ensure an even distribution.

**CHAIR** - All right. I'll be looking for the list, so I can contact my -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I can read out a -

**CHAIR** - We might table the list, if that's fine.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, I've just got a list of things that they've actually asked for - the sort of types of equipment to - not yet down to the actual brigade.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just where the allocations are happening. That was interesting.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, every brigade has an opportunity, over the four years of the program.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. But with this - okay.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. So every brigade -

**Mr VALENTINE** - You're saying the \$2 million - I appreciate that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes.

**Mr HARPER** - I sit on the panel that our volunteer runs, but I sit on the panel as the executive. We had a committee meeting three weeks ago. We're down to approximately 10 or 11 brigades in the state that haven't put a grant process in. So all the other brigades have had their contribution. We've distributed approximately \$1.3 million through that. We're in our last year of the initial four-year component, and what we're going to do is hold a specific round for those brigades that haven't come forward, and we'll work directly with them, to provide them the opportunity to get that. For TFS, it was \$7,700 per brigade. And the SES distributed



theirs in a different manner and through a different process. But to have only 10 brigades out of in excess of 200 not receive anything through that grant process so far is a very good result.

**Mr VALENTINE** - All right.

**CHAIR** - All right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So it's right across the board.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

### **State Fire Commission**

**CHAIR** - We will now move to the State Fire Commission. So who do you need at the table? Thank you. I'll move straight to Mr Willie. I believe that you have a preamble.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - I hope it's not too long.

**Mr WILLIE** - It provides some background, though. Minister, the devastating 1967 bushfires saw 62 people lose their lives, 900 injured, 1293 homes destroyed and 264 000 hectares burnt in the space of five hours. The fires came within two kilometres of the central business district in Hobart. The Fire Service Act 1979 was enacted as a result of the recommendations following these devastating fires and led to the establishment of the State Fire Commission and the Tasmanian Fire Service as it is today, the only integrated fire service in the country.

In the current model, the SFC is established as a statutory authority, which has served the community very well for over 40 years. Since the establishment of the SFC, the fire fatality rate has reduced significantly and nearly halved in the last 10 years, and there has only been one fatality from bushfires since the 1867 fires, despite catastrophic bushfire events in the Dunalley fires of 2019, the 2016 west coast, south-west fires, and the 2018-19 central highlands, south-west fires.

Due to climate change, the risk of bushfire to Tasmanian communities is increasing, as evidenced by more frequent, severe and prolonged bushfire seasons. What Tasmania needs is a responsive and independent fire service that is able to meet this increasing risk, not a fire service nested within government departments, where its support functions and fundings are assumed within a government department with differing priorities. The review of the Fire Safety Act, the Blake Report - Fire Service Act, sorry.

The Blake Report was released quietly on the same day the Government handed down its Budget, just over a week ago now. The Blake Report recommends that the statutory independence of the State Fire Commission be abolished, and that the TFS be merged with SES and sit as a division within the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, controlled by the police commissioner. Given the Government has committed to retain the State Fire Commission as an election promise, will the Government commit to retaining the

State Fire Commission as an independent statutory fire authority, so that it can continue to protect Tasmanian from the threat of fire and other emergencies, as TFS has done effectively for the last four decades?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I thank the member for his question. As you said, their consultation has now commenced on the development of a new contemporary Fire Service Act. The fact is, it is 42 years old. And as we committed to do in our first 100-day plan, we put it out for comment, because Mr Blake did recommend the abolishing of the State Fire Commission. We're committed to retaining it, and that's why -

**Mr WILLIE** - As a statutory authority?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - And that's why this paper is out for everyone to look at - what the Blake fire review actually did say and the 45 recommendations, so people can put forward their thoughts. But for a meeting with unions and other stakeholders, there is - everyone says that it is time for a refresh. The act isn't contemporary, and it's the opportunity now for people to have their say on what they think the State Fire Commission should look like in the future. So do they want to have a skills-based board, for example, or what do they want to see are the representatives on that State Fire Commission.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'll ask a very simple question. Are you committed to retaining it as a statutory authority?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - We're committed to retaining the State Fire Commission, and we want people to have their say as to how they see the best fit. This is going out for consultation so we encourage the Labor Party, unions, other stakeholders to put forward their thoughts as to what they would like to see a 21st century State Fire Commission to look like. We're waiting for the review to be undertaken for people to forward their feedback. I'm not going to pre-empt the findings of Mr Stevenson's work that is being undertaken now.

**Mr WILLIE** - So you're not ruling anything in or out, minister?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'm not going to pre-empt the findings but we're committed to ring-fencing the funding and we're committed to retaining the Commission.

**Mr WILLIE** - It's a very simple question: are you committed to retaining -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - And I've given you an answer.

**Mr WILLIE** - the State Fire Service as a statutory authority?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The reason we're undertaking a consultation process and a review is because we want the Tasmanian community to have their say. There's no point us coming out with a stated position which would mean that we haven't put it out for consultation. I encourage the Labor Party, if you've got a view, to make a submission.

**Mr WILLIE** - Who funded the Blake Review and how much did it cost?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I don't know.

**Mr BARRY** - Sorry, my understanding, through the Commissioner, is that TFS did fund it. I don't know the cost.

**Mr WILLIE** - Are you able to take that on notice through the minister?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, we'll take it on notice.

**Mr WILLIE** - You'll take that on notice. Minister, when you say 'ring-fence' the funding for the fire service, I guess there is a concern that most of the revenue comes from the community through levies, that that will go in to consolidate a revenue. So you're ruling that out?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, we'll see that the funding that is for the State Fire Commission will be ring-fenced so that funding - we've made that very clear during our election commitment, funding will be ring-fenced. But Treasury will be putting out an options paper because we know that, for example, the SES needs more sustainable funding. So we want councils and other stakeholders to have their say as to what they think the future funding level for the TFS and SES should look like in the future as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - So let me summarise this: you're committed to ring-fencing the funding, you're committed to the State Fire Commission, but there are question marks around the governance in terms of -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - That was the purpose of doing the Blake Fire Service Act Review, and we're being transparent in putting out that report so that people within Tasmania can now have their say. A lot of people were interested in seeing what the review said, so now people can say whether they're for or against the recommendations and that's what we want to hear. That's why we're undertaking this consultation process. I encourage everyone to make a submission.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thanks.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm just interested in what level of consultation happens with Parks and Wildlife when it comes to fuel reduction burning and whether you're covering things like biodiversity and threatened species in that level of conversation?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - We can ask that in the next -

**Mr VALENTINE** - I know we could but I'm interested in the Commission's -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regards to the Parks and Wildlife Service, biodiversity is very important and there's a lot of effort that's put in with the firefighters in the Parks and Wildlife to ensure biodiversity and natural value - natural and cultural values - are definitely protected.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm interested to know who's driving the process of fuel reduction burning. Is it the Fire Commission that drives it? Is it Parks and Wildlife that drives it when it comes to reducing fuel loads? I need to get some handle on how that's progressed.

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**Mrs PETRUSMA** - There's a steering committee for the fuel reduction program, so TFS, Sustainable Timber Tasmania and PWS are all members of it. It is chaired by the commissioner so I might - who's just now here. I'll ask the commissioner to make a comment.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you for that, through the minister. Yes, I chair the Fuel Reduction Committee and it's as the minister outlined. There are the three land management agencies for that, so it's a very much a collaborate approach in relation to fuel reduction.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do they take that into account: biodiversity and threatened species?

**Mr HINE** - They take that and more into account.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And other aspects?

**Mr HINE** - So it's a very scientific and researched base about what is and what isn't part of the fuel reduction, it's about reducing the risk to communities including threatened species and those aspects, and Parks, obviously with the TWWHA they have specific funding to look after fuel reduction as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's been a while since I've been in local government but do you have those personnel on the committee as well or is that sort of achieved in some other way, in terms of consultation within?

**Mr HINE** - That's achieved through other means, not through the fuel reduction. That's TFS deal directly with local government areas.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. The talk that's been going on through the media with regard to the threat to Hobart city, that sort of situation has been entirely - simply with Hobart City Council and the Fire Commission as opposed to this group that you're talking about?

**Mr HINE** - Yes. In fact, there has been recent discussions with Hobart City Council fuel reduction and evacuation plans as well. I think that was last week there was a meeting to explain that. Tasmania Police are responsible for the evacuation of people. The local commander, Commander Tony Cerritelli, had a meeting with local government, I think it included the mayor, and TFS about not only fuel reduction but also the issue that was raised in the media about evacuation plans.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is there anything you can share with us with regard to that meeting, through you, minister? Perhaps the Fire Commander?

**Mr LEA** - Key focus for TFS annual is to do an annual exercise about the most at-risk area. One of the most at-risk areas is the surrounding bushland to Hobart and we have extensive plans in place should we have an event in that context, and people might recall that not long ago we had quite a significant smoke plume to the west of Hobart. That was really part of our fuel reduction program getting the opportunity to reduce fuel loads and risk to the community of Hobart.

We have our Fire Management (FMAT) councils that come together, those groups are under the control of the State Fire Management Council and they work with local groups as well, both on evacuation planning as well as also some of our fuel reduction programs.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Would that include the Southern Tas Councils Authority itself, or is it individual councils that come together?

**Mr LEA** - It's individual councils that come together and then we work with those entities to make sure that we've got both their programs and our programs aligned.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So there is consultation that happens across council boundaries between the councils as well as with the Fire Commission.

**Mr LEA** - And that's led through TFS. Fire doesn't respect boundaries so we actually -

**Mr VALENTINE** - It doesn't, I appreciate that.

**Mr LEA** - So we actually put these programs in place where they will provide the best fuel load reduction that gives us an opportunity to make our operational response activity effective.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Last Thursday there was a big exercise that was undertaken in Hobart.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I saw some of that but I was wondering if there was an extra information that could be added in relation to it.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. A large scale bush fire exercise was undertaken last Thursday with key participants including representatives from Hobart City Council, Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service and other stakeholders. It was run out of the police operation centre and tested the response from all emergency management agencies and what an evacuation would like for particular Hobart suburbs in this sort of emergency. To give all, including the council, further understanding of the need for flexibility in emergency response and what the various communication responses would be to inform this emergency situation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With respect to strategic direction in relation to that, what are the next steps in that space? Is there a regular meeting that's going to occur to monitor the circumstances or what, minister?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Hobart City Council also had their own bush fire management plan.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I appreciate that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - But at the end of the day bush fire response comes down to each and every one of us. We're all responsible for having our own bush fire management plan ourselves and I encourage everyone to do their own five-minute plan because -

**Mr VALENTINE** - I appreciate that. It's just the connection between the various bodies and whether it's effectively strategically planned as well as relying on each council to do its own.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll ask the chief officer to -

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Unless it's something that's going to enhance what the minister said, we've got two more questions and we've got to finish at 1 o'clock.

**Mr BARRY** - Quickly then through the Chair, only that I actually wrote to the Hobart City Council and arranged to meet with the lord mayor there as well, and this will be one of a number of issues we'll discuss as a consequence of that but thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms PALMER** - Minister, can you outline for us the details of the State Operations Centre Multi-Hazard Intelligence Team funding?

**CHAIR** - In two minutes, thank you, minister.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Just because we've been talking about fire I thought this would - it's an interesting question just because the State Operations Centre, for a start, we put \$6.5 million to fund the new Emergency Services Operation Centre with an extra \$3 million this budget, which will help in regards to the sort of work we've just been outline. But also we're providing \$900 000 to expand the team of skilled staff with a permanent presence in the State Operations Centre, so they'll be able to give a head start for planning responses to all sorts of hazards that impact our state, whether it's flood or fire or other sort of emergency events. The Government is taking this whole situation very seriously to make sure that we do have the resources in place, to make sure that we're ready for bush fires but floods as well. There's been a range of initiatives in the SES too in regards to the flood mitigation projects too.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister.

**Mr WILLIE** - Mine is a quick question too. It's been quite useful in the past, the head of the Fire Services briefed the Legislative Council members in regards to the bushfire season. I'm wondering whether the current minister is committed to doing that. It is good for us in the community to be able to provide information in those conversations when it is a topic of conversation as we approach bushfire season.

**CHAIR** - So, is the Council going to receive a briefing by your good self?

**Mr WILLIE** - Through the minister, yes.

**CHAIR** - And when? When we can fit it in?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It would be once they do all the modelling, which I think is end of October.

**Mr BARRY** - It's usually around late October. We've got the seasonal bushfire outlook now which is a national perspective, but then they'll model that, they'll look at local and put that sort of information. Once we have that more informed position then we're in a position to brief parliament.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you.

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**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So probably in the November sittings, Chair, I'd say, when they've got all their modelling.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions members? Minister, in light of the fact that we have finished this, we've gone about 45 to 50 minutes over what we had anticipated for your area but certainly an important area. We thank everyone for their work and effort and we will see you back here at five to two, ready to start Minister for Parks.

We shall suspend the sitting and very much again appreciate everyone's efforts this morning.

**The Committee suspended at 12.55 p.m.**

**The Committee recommenced at 1.55 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - Minister, I will invite you firstly to introduce your team at the table, and then also provide what you might have as a brief overview of this area. Thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Chair, I'm delighted to be here today with representatives of the Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment. Tim Baker, secretary of DPIPW. Stuart Fletcher, General Manager of Lands Tasmania, and Tim Grant, our Valuer-General.

**CHAIR** - Welcome.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Chair, it's an absolute pleasure to be here today as Minister for Parks. First, I thank and acknowledge the department staff and all the volunteers for the incredible and very important work they do to protect, preserve, and support our national parks and reserves and management of Crown land and the provision of land titles, survey mapping, and valuation services.

In the 2021 election, the Tasmanian Liberal Government continued its investment in our national parks and reserves, making commitments totalling more than \$42 million in our parks, power, and regional economies policy. This investment is to future proof our world-renowned national parks and reserves, but also to provide for our regional economies in terms of economic activity and jobs creation, and it's estimated our investment will create around 200 jobs and will build on this government's investment of more than \$85 million into our parks since 2014.

There are many initiatives that I'll go through at another time. But it's a project that's featured in today's *Advocate* is that we've announced the feasibility phase, that we've announced our next iconic walk project which will be in the Tyndall Range. It's a very exciting new opportunity, especially for the west coast because it will deliver a lot of benefits to residents of the west coast, especially in tourism and other ventures in the west coast. It will be a \$40 million project. We've already committed \$20 million and another \$20 million will be forthcoming in the future.

I want to briefly touch on Aboriginal cultural burning. I know that members of this committee have had an interest in our Tasmanian Aboriginal people, and to ensure that we do undertake to work with them, especially because they have undertaken practices in this state

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for tens of thousands of years and have helped to shape the landscape of Tasmania as we know today. So recognising this rich cultural and environmental understanding, the government is working with Aboriginal people to re-establish cultural burning practices in Tasmania and have provided \$100,000 in grant funding to support communities to undertake cultural burns and to undertake training.

My family and I are frequent users of our parks and I commend Parks and Wildlife Services for what they do to looking after our parks. I passionately believe that culturally sensitive and environmentally sustainable visitation to our national parks, reserves, and Crown lands can ensure that our future generations can likewise enjoy Tasmania as well.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. Can you drill down into where the Tyndall range is for a non-west coast-ian?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, the Tyndall Range is on the west coast.

**CHAIR** - Yes, we got that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So it's up near Tullah and Zeehan.

**CHAIR** - There's a fair bit of west coast.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - There is a lot of west coast, and I've got a feasibility study that has got lots of good pictures here that you can check it all out. But I and Mr Jacobi went up there a few weeks ago and he showed me where the Tyndall Range is, and it's outside of TWWHA. It's a beautiful area up there and it will be our next iconic walk. It's something that we identified as -

**CHAIR** - So where is it close to? Or is there nowhere?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It's sort of round, like between Tullah -

**Mr JACOBI** - Rosebery, Tullah, those sorts of things.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Strahan, all that area up there. Welcome to the table, Mr Jason Jacobi.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Jason.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It's when you drive between Strahan to Zeehan, Rosebery. We went on a side road to it.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister, the proposed walk, the recommendations from the feasibility study is that the walk is a three-day, two-night walk that extends from Lake Plimsoll in the north, which is on the Lake Anthony Road, to Lake Margaret in the south, which is only a 10 minute or 15-minute drive from Queenstown. The advantages of the walk location are that it picks up on potential accommodation in all the towns of Queenstown, Rosebery, Tullah,



Zeehan, and potentially also Strahan. It complements all the activities and tourism activities on the west coast that are underway in Queenstown that already exist in that local area.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is it two-way? Can you go from either end?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The walk will be put out to commence and go in one direction only, because when you come out near the finish of the walk, you get to see like wooden pipes and the hydro station and all these -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is that Lake Margaret?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Some of us have actually been there with the member for Murchison.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It's beautiful and it is iconic. People get to see the rich history of the hydropower development in the area and also see a rich mix of heritage, mining, its landscapes, waterfalls. It's pretty magnificent, and from what we've identified, people who have done the Three Capes said if Tasmania had another iconic walk, they would stay and do another walk. This has the potential to be a huge driver for the west coast, especially in employment and its benefits are going to be very big. The West Coast Council is very excited. It's generated already a lot of enthusiastic response since it featured in today's *Advocate*.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Along with their bike tracks, no doubt. The mountain bike tracks. That's generated a fair bit of interest as well, I think, Chair.

**CHAIR** - That's right, it has.

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes, so halfway between Queenstown and Rosebery, basically.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Thank you. So if there are no more overview questions, then I'll move straight to 1.1, Lands, Titles, Survey, and Mapping Services.

## **1.1 Lands, Titles, Survey, and Mapping Services**

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. Can you explain why the appropriation for 2021-22 has increased by 3.54 per cent from the amount projected in last year's budget papers? I'm dealing with two separate budget papers here. Not this year's budget paper on its own, but the difference between the projection for 2021-22, last year's papers to what it is this year, and it's about \$1.3 million higher. I'm after finding out what's caused that and it seems to be a single year increase in the appropriation which hasn't been carried through to the following years of the forward Estimates. So I'm not sure what that is.

**Mr BAKER** - I'll just look it up for you, Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you want last year's budget paper? I've got a copy.

**Mr BAKER** - No.

**CHAIR** - It's a very good question.

**Mr BAKER** - Which page?

**Mr VALENTINE** - The page?

**CHAIR** - 288.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, he means in last year's budget paper, do you think? Are you asking that?

**Mr BAKER** - No, this year's budget.

**CHAIR** - 288.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Output group 1.

**Mr BAKER** - It's a good question, Mr Valentine.

**CHAIR** - 286.

**Mr BAKER** - There was, through you, minister, there was \$300 000 in last year's budget allocated for the Land Titles office, and then there was an additional \$100 000 that was allocated as part of the regulatory approvals budget commitment.

**Mr VALENTINE** - But it's about \$1.3 million altogether, isn't it, the difference? 3.54 per cent, I'm told, my researcher tells me.

**Mr BAKER** - Through you, minister, helpfully I've been informed that it mainly reflects the impact of indexation, and then there's additional - there was an additional increase of \$51 000 which primarily relates again to indexation. I am also aware that there was additional money as a result of PESRAC, and that it may be that money which was included for one-off improvement inside the Lands team.

**CHAIR** - And that's down to 90.5, that money.

**Mr BAKER** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - So no, that's not it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Take it on notice?

**Mr BAKER** - Yes, we will take it on notice, Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you take it on notice? The difference between the 2021-22 appropriation in the 2020-21 papers and the 2021-22 appropriation in this year's papers. I think that's clear. Okay.

**Mr BAKER** - Yes. Only other than to say that it's an increase, minister, so I won't complain.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Through you, Chair, you're talking about on page 312 of the budget paper, are you?

**CHAIR** - No. Page 286.

**Mr VALENTINE** - 286 is the -

**Mr BAKER** - Through you, minister, we'll take it on notice.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. I think it's clear, the question is clear.

**Mr BAKER** - Very clear.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We don't have to - yes.

**CHAIR** - It's also clear that it's not around the improving Crown lands transaction turnaround time. Because that's my area. That's different.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Given the concerns in the community about the development of commercial activities with Tasmania's national parks and other sensitive areas, can you advise why there are no performance indicators relating to this - I'd have to say increasingly controversial activity for the Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Mr BAKER** - I'll just as the Deputy Secretary to come forward, minister.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I knew you should have stayed, Jason. Just checking, Chair, we're not going to just stick to Output group 1?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Because we're now going to performance managers where Parks was our Output group 8. So I was just checking.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's Parks and Wildlife Management.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Land, Titles, Survey, and Mapping Services.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm sorry.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. I was going to say, we're still in 1.1.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, no, sorry.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - That's all right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's my fault.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Okay. Stay there, Jason. Don't leave.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, no, it's my fault. I've actually jumped -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Jumped a line item.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, a line item. Just hang on.

**Mr BAKER** - We can wait.

**CHAIR** - No, no, we'll wait.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry.

**CHAIR** - We'll wait for that one, thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, I'm on the - it's my fault.

**CHAIR** - Right, so you're back -

**Mr VALENTINE** - I still want the answer.

**CHAIR** - Yes. At 1.1.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, yes.

**CHAIR** - The member has gone back to 1.1.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, I'm ahead of myself. Okay.

**CHAIR** - I got ahead of myself this morning, so it's okay.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Lands, Titles, Survey, and Mapping Services. So it's performing very highly and I think everybody would agree with that; page 288, and there's strong confidence in its accuracy. The revenue collected through the list, what has that been over the last year? Many apologies for that.

**CHAIR** - It was around \$22 million, wasn't it?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, \$22.7 million in revenue from the collection of statutory fees.

**Mr VALENTINE** - 22.7?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - This says 21 per cent or \$3.9 million greater than the budgeted figure of \$18.8 million.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There's a whole heap of metrics here that I'd like - and I don't want to take up too much time in doing this, so I'm going to rattle through them and you might be able to give me the figures as I go. So the number of transfers lodged, whether it's up or down compared to last year. The priority notices. The mortgages. The mortgage discharges. The survivorships. The transmissions. The transfers. The caveats. The plans lodged. The number of dealings. So there's a whole heap there, and they're all in -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Would you like to go through those?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, thanks.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Okay. So in regards to transfers in 2020-21, there was 21 240. In priority notices there was 22 638. In mortgages there was 20 306. In discharge of mortgage, there was 17 853. In survivorships, there was 1075. In transmissions, there was 1433. In transfers via sent, there was 571, and caveat, there was 717.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. Do you have an indication on the percentage change? Can you give me those?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. So transfers, there was a 15 per cent increase. Priority notices, there was 21 per cent increase. Mortgages, 15 per cent increase. Discharge of mortgage, 9 per cent increase. Survivorships were up 1 per cent. Transmissions were down by 3 per cent. Transfers by 1 cent or down by 3 per cent, and caveat was down by 29 per cent.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. And in some ways very reflective of the very much increased activity in that space, I would expect.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - If you'd like the total, it was a total of 85 833, which is a 14 per cent increase from last year.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Fourteen per cent overall. Can you just explain to me the survivorships? I saw that and I thought, well, yes, what does that mean?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Survivorship is a registration of survivor of joint property. It's section 100 under the Land Titles Act 1980, and it refers to an application to be a registered proprietor by survivorship, whereby surviving joint tenant of an estate or interest in land becomes registered as the sole proprietor upon the death of the other joint tenant.

**Mr VALENTINE** - All right.

**CHAIR** - I just want to alert members that we only have till 7.30 p.m. We need to be finished here by 3 o'clock on this output group. So we need to smarten ourselves up. That goes for all of us. Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I've got quite a few questions, but I understand. The average time to have a title issued - so there's a 15-day statutory time frame for processing sealed plans once they're lodged with councils for processing and sealing, and that's done in parallel, to speed things up. How's that going? Are we managing to stick to that?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I know that they're meeting performance measures, so I'll have to -

**Mr VALENTINE** - I don't think it's in the PI, is it? In here? Is it? What page, please.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The priority final plan detailed statistics are that 208 - so there was - lodged initial, 266 lodged final plan, 111 complying with the requirements and complies at time of report, 208 dealt with by the Land Titles Office within statutory time frame, 115 lots on PFP-compliant plans, 565 requiring requisition, written notices for answer. And a hundred per cent of registration of PFP-compliant plans within 15 business days of received final plan sealed by council - was a hundred per cent.

**Mr VALENTINE** - All right. Now, you've provided \$1.2 million over four years last year to assist, and \$2.4 million for regulatory assessments and planning applications more generally. What's that doing to your FTEs? Are you actually employing more people to get on top of that? Can you give us an understanding as to what your FTE levels - I think it was 78.64 before?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll ask Mr Fletcher to answer the question.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister. So in terms of the FTE numbers - so output group 1.1 - so as of March 2020, the FTEs were 78.14, and in March 21 it was 80.81 for output group 1.1. Now, output group 1.1 includes both the Land Titles Office and location services.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Surveys?

**Mr FLETCHER** - But in terms of staffing in the Land Titles Office, we've had four additional staff recruited over the last about 18 months. So as part of that funding -

**Mr VALENTINE** - So that's to help specifically with that workload.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Three of those positions have been funded for business transformation in the Land Titles Office. Looking at improving our processes longer term, and then additional one FTE out of the \$2.4 million for regulatory funding was provided to the Land Titles Office to assist with plan examination.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What's the stress levels of the staff like? Are they taking their leave and all of those sorts of things or -

**CHAIR** - Probably similar to the Chair, I reckon.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, might well be.

**Mr FLETCHER** - We are managing our staff. Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You are. Thanks for that. The website itself - any problems being experienced in coping with demand?

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's the LIST.

**Mr FLETCHER** - The LIST. So there's actually a performance measure in the Budget papers in relation to the LIST. I'll just flick through my folder. So the LIST last year saw a 14 per cent increase in usage. So from 2.5 million sessions to 2.86 million sessions in the last financial year. So 14 per cent, consistent with what we're seeing in terms of the property dealings that have been lodged with the Land Titles Office as well. So in terms of the LIST, no issues that I'm certainly aware of. It's certainly a well-used system.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No cybercrime happening, is there? I mean, there's a lot of data in there, and valuable data.

**Mr FLETCHER** - So from that perspective, we've been doing a lot of work with government agencies around their logins to the LIST. What we're doing, particularly in our agency, we've got multi-factor authentication for LIST accounts, and then we're rolling authentication through other agencies' systems out - so they'll be able to also enable multi-factor authentication for their LIST users. We've also written to all of the councils, requesting that we actually switch their accounts over to federated logins as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With regard to commercial contracts, how many commercial contracts has the department entered into, either in its own right or as part of a consortium of state government agencies for the sale of electronic land information?

**Mr FLETCHER** - We'll have to take that on -

**Mr BAKER** - Take that one on notice, please, minister.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - If you're going to take that on notice, what is the nature and value of those contracts to the Tasmanian Government?

**Mr FLETCHER** - Specifically, you're after where we've sold data?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Basically, yes. Well, under a contract. And the value of those contracts. I suppose the question remains, minister, can you assure us that the Tasmanian Government has no intention of seeking to privatise all or any part of this activity during the term of this Government?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Definitely has not been raised.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There you go. I've whipped through.

**CHAIR** - You've done very well. Thank you. Move now to -

**Mr VALENTINE** - After a false start.

**CHAIR** - No, just got the heads up. Valuation services, 1.2. Ms Palmer. Thank you.

## **1.2 Valuation services**

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you very much. Minister, if you could please provide an update to the committee on the VISTAS valuation management system.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I thank the member for the question. The VISTAS - or valuation information system - has delivered a new, contemporary property and valuation management system for the Office of the Valuer-General. It's an authoritative property and valuation register that underpins and supports government property management and valuation activities. It was developed by a local IT company, Geometry Pty Ltd, with close involvement of the staff from the Office of the Valuer-General. As of 30 June 2021, there were 290 859 properties within the valuation role managed within the system, and this represents a total capital value of approximately \$110 billion.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I bet they didn't predict that a house in Derby would sell for \$1.31 million.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I saw that the other day.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think it's the land, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Yes. It's got a house on it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes, that'll be demolished.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. But it's being upgraded all the time. The department's introduced a new module to streamline the management of the land acquisition process, which has replaced the need to utilise four different separate systems, and a new market analysis module is going to be put in place later this year.

**CHAIR** - Given COVID-19, is there any issue with the valuation cycle that we have Tasmania?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It has been delayed, I believe, because there is a - just with contractors and getting them, but it might be -

**Mr GRANT** - Thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Valuer-General to outline more.

**Mr GRANT** - Thank you, minister. Yes. Look, the fresh valuation cycle has been pushed out one year. We were due to have fresh valuations undertaken last year, as at 1 July 2020, and the tender committee just determined that we would have trouble getting staff on the island to do that work and also getting mainland contractors into the office - into the state. So that cycle was pushed out one year. So we're currently in the fresh valuation cycle now, for the municipalities of Hobart, Kingborough, Huon Valley, Central Highlands, Southern Midlands, West Tamar, West Coast, Latrobe, Kentish and Devonport municipalities. So they're pushed out one year, but are still within the seven-year cycle, which the Act provides for.



**CHAIR** - We still are super heavily reliant on valuers from outside of the state; is that correct?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Just in regards to that - while there's no solely Tasmania-owned enterprise, each tenderer does have a Tasmanian base of operations, with Tasmanian staff. So there are Tasmanians that are used. So they're not just solely on the mainland.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Any other questions in that area? If not, we'll move to 3.4, which is the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. Ms Siejka. Thank you.

### **3.4 Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens**

**Ms SIEJKA** - I note that funding for the gardens in 2021-22 decreases, which is explained as reflecting the completion of the capital upgrades, as grant funding. Can you give me a breakdown of where that funding went and why? Also, why is it a grant and not listed under the capital program.

**Mr JACOBI** - Can I just, through the minister. The reasons for the delay in the visitor centre largely related to the complexity of the heritage value of the gardens. But we've undertaken a considerable amount of planning with architects to evolve the ideas about where - and the concept of where the visitor centre may be. Unfortunately, the main avenue, which is the lead-in to the gardens and the entry point has a number of significant heritage assets, both trees but also heritage structures. We've recently identified that there are some complexities around the protection of those heritage values. We're working through those at the moment.

The consultant architects are progressing with the planning. And, I think, at this point in time we're well and truly on track for completion in the next 12 months. But, obviously, there's tenders to be awarded for consultants, there's approvals to be obtained, both through council and internally, but that's - does that explain -

**Ms SIEJKA** - Is it expected that visitor centre, minister, will be up the top there? Is that where -

**Mr JACOBI** - There's a number of potential options. The preferred option was at the actual arrival point, where the gates are but we're also considering some other options inside the Botanical Gardens' wall. Obviously, building at the front entry creates some challenges around access to the gardens during construction, but it's more so the heritage values of that front entry which are problematic and which need to be dealt with first.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Thank you. Another question around the impact of the pandemic on the visitor numbers. Obviously, there's not a lot of travel, but whether or not you had any sort of data on whether or not the locals - or it's purely down to interstate visitors that have reduced those numbers and, yes, if there's any plans to promote the garden locally, to make up some of that.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I know we do - so the visitation numbers have remained steady through COVID-19. The number of people who actually visited the RTBG this year was 427 000, versus 429 000 in 2019-20. That has mainly been Tasmanians - Tasmanians, whether it's at the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens or across our parks, are rediscovering our parks,

which is a good thing. So it's mainly - yes, people from Tasmania are now discovering the beauty of the Royal Botanical Gardens.

**Ms SIEJKA** - All right. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Any further questions? If not, we'll move now to 8.1, which is the Parks and Wildlife Management. Thank you very much.

### **8.1 Parks and Wildlife Management**

**Mr VALENTINE** - And here we go.

**CHAIR** - We already have a question, so we'll just need the answer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So you might not have to scratch your head now as I ask you this question. So do we have people here at the table?

**CHAIR** - We do.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The question is, can you explain why the appropriation for 2021-22, last year, has increased by 3.54 per cent over that which has been handed down in this year? So it's about \$1.3 million higher. Is it possible for you to explain that difference, minister? I apologise for the question before, because you were probably wondering where I got the \$1.3 million from.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - We'll take that one on notice.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You need to take it on notice? All right. So, I restate the second question, which probably makes more sense. Given concerns in the community about the development of commercial activities with Tasmania's national parks and other sensitive areas, can you advise why there are no performance indicators relating to this, as I said before, increasingly controversial activity for the parks and wildlife service.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Sorry Chair, we have the answer to the first question - second question. All right Mr Jacobi I'll let you go.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister, just to be clear, the Office of the Coordinator-General is responsible for the administration of the expressions of interest program. I am advised that their performance measures relate to two key measurables. One is the estimated number of full-time equivalents created. To date, 286 FTE have been created through the EOI program. They are specifically for the ministerial approved projects only, so those are the projects that have been approved by the minister to progress to lease and licence negotiations with the Parks and Wildlife Service. The estimated project investment is the second key performance measure. To date the figure I have before me, \$106 million, is estimated to arrive from the EOI projects that have been approved to date by the minister.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Those ministerial approvals, they're following Treasurer's instructions?

**Mr JACOBI** - I can't answer that question. I suggest you redirect that to the officer of the court manager.

**Mr BAKER** - Mr Valentine, through the minister, I guess the other point I would make in terms of the general protection provided on reserve land is that first you have the act, and then the second line of protection is management plans, and you can see there is a KPI on management plans. In effect what happens is, when a proposal is put forward to the director, or to the minister, in my case as director, I assess that against the management plan, or the act when there isn't a management plan. That core protection is covered as a KPI in the budget papers, and we are meeting that KPI. I think it's really important, and we put again on the public record through you, minister, that the role of the Parks and Wildlife Service, and the director, and the general manager, and the deputy secretary is to assess those proposals against management plans, and we're ensuring that we have management plans in place.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The management plans are signed off in consultation with -

**Mr BAKER** - The management plans go through a full statutory planning process. They are signed off after significant consultation, and Mr Jacobi can talk to the full process, but they are a statutory management plan which require significant consultation and sign off from the minister. As I said, if you look at some of our larger plans, Mr Jacobi, we're getting hundreds of people providing us feedback into those plans.

**Mr JACOBI** - Would you like me to elaborate on the process?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes please.

**Mr JACOBI** - When expressions of interest are submitted by a proponent, it is considered by the expressions of interest assessment panel. The panel seek advice from the Parks and Wildlife Service about any key legislative or statutory implications relating to the proposal.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Who is on the panel.

**Mr JACOBI** - The panel comprises a number of people, John Fitzgerald from Tourism, Mr Perry from the Office of the Coordinator-General, the secretary of DPIPW, Tim Baker, and also the chair of the National Parks and Wildlife Advisory Council, Mr Malcom Wells. I provide advice and support to the panel, but I'm not a panel member.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No community member at all?

**Mr JACOBI** - There are no community members per se at this point in time.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Minister, is it something that you've addressed your mind to, the fact that there's no community members?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The panel was under the Office of the Coordinator-General, which is State Growth, so that's a question you have to put to them.

**Mr BAKER** - Minister, the other point is, once it gets, for a lack of better words, spat out the end of the EOI process, it then still has to go through the RAA process, which depending on the level has full consultation attached to it, public consultation attached to it as well. If anything the EOI process is an additional set of checks and balances that are put in place before it gets to the RAA process.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. If I can go this one, can you advise how many existing commercial operators are undertaking services within our national parks?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I know there's about 40 in the TWWHA. So there are over 600 and leases and licences across the reserve system in Tasmania, with around half associated with the nature-based tourism sector. Of these, approximately 40 are nature-based tourism operators that are leased or licensed to operate in the TWWHA, such as the Waterfalls Café, Mount Field, Pumphouse Point, rafting guides, and cruise boat operators in the Franklin River. Scenic aircraft operators like Par Avion, that deliver walkers to our more remote south coast track and other things.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you able to table any of that information?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The whole 40?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**Mr JACOBI** - Is there anything specifically, Mr Valentine, you would like? Like a location or an operator?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm interested to know the services which are provided in -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So we'll just provide the 40 names of the -

**Mr VALENTINE** - And their location, and where they're operating.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well these are in the TWWHA, so these are just the 40 that are located in the Tasmanian -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, but it would be good to know exactly where in the TWWHA they're operating, if it's possible.

**Mr JACOBI** - We can provide it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You can provide that, okay. I'm happy for it to be tabled, and I guess the extent to which those services are using publicly accessible huts, such as those on the Overland Track and those within the Tasman National Park.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister, Mr Valentine, there are hundreds of lessees and licensees operating across Tasmania. There are a number that are operating obviously within the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, there are several that have been operating for decades, for example the Tasmanian Walking Company operates the huts on the Overland Track, as an example.

There are also standing camp operators in the south-west down at Port Davey. Par Avion has an arrangement down there to fly into and provide standing camp services, and that's done under their licence for that location. These operators, particularly if they're building or using huts, they operate under a lease which provides them long-term security and tenure for the operation of their business, that operating is subject to a whole lease agreement which contains conditions and terms.

In terms of using the facilities - let's use Tasmanian Walking Company as an example. They have their own huts which they have built and operate, but they use the Overland Track. They walk their clients in, and they use the track, and they pay a rental for, an annual rental for the use of those facilities, and that goes back into our revenue to upgrade and maintain the overland track.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So all of those services, are there any, I suppose, special areas, let's call them wilderness areas, that the Tasmanian public in general aren't able to access, except for paying for a park's pass, like are they stopped from going to certain parts because there's some commercial operation happening, that's an important question for me.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister. As you know, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area is an extensive rugged wild place -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, I understand that. I've spent a lot of time in it, like the minister.

**Mr JACOBI** - The leases that are issued to existing operators, or that might be considered for future proposals in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, the lease area, is minimised to only the immediate footprint that is required to operate the business. Those leases are typically exclusive leases. They afford the lessee the right to control and manage the land on which their built facility is located, and we make a value judgment about how big that area needs to be on the basis of the particular operation that's being proposed.

**Mr VALENTINE** - But there's nothing stopping somebody putting a pack on their back, taking their tent, walking through that same area, as long as they're not camping on the lessee's area.

**Mr JACOBI** - There's nothing preventing them, and I don't think any lessee would have any concerns at all with a member of the public walking through or using that land. It would only be if the member of the public started to conduct an activity which was inconsistent with that lessee's natural rights and interests, and I mean that in the sense that their quiet enjoyment of the lease.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I was going to say, is it written into the lease that they have to allow members of the public to walk through.

**Mr JACOBI** - I am not aware of where it's specifically mentioned in the lease, but in all the cases that I'm aware of members of the public can walk on the national park freely, it would only be if the person started to interfere with the natural and quiet enjoyment of the lessee's rights and interests that it would become a problem, and even then it would be a case of the lessee feeling the need to take any action, and I've never been aware of any circumstances where that's occurred.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. What I might do is put a few questions on notice, rather than taking up time here. I think that's important.

**CHAIR** - Last question, pick your best, that's what I used to tell the former member for Windermere.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. I'll pick one that's pretty topical at the moment. Recently there was a media release that talked about a new and improved recreational driving opportunity on the west coast, \$10 million in the budget, but at the same time it's coupled with resources for providing enforcement in the Arthur-Pieman conservation area. So there seems to be, to my mind, a bit of a tension between those two. I'm interested to know what the actual funding split is between those two aspects of that release, the \$10 million, how's that being split up for the new and improved recreational driving opportunity, and yet they're providing resources for enforcement.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - On Friday we met with the APCA management committee in regard to the \$10 million over three years to improve recreational driving opportunities in the area, and the management committee's very passionate that we need to make sure we increase parks resourcing in the area, so that we can better manage those natural and cultural values in the area. The \$10 million is going to safety improvements, trail management, better camping and driving, but also looking at doing a new management plan for the area. We're going through with the committee how much will be allocated to resourcing, how much to tracks, how much to better camping facilities.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So you don't know that at this stage?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - We've got an approximate estimate, but we do need to get them all costed first. I know that Mr Jacobi spent some extra time with them after I'd finished to discuss that. I'll hand to Mr Jacobi.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister, we talked at length with the APCA management committee about how that \$10 million might be allocated. One of the most important items is to press a four-wheel drive strategy for the whole of the west coast, and that strategy will look at opportunities for a multi-day driving experience, from the APCA in the north, all the way south to Macquarie Heads. That strategy will identify the condition of existing tracks, like the Cumberland, the Climies track, Balfour track, Sandy Cape track down to APCA and it will identify a suite of potential works or investments that will be best made to provide the opportunities for the west coast. The value of that work is around about \$350 000 so the APCA committee agreed that that was a first stage investment, and a priority.

The second thing that the APCA committee all agreed unanimously was that we should allocate \$20 000 as soon as possible towards compliance actions in the APCA in partnership with Tas Pol, so use Tasmania Police in partnership with our rangers to support compliance activities. The third priority was the upgrade of Sandy Cape shack node access tracks, so there are a number of different roads that provide access to shacks all along the APCA coast. The condition of those roads has deteriorated significantly over the last 10 or 15 years, \$900 000 was agreed to be prioritised towards bringing those roads back to useful condition.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They're public roads?

**Mr JACOBI** - They're public roads, yes, and they're used to access numerous shacks. We would do this in consultation with the Circular Head council, which has expressed an interest in taking over the responsibility for the maintenance of those roads on an annual basis, if they were brought up to a standard and condition that was acceptable.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The last part of that question is in relation to consultation with the Aboriginal community to do this. Has there been consultation, if so, who with and are they happy?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - With the package of \$10 million?

**Mr VALENTINE** - The \$10 million package and the four-wheel drive, so you know whether it's - yes, four-wheel drive access.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation of course is the local Aboriginal community organisation in the area, so they're very aware of the \$10 million, but I've also had discussions with our other Aboriginal organisations in the state. They're very aware that we are going to be investing \$10 million, they've warmly welcomed the fact that we're going to put increased resourcing in the area for Parks and Wildlife and that it'll be looking at what we can do to protect the values, the natural and cultural values in the area as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The question was are they happy, the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation are happy that we're investing \$10 million but Mr Jacobi -

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister, there is the representatives on the APCA management committee for the Circular Head Aboriginal -

**Mr VALENTINE** - From CHAC?

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes. They were involved in the consultation discussions that we held on Friday. They were fully supportive and all of the committee members recognised that there are some aspects of this \$10 million investment that will require further consultation. For example, it was all agreed that a contemporary management plan for the other primary conservation area is an important thing to progress. That's a significant process that will need to involve an extensive consultation with the Aboriginal communities in Tasmania.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Ms Palmer, last question in this area.

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you. Minister, I wanted to raise Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Cultural Burning Program. Can you update the committee on this please?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regard to how we are working with the Aboriginal community in looking after our parks, as indicated in the overview we definitely want to make sure that we work within the understanding of the Aboriginal cultural and environmental understanding,

which is why we're working with the Aboriginal community to re-establish cultural burning practices in Tasmania, as part of our overall fire management strategy. They've undertaken those practices for tens of thousands of years. We've been working with Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania to collaborate with the Aboriginal fire practitioners in drafting - the Parks and Wildlife Service Cultural Burning Policy. Consultation's underway now to inform and guide how this policy will be further developed and implemented.

We've also employed three new Aboriginal cultural burning employees, including an Aboriginal burning project officer to support the development of policy and management of the program, along with two specialist Aboriginal fire rangers to work with communities. I'm delighted to announced that Parks and Wildlife Service undertook the first cultural burn as part of this program at Dempster Plains in Tasmania's remote northwest recently. We've also provided \$100 000 in grant funding. The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania has secured three grants; the Karadi Aboriginal Corporation two grants; the *melythina tiakana warrana* Aboriginal Corporation received one grant and the Southeast Tasmania Aboriginal Corporation secured two grants. The Tasmania Aboriginal Centre received two grants. I'd like to acknowledge the support and expertise of Rodney Dillon, our current Chair of the Aboriginal Heritage Council, who's been a key member of the state-wide fuel reduction steering committee for his advice in this regard.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thanks. Minister, I'm just looking at some of your election commitments. The Maria Island Rediscovery Projects, stage 3. There's a commitment of \$6.8 million. There's only \$2.8 million in the Budget and it's pushed out past the forward Estimates. The Freycinet Visitor Gateway is a \$14 million commitment; there's only \$4 million in the Budget and a predicted completion time of 2025-26. The Flinders Island camping upgrade and RV access, you've committed \$900 000 and there's only \$400 000 in the Budget, so I'm wondering if there's an explanation for those projects to be pushed so far out?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, it was a \$42 million commitment of infrastructure in our world-renowned national parks and reserves. This is the funding component towards it but as the Premier said there's work looking for people in Tasmania and we're working in conjunction with the infrastructure industry sector as to what rollout suits them, because there's a lot of work on in this state so we're rolling infrastructure out as they've got the capacity and ability to undertake the works.

The Premier has also said we can flex in and out, that if we can undertake the works earlier we can have the opportunity to bring forward money as well. It's about working with the industry and the sector and the feedback that we've had that there needed to be a better pipeline of work for them, because at the moment they don't have enough employees to be able to do the work.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay.

**Mr BAKER** - Minister, it might be worth the deputy secretary explaining some of the challenges around infrastructure inside on reserve land because I think what you'll find is that there are a massive amount of challenges as it is, but it's even heightened on reserve land because they're specialist builders who do the work. There's only a few companies to do that available in the state that I know of.



**CHAIR** - If we get a chance we might come back to that but at this point in time that'll be for a briefing with Leg Co members at another time, but thank you. I'll move now to 8.2 which is Crown Land Services, and the member for Launceston.

## **8.2 Crown Land Services**

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, would you be able to give me an update. Is it Okines Lewisham Foreshore Works Initiative? Okines?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Okines. Lewisham are you talking about?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes. I wondered how it was determined to be a priority funding project?

**Mr HIGGINS** - I don't see it, sorry.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, I realise that but it's an interesting one because it's listed, but there's not really much information.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, the Lewisham Foreshore Management Association has for many years been seeking options to halt coastal erosion to the Crown land foreshore strip at Okines Beach. In 2019 the Parks and Wildlife Service Commissioner detailed a comprehensive erosion modelling assessment for the foreshore. That was of \$127 000 and the Government then committed \$610 000 over two years towards remedying the longstanding erosion issues at this location through the sand scraping or a rock seawall. This is being done in conjunction with and under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act requirements.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I notice as well that it's not listed in the Capital Investment Program, so I wondered why it's -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I think it's because it was a previous commitment, not this year's commitment. It was -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I see it's at 8.2, the notes - the increase there but I thought it was interesting that it wasn't in the other one.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, it was funded in the previous year's budgets.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. One last question which relates to the public sale of Crown land. Has there been any significant boost in overall revenue based on the market price of land in Tasmania currently?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, I know there has been and we've also started the process off where people can look it up for sale. We put up a couple of blocks for sale in Weymouth and Waratah and five properties are currently on the market, and three are under sales contracts of around \$400 000 each so it's - total, \$400 000 in total. If you looked on the Crown Land's website when you clicked on the link to the real estate companies that were seeing these, you could see like the ones that I looked at Weymouth, they were great locations beside all other houses. It was just this block of land that would make a great place for a shack site or something

like that. Otherwise at the moment it's just costing Parks and Wildlife to mow the grass when we could be selling it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Can I have some indication of what is the lease arrangements now with Crown land? In the past it was quite easy to get a 99-year lease. My understanding is that those things have gone completely. What is the maximum now?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'll ask Mr Jacobi to answer that one.

**CHAIR** - I heard recently someone had been offered 40 years. I said no way.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister. Thank you for the question. The lease terms are largely determined by the level of investment by the proponent. Depending on the magnitude of the investment we determine the term to be commensurate with that level of investment, or the particular nature of the activity. The act specifically prescribes what length of term can be allowed for. So coastal or foreshore marine leases can be up to 100 years but outside of those, they're down to no greater than 50 years.

Typically, when we issue a lease it is continued on the completion of milestones. Say, for example, if a proponent has to undertake a staged development the initial lease term is a pre-requisite or conditioned on them completing that first stage of development and then they may have a subsequent term, which is dependent on the successful completion of that first stage.

**CHAIR** - Minister, a marina, substantial investment, between 50 and 100 years. Would that be correct?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'd ask Mr Jacobi.

**Mr JACOBI** - I haven't got examples in front of me but typically if you were doing a large scale investment we might issue a lease historically of up to 45 years and that could be three 15-year terms, with the continuation of each of those terms dependent upon satisfactory meeting of conditions in the lease so that there's been no breach of the lease, there's been no default, the lease is in a clean, tidy and neat condition. There are the occasional leases that have been issued historically which are for longer terms but I can't give you the exact reasons why those leases would have been issued for a longer period.

**CHAIR** - So the 10-year policy has effectively gone. Am I correct? In the past there was a 10-year policy that I'm aware of.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister, I'm not aware of a 10-year policy.

**CHAIR** - That's good. Thank you. Moving now, I'm going to forgo 90.5 and ask my question in the parliament given that we're short on time. 90.7 Parks Support. Thank you, Mr Willie.

### **90.7 Parks Support**

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - Thanks, Chair. Line allocation that finishes. I'm interested, there's \$7 million allocated to it, what has that's gone to and why.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - \$7 million, that was COVID-19 support funding.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, so what sort of things did it fund?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The good thing is a lot of Tasmanians have been using our national parks so I think the department only used about \$5 million of the \$7 million so it's because more Tasmanians are going to our parks, more people have been buying parks passes. We initially thought there'd be decreased revenue coming in.

**Mr WILLIE** - So it was to offset revenue but that hasn't decreased.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Offset revenue losses, yes. We actually had a lot of Tasmanians enjoying our national park and if anyone here hasn't got their two-year parks pass, I do encourage you to go and get one. It's good value.

**Mr WILLIE** - So was the full \$7 million used by the department or it was handed back?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - No, it was only \$5 million used. Yes. That was a good thing because Tasmanians are embracing our national parks and that was -

**Mr BAKER** - Somewhat nervous deputy secretary down the end there but what I would say in response to that is obviously at the time nobody had any sense as to really what the numbers were going to be like. We didn't know how long we were going to close the parks for. The Parks and Wildlife Service did their best and made a judgment on what they thought the likely revenue hit was going to be: \$7 million was the number that we came up with. That has been supplemented by a spike in two-year passes, which is great. The reason Mr Jacobi might be looking nervous is obviously two-year passes mean this year we're not going to have as many passes purchased. The treasurer -

**CHAIR** - He's got \$2 million extra in his budget anyway.

**Mr BAKER** - We gave it back. He's also got border restrictions though so.

**CHAIR** - Well, I think he should get it back then.

**Mr JACOBI** - So the good news is that the treasurer, the secretary of treasury and the treasurer or premier have made it clear that the provision will be used to offset any revenue again this year. This year round we're just simply going to draw on the provision as we need it rather than making a somewhat educated guess. It was 5 million, so it was close but - so the Parks and Wildlife service, as we've said on many occasions is the state's largest tourism business and we're incredibly lucky that there hasn't been a staff member who's been financially worse off as a result of COVID-19, because the government has supplemented the loss in revenue. The Premier, Treasurer and the secretary of Treasury have again been very clear that if we get in that circumstance again then the provision will be used.

**CHAIR** - That \$2 million would have been helpful for maintenance for some of those roads into parks.

**Mr JACOBI** - If we could spend it, yes.

**CHAIR** - That's a statement, not a question.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - There was \$8 million, I believe, that was provided for maintenance for the last few years too.

**CHAIR** - It went nowhere, considering the amount of 51 per cent of our land mass is in parks. It's in my notes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I'm very well aware of that.

**Mr BAKER** - Sorry, minister, through you. I'm being told it was \$5.9 million so we found \$900 000 extra to spend, so just for the purpose of the record so I haven't misled, it was 5.9 million.

**CHAIR** - Still leaves \$1.1 million.

**Mr WILLIE** - Are the park numbers comparative to previous years despite the lack of international tourists? I've heard anecdotal stories of lots of mainlanders here visiting our parks.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I think it was 16 per cent overall deceased.

**Mr WILLIE** - In fact I know someone with a bushwalking company that reckons he never had it better before the last border restrictions.

**Mr BAKER** - Yes. Through you, I'll let the deputy secretary answer this, but generally speaking, about 20 per cent of visitation was international pre-COVID-19. We've had a spike, but we've also had an increase of both domestic and Tasmanian tourism. But as it stands, we still got an overall reduction, Mr Jacobi, didn't we?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, 16 per cent across the state, compared to 2019- 20. But we've also had record increases in certain months, since April 2021, which is usually our off season. So, people during April, May, June, et cetera, we've had some of our busiest months ever. So, people are holidaying -

**Mr BAKER** - It's jumping around, depending on border conditions, to be blunt.

**CHAIR** - All right, thank you very much. Everything is quite clear in the area of grants, subsidies and capital investment program that the member for Elwick has already touched on.

Minister, I thank those people at the table who are going to leave us, and welcome the ones who will join you for your area of Minister for Prevention of Family Violence. Thank you all. We'll get you on early next time. Two-minute break while we have a change.

**The Committee suspended from 2.56 p.m.**

**The Committee recommenced at 3.00 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - Minister, I welcome you as Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence, a very important area. This is Safe Homes, Families, Communities and the like. Minister, would you like to introduce your team. We have only 30 minutes not a minute longer. Also, do you have a brief overview?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Thank you, Chair. I introduce Mr Mike Pervan, secretary of the Department of Communities Tasmania, as well as Ms Mellissa Gray, deputy secretary Wellbeing, Strategy and Engagement.

**CHAIR** - Welcome to you both.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Thank you, honourable members. I am delighted to be here to day and very honoured to be the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. Addressing family and sexual violence is a top priority for the Tasmanian Government and for me as minister. I see my role as leading the Government's efforts to eliminate family and sexual violence and to coordinate the delivery of our 40 actions under the Government's second action plan, Safe Homes, Families and Communities. This plan has a range of actions and measures that address primary prevention, response and recovery and efforts to strengthen the service.

I am grateful to be supported by Ms Gray and the great team in the department of Communities in setting the whole-of-government policy and strategy for the Tasmanian Government as well as to work across the various portfolios to achieve real and meaningful change for victims, survivors and their families.

While each of my ministerial colleagues has different actions in the action plan, we all very much work together in regard to the action plan. My ministerial colleagues have the governance and the responsibility for their own actions, but together through greater collaboration and coordination we have a collective focus. This is an award-winning model which one the Institute of Public Administration Australia award. It is the same model that we are now using for the recently released Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy and the Closing the Gap implementation plan.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I will move now to output group 5.1 and the member for Pembroke.

**Output group 5**  
**Safe Homes, Families, Communities**

**5.1 Safe homes, families, communities: Tasmania's action plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022**

**Ms SIEJKA** - I wanted to know how many staff are assigned to prevention of family violence unit? How many of those staff work in other areas?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Because it is delivered across government, it is like 27 people across government who are involved - yes, it is 27. There are specialist police prosecutors, and they are under the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. There are some in Communities Tas, there are some in Justice, Education.

**Ms SIEJKA** - So nobody just in the unit?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In Ms Gray's team there is Ms Gray and -

**Ms GRAY** - Through you, minister, and two other FTEs.

**Ms SIEJKA** - But 27 all up across government.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Keeping in mind, under the two action plans there has been \$61 million of funding just for the action plans, but across government every year there is \$19 million in direct services but there is another \$59 million in indirect services that are provided each year to address family violence. We have specific actions under the action plan itself but across government there are other initiatives that are in place. The Safe at Home system is delivered outside the actual action plan. There are other systems in place that are outside the action plan, which have different staffing again.

**Ms SIEJKA** - On the action plan, on page 67 I was looking at table 2.6 and it shows the targeted actions and milestones for the Safe at Home plan. The implementation actually declined. I wondered why that was.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regard to the performance measures? Our target last year was 90 per cent and we way overachieved that. We got 97 per cent. The target is 90 but we are achieving way above it every year.

**Ms SIEJKA** - The target hasn't changed -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It is just that we are performing higher than our target. I commend the department on that. It is a lot of work to coordinate 40 actions across government and to keep all those different agencies and different ministers delivering their actions.

**Ms SIEJKA** - PESRAC recommend long-term funding for community organisations - three-year contracts. What progress has been made on that?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Under my portfolio of Family Violence, the only non-government organisations we have is Our Watch, I think, under specifically myself. The others, for example, sexual assault support services, they are under Community Services. You would have to ask the respective ministers in regard to their own area.

**CHAIR** - With the one you have - Our Watch?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, Our Watch. It is a new role. We are the first state in Australia to have this new role with Our Watch. The Our Watch prevention officer in Tasmania - when I talk to Peter Kingsley, the CEO of Our Watch Australia, they are very excited that we have our own senior adviser. What the senior adviser with Our Watch does is work closely with government and non-government services. She is also working with local government to build primary prevention capability, knowledge and skills in Tasmania. She is also undertaking work with Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations and providing advice on the design and content of the Tasmanian Government's primary prevention grants, and working with sexual assault support services. It is part of our \$3.3 million investment in primary prevention that she is leading.

**Ms PALMER** - Minister, can you please update the committee on the Government's actions to ensure the community has easily accessible information on family and sexual violence including how they can get help when they need it?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Thank you. When I came back to the portfolio one of things I became the most excited about is that we have a new website in Tasmania, the Safe from Violence website. What Communities Tas has been doing is to have one website where anyone in Tasmania if you typed in 'family violence' or 'violence against women', or different code words it would come up with our website, from where they can get different resources. It provides clear and targeted information about family and sexual violence, information for victims, survivors, perpetrators, family and friends. It also has information sheets in different languages. More importantly it has a quick exit button so if someone is looking at the website and doesn't want the perpetrator to see what they are looking at, they can get out of it and it won't show that they have been there. It is the resources for our CALD community members. We have information and fact sheets in Arabic, Karen, Nepali, Amharic, Burmese, Farsi, and others. We wanted a website where all Tasmanians could go to as a one-stop-shop.

During the COVID-19 pandemic we had things printed up which went on the back of prescriptions. If they went to a pharmacy this could be put on the back of a prescription so people could look at where they could get help if they were experiencing family violence.

We had a big focus this year on coercive control to let people know what is emotional abuse. For example, this one here is on the back of a prescription and it talks about, 'My partner always makes me feel guilty when I go out with my friends. They send me hundreds of text messages checking where I am and who I am talking to'. We make it quite clear that this is emotional abuse and it is family violence. We give them where they can find help.

We have done lots of resources that are available online. It is a very exciting project and I commend the department for their great work in this area.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is that in different languages? All those one you read out?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - It is a really good initiative.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Table 2.2, Output group 5, shows the funding ceasing in line with the conclusion of the Safe Homes plan. What is the expected funding required for the new plan that is due to be finalised in the next few months but has no budget allocation?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Just like when I was minister for the previous plan we have already started doing consultation work on what would be our third action plan. As part of that, Ms Gray and the team, we're getting together data across government and looking at what has worked, what can be improved, what works really well to see what needs to be funded as part of the next action plan.

One thing we know that has worked really well has been electronic monitoring. That has had, like, a 100 per cent decrease in - if it's in stalking, and a big reduction. In fact, our high-risk incidents because of electronic monitoring has gone down by 46 per cent since 2015-16.

It's a big reduction and that's through electronic monitoring. So that's one thing we know is working really, really well. We're looking at what is working, what can be improved. We know the safe family violence, our website, is working well, and that's what we're doing now. And we're consulting, more importantly, with the sector. We got a family violence consultative group that has different reps on it. Also the national summit is on right now which got in budget estimates, we have 12 community sector organisation reps as well as people who have lived experience attending the national summit to help provide information towards the next national summit action plan because of that our action plan will fall in line with the next national action plan.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Recognising that that work is still under way and there's consultation happening, are you able to confirm that the funding for the next plan will at least stay at the current levels or -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, it's stayed the same. We've actually provided extra funding; the initial action plan was the \$26 million. This one, we're up to \$61 million now that we've provided under both action plans, plus on top of that we provide an extra \$7.45 million as COVID-19 support funding towards organisations, too.

Yes, it won't be getting less. We're on this journey and it's something that I and all my Cabinet colleagues are very determined and very passionate about, as a lived survivor myself. It's something that I'm determined that if we can reduce family violence in Tasmania we can improve child protection, homelessness, gambling support, drug and alcohol, kids going into care. There're so many things that I think we could make better in this state if we can truly make a difference in family violence. It's very important.

### **90.7 Family Violence Prevention**

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If there are no further questions in this area I'll move now to 90.7 which is Family Violence Prevention. We've crossed over a little bit into there. Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, certainly have, but that's okay. I want to have something cleared up. Bit of a query around appropriation and expenses. Can you explain why the expense for the output of \$824 000 in this year's papers - that's in table 2.2 on page 54 - is about double the expenses as described in last year's papers of \$400 000?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - The COVID-19 response and recovery - that was extra funding that the Tasmanian Government put in because of our COVID-19 response.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And that was \$2.7 million, wasn't it?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. That funding goes through to June next year.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, but this is to do with the expenses side of it as well as the appropriation.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So there's also national funding. We were also given funding by the Australian Government which, together with our funding, went to nine different community sector organisations, so that's why it's using the rest of that funding up.



**Mr VALENTINE** - That's what the extra expenses are.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's using up the extra funding that you have put in as opposed to the feds or the other way around?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, there's substantial funding - \$7.45 million together that's provided to the organisations to help them because of demand during COVID-19.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. So, to the important aspect of the item, given the absolute importance of the services to the safety of women and children in the main, can you detail how each of the initiatives - there are six listed - have progressed especially those six initiatives in the program, and I'm talking particularly about the \$310 000 for community-based specialist family violence support services to increase the service's operational capacity. That's one.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - There's been quite a different amount of funding that has gone to different organisations, so -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can I read out what I've got and then you can tell me whether I'm on the right track? There's \$300 000 for community-based specialist family violence support services to increase the service's operational capacity; there's \$100 000 to establish a one-off flexible support package to assist and support family violence victims and survivors in leaving abusive relationships to access essential items and/or emergency accommodation. There's \$260 000 to increase the rapid re-housing pool by an additional 20 properties for transitional housing for up to 12 months for families and individuals leaving a violent relationship.

There's \$1.9 million to increase the capacity of Safe at Home, Tasmania's integrated criminal justice response to family violence. There's \$100 000 for primary prevention awareness campaign, and there's \$5000 for crisis accommodation services to purchase materials for children's entertainment and education purposes during self-isolation. All of those are programs or projects, however you wish to term them. I'm interested to know how each of them are going. You've just described one about the pharmacy leaflet that you were talking about is probably part of that \$100 000, primary prevention awareness campaign. I'm interested in all those others as to how they're going. We don't see any performance information or key deliverables in the papers to tell us how they are going.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. I can go through the ones that have been funded through the Tasmania Government's social and economic support package. In community services there was \$5000 provided for amounts of \$700 to \$100 payments to seven crisis accommodation centres to purchase material items for children's entertainment and education purposes during isolation. That was Hobart Women's Shelter, Hobart City Mission, Gira House, Sponsors to Women Shelter, Macombe House, Salvation Army Worroree for justice. There was \$100 000 for -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry. Just on that, that's been completed, has it?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, and some of these have also had top-up payments that I can go through. Justice, for example, there's \$100 000 which was used to establish the flexible support packages program which is \$6000 available to people escaping family violence to purchase

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basic items. But then we then provided a further \$662 846 to this through the national partnership. There was the \$100 000, as you quite rightly said, for the Safe From Family Violence website which is those resources that I went through earlier. There was \$260 000 that went towards rapid re-housing and that pool of 20 additional properties was achieved by 30 June 2021 in community services develop. There was \$310 000. So, these were 62 payments of \$1000 to five community-based specialist family violence support services to increase services and operational capacity.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So that's all spent?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - That's all gone. Justice - there was \$1.916 million to increase the efficiency of Safe at Home. That was across government. That has been used as well. So that was a total of \$2.691 million that's -

**Mr VALENTINE** - And they're all spent.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes. And it's been done, topped up more. So, like, the Safe at Home, there was extra funding in this budget to keep the services at Safe at Home, for example, continuing until the end of June.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. There's nothing in the key deliverables that actually indicates that you've got all that, I suppose, in the budget papers. That was -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - There would be a pretty big budget paper if we put in -

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, it's just that there's no lines to say that this has been completed or whatever.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Well, it's a bit like in - well, when I had disability organisations I had, like, 1200 disability organisations, so -

**Mr VALENTINE** - You can't list the lot.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - - usually it goes I assume probably in the annual report would be probably where it might - it'd be - yes, it'd be in the annual report with the department.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Anyway, suffice to say that it's - all of that funding that I've read out and that you've just reiterated and added some extra information to. I appreciate that. That's all been -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Some of them have been topped up to take them through to 30 June, too. We've added more funding.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. Do you work with any established service providers out there when you're designing policy responses for this sort of area?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - To do the actual policy work?

**Mr VALENTINE** - To actually come up with the design, the policy response. Do you actually work with -?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - When we did this action plan we actually surveyed 500 women with lived experience to see what the services they thought that they needed and what resources. We did extensive work with developing that second action plan and will be doing similar again with this action plan. We work with Australia's national research organisation for women's safety, ANROWS, and we work with Our Watch. We also have good relationships with other states and territories to see what is working in their respective states. For example, the Safe Families coordination unit that we have in Tasmania that's based on a program that was in South Australia, and another similar one in Victoria. Back in 2015 I went to Victoria to see how the program worked, and helped to bring it in Tasmania. We're always looking. It's a living plan, so if there's more initiatives or better ideas, we always welcome hearing them.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm very aware that there are some organisations, Engender Equality is one of them, they've got counselling services booked up until the end of the year, and they have to carry the burden of knowing that they're likely - whether they're able to deliver that or unlikely to be able to deliver what the services that that person that's knocking on their door.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - So, within gender I can say that we've been working with Engender. That's why we provide them extra funding as COVID-19 support. I know Ms Grove was out there recently because we should be getting - I think it's about \$5.45 million from the federal government in September towards the next body - as funding under the national plan. We've already been talking to Engender and other services. The ones that we see have got increased service demands so that we can help them, because we truly want to make a difference.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They are at the forefront, yes.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - That's right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sort of at the coal face, if I can put it that way. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Ms Armitage, then Ms Palmer, and then we're done.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. Minister, the Family Violence Act 2004 - I noticed at that time there was a lot of training for police officers and state service people who were involved in that area. So, how much training has happened since and is it regular? Do you have regular training to bring people up to date, to teach them new skills? What do you do actually with the police and with the State Service or what is happening on an ongoing basis to do with the Family Violence Act?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - In regards to police, they do training at the police academy and it's something which the commissioner is very passionate about, making sure that there are training modules. The family violence counselling support service as well as the sexual assault support services go to the academy to provide training, and there's a really good module that any of you here can actually do if you go on the SES website. You'll actually see there's a family violence module on there which has specifically been done for emergency services workers by the family violence counselling support service which goes in modules which explains family violence, how to recognise it, how to look after the best interests of victim survivors and perpetrators. In regards to the sector, we've been working - there's a lot of work that goes with the sector as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So, when they leave the academy - you mentioned there are modules at the academy, but once they've left the academy, are there ongoing - is there ongoing training for officers because I guess they never know when they're going to come across family violence in their day-to-day jobs? I'm just wondering - I accept that it's a module at the academy, but once they've left - and also the State Service employees - is there ongoing training with regard to family violence particularly for police?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, They undergo training as part of all promotional courses, and it's scaffolded into modules of other specialist courses. For example, they do prosecution course, CIB course. But they also do modules through the University of Tasmania and on victimology and offences against the person, family violence policing. It helps them to get their associate degree through doing this ongoing training and modules.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But if they're not doing promotion, do -

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - No, promotion as to get promoted.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, I understand that, but if they're not studying for promotion, is there simply ongoing training that your average officer who is on the beat that might get called to family violence, that they actually have some updated training to do with family violence apart from those that choose to actually go and do it at the university module or are seeking promotion? Does your on-the-beat officer or other officers who are there at the station who might get called, is there training that's actually mandatory as opposed to by choice?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Training is a part of every police officer. I think training is required every five weeks where they have to go to the academy.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So, there is upgraded family violence?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - There are regular upgrades, but the commissioner and I have had lots of discussions on this. Yes, it's something they're very passionate about making sure that police officers have regular training.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - All right, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms PALMER** - Minister, looking at the primary prevention of family and sexual violence and violence against women. Can you provide an update on the Government's leadership in these two areas?

**CHAIR** - It's a brief one. Thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - I've talked about the Our Watch senior adviser role, but we also work in with the sexual assault support service.

**CHAIR** - The right one is coming now. I'm not sure how that happened, minister. You would never have known that question was coming.

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**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Anyway, I'll just talk about these great initiatives, because this is called the Z Card that the Glenorchy City Council have actually put together on family violence. It was something that was supposed to be small and discreet.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can I have a look? Thank you.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - It's something that the council themselves did to - have a discreet resource that people could look at to see what family violence is and where to get help. It's something that could be popped in a pocket. It can be handed discreetly to somebody experiencing family violence, because we know that at times somebody needs to be helped without letting the perpetrator be aware of them seeking help. It's a great resource to help them and to know and explain. So we've been very busy trying to do resources that are discreet.

There are also different apps that are available now. There's the Daisy app, which is an app that can go on a phone which can help people to search up different resources, whether it's sexual violence or other areas of help and has a quick exit button and also an emergency alert button as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Has that got all the different languages on the back as well.

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - Yes, it's excellent.

**CHAIR** - Is that partly funded by Government?

**Mrs PETRUSMA** - By the Tasmanian Government in conjunction with the Glenorchy City Council. So the department is trying to do very innovative work all the time in trying to look at what we can do. But this is where we take on board the feedback from the community, we're going to be doing our next action plan. At any time, I want this to be across government, upstairs, downstairs, so at any time if anyone has got any ideas, I'd very much welcome the opportunity to work with our members of parliament as to what we can do to improve our responses. It's only together that we can make a difference in this state.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, and I feel sure that everyone at this table and our colleagues as well across the parliament fully support the government's initiatives, and particularly that great initiative as well. Minister, sadly our time has expired. We've actually taken some of the next minister's time, but we'll try and get some of that back during the day.

Our sincere congratulations to yourself and everybody involved in putting together your extensive list of what you anticipated questions might be, and we have other opportunities in the parliament to go down the path if we haven't been able to get enough answers today. Thank you very much.

We shall suspend and come back in a minute and a half, thank you, with minister Howlett. Thank you all.

**The Committee suspended at 3.28 p.m.**