

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Monday 28 June 2010 Estimates Committee B (Thorp) - Part 1

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Monday 28 June 2010

MEMBERS

Mr Dean
Mr Finch
Mr Gaffney
Mr Wing
Mrs Taylor
Ms Rattray (Chair)

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS

IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Lin Thorp, MLC, Minister for Education and Skills, Minister for Children, Minister for Police and Emergency Management

Department of Education

John Smyth, Secretary, Department of Education, DoE
Greg Glass, Deputy Secretary, Corporate Services, DoE
Jenny Gale, General Manager, Strategic Policy and Performance, DoE
Sue Kennedy, Manager, Portfolio Co-ordination Unit, DoE
Nick May, Director, Finance and Resources, DoE
Siobhan Gaskell, Director, Information Service and Community Learning, DoE
Andrew Finch, Director, Facilities and Capital Planning, DoE
Brendan Kelly, General Manager Learning Services (South)

Mark Sayer, General Manager, Skills Tasmania

Malcolm White, Chief Executive Officer, Tasmanian Skills Institute
Belinda McLennan, Chief Executive Officer, Tasmanian Polytechnic
Mike Brakey, Chief Executive Officer, Tasmanian Academy
Tony Luttrell, General Manager, Shared Services, Tasmanian Polytechnic

Department of Police and Emergency Management

Darren Hine, Acting Commissioner of Police
Phil Wilkinson, Acting Deputy Commissioner
Scott Wilson-Haffenden, Director, Corporate Service

Tasmania Fire Service

Gavin Freeman, Acting Chief Fire Officer
Tony Davidson, Acting Deputy Chief Officer
Mike Gallagher, Director of Corporate Services

Department of Health and Human Services

David Roberts, Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services
Alison Jacob, Deputy Secretary, Human Services
Penny Egan, Chief Financial Officer
Mark Byrne, Chief Executive Officer, Disability, Child, Youth and Family Services

Ministerial Staff

Mr Terry McCarthy, Head of Office
Ms Sandie Shepperd, Senior Adviser (Education)
Mr David Clements, Senior Adviser (Education)
Ms Jan Newton, Adviser (Education)
Ms Jennifer Thain, Senior Adviser (Children)
Ms Yasmin Kelly, Senior Adviser (Police and Emergency Management)

The committee met at 9.31 a.m.

CHAIR (Ms Rattray) - Welcome to Estimates Committee B for 2010.

DIVISION 9

(Department of Police and Emergency Management)

Ms THORP - It has been my pleasure to take on the portfolio of Police and Emergency Management. Over the past 12 months, the effects of the global financial crisis have been noted and I am pleased to confirm that Tasmania Police, State Emergency Services and Forensic Science Service Tasmania have continued to provide an outstanding service for the community of Tasmania. Tasmania remains a safe State. Figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics on 3 June 2010 show that, for the majority of offences reported in 2009, Tasmania's victimisation rate is the lowest in the country. In fact it is pleasing to see that Tasmania Police has actually reached its 2020 target of halving offences some 10 years early. This is a tremendous effort of which Tasmania Police should be very proud.

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This Budget will provide the Department of Police and Emergency Management with an additional \$27.999 million over the next four years. The introduction of an additional 30 police officers in this financial year will see the State's police service rise to its greatest ever strength with some 1 247 police officer full-time equivalents, and in excess of about 1 270 individual officers. The 2010-11 Budget provides an opportunity for the department to continue to develop systems and processes to support the work carried out by sworn police officers, State Service support staff and the many volunteers of the State Emergency Service. It will ensure that Tasmania Police remains a highly skilled and high-tech organisation with modern technology to enable it to carry out its valuable work to the highest standard.

As you are aware, it was at this stage last year that we were all horrified at the tragic level of lives lost on Tasmanian roads. Whilst there are many factors that contribute to this, we have taken the opportunity through this budget to provide Tasmania Police with the most efficient and effective tools to enforce traffic laws. Additional funding will not only provide for the replacement of road safety devices but it will also further enable access to mobile data and the use of automated number plate recognition technology. With the introduction of mobile data technology in vehicles, some 163 unregistered vehicles were detected on our roads in a one-month period. At the same time the introduction of clamping legislation saw some 430 vehicles removed from our roads over a six-month period for serious driving offences.

The valuable role that Forensic Science Service Tasmania play in ensuring that Tasmania has some of the highest clearance rates in the nation has been supported through the provision of \$1.5 million over three years to support an upgrade and replacement program.

The valuable role that our State Emergency Service volunteers play in providing assistance in times of need has been recognised by the contribution to each SES unit in Tasmania, of which we have 31. This funding will see an additional \$155 000 provided in the coming financial year, together with \$100 000 for upgrades to SES facilities on the north-west coast. While there are many more initiatives I could detail, it is probably appropriate now to go to questions.

CHAIR - Thank you very much, Minister, for that overview.

Mr WING - The increase in this year's budget to this item is attributed to frontline services, police connectivity and assault prevention initiatives. Would you mind telling us how that has been apportioned and some more details about each of those activities?

Ms THORP - The additional frontline police officers - \$1.137 million. The police connectivity initiative - \$2.176 million. The police connectivity refers to the automatic vehicle location project and other updating of data systems and software, plus GPS location. One of the big things about particularly the automatic vehicle location vehicle project is the safety issue. Many times the issue is raised: should police be alone in a vehicle at any given time? That is the case; we are never going to have every patrol with two police officers available at all times; it is just not physically possible. So every effort is made at all times to make sure that officers are as safe as they could possibly be. The AVL project means that at any given time vehicles can be located by GPS. It is not in all vehicles yet.

Mr HINE - No, but the majority are going to be covered. This financial year we are going to cover most of the operationals with Automatic Vehicle Location.

CHAIR - What sort of number is most - 80 percent?

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Mr HINE - The administration vehicles will be the last ones to be fitted. My vehicle, for example, will not have it in it. Non-operational vehicles will not have it in it but all of the operational vehicles will. I will be able to give you the exact number fitted with AVL.

Ms THORP - If at any given time a police officer is out of radio contact, it is able to pinpoint using GPS exactly where that vehicle and officer are located. It is an additional safety issue.

Mr WING - Is it desirable to have more than one police officer in every motor vehicle?

Ms THORP - I think you could say that in an ideal world that might be the case - in the same sense that we might say class sizes of 10, or upping nursing numbers would be ideal - but the police look at these issues extremely seriously. When there is any belief or consideration that the particular place the officer is going to may be dangerous, that is when they would make sure that it is not a single person patrol. On many occasions a police officer would be alone, either on their motorbike or in their vehicle, and that is when this extra backup - being able to exactly pinpoint the officer's location - is an additional level of safety for that officer.

Mr WING - I am not suggesting there should be pillion passengers on police motorcycles. But, in motor vehicles - if could be afforded, would the ideal be to have two officers in each vehicle?

Mr HINE - This is an issue and a debate that has been worldwide for many years, but the majority of police services around the world have single officer response models. There are not too many police services that can afford to have two officers in a car at any one time, and, in fact, it would be a waste of resources.

There was a shooting of a sergeant back in 2006 and he was on his own, so we revised the single-officer model. We developed a policy that there is always going to be room for single officer patrols and responses, but a risk management approach should be used. An officer attending takes a risk management approach, based on the information he receives over the radio and conditions he observes at the scene. If they believe, from their assessment, that it is too dangerous to remain at a scene, they will withdraw themselves, and the model caters for that. Obviously, in certain instances where the radio room calls police officers to attend, there is an automatic response. There may be two single officer responses, so you have two vehicles and two people. But it is all based on the risk assessment model.

In relation to single officer stations, we give specific training to people at those stations with regard to our policy. As part of a coroner's report in Victoria some time ago, a police officer who was shot recommended that all single officer patrols be withdrawn. That recommendation was not adopted by the report. In high-risk situations, single officer models should not be implemented, and that is quite right. That is where the officer has the responsibility to make a risk assessment and if they consider, with the information they have, that they should not attend unless they get backup, that is what they do and we fully support them.

Mr WING - Are there often situations where it would not be possible to assess whether it is high risk or low risk?

Mr HINE - You make a risk assessment from the information you get from the radio, and when you actually arrive at the scene. You are going through a risk assessment model all the time

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and that is what we tell our people - you deal with the situation as you come to it. It might be as simple as passing on a message. Would you want two police officers tied up doing routine things - serving summonses, making inquiries that are normally quite routine? Would you want two officers to do those things all the time, or do you get a single officer patrol to do those things. Even with routine things, an officer can go to a house and there may be a domestic while they are there - they will make an assessment, and that is why they have radios with them.

Mr WING - How often would the situation arise where there is a single officer going to a call out not really knowing what to expect?

Mr HINE - We teach our police officers to always expect the unexpected because when they go to a situation they do not know what they are going to come up with, but they have to make that risk assessment as well when they go to it. Even if you are doing a routine traffic stop you always expect the unexpected. That is why we have the AVL and there are 207 GPS-enabled vehicles in the fleet at the moment - 152 GPS-only vehicles and 55 mobile data terminals as well - officers can get information through mobile data terminals themselves. They have AVL, they have a radio, and they are constantly making an assessment.

Mr WING - If it could be afforded, would it be desirable to have more of the officers going to call-outs with two officers in the vehicle?

[9.45 a.m.]

Mr HINE - I think it would be a waste of resources to make sure there are two people all the time because there are routine matters; for example, if an officer is going to get a witness statement from someone - it might be the general patrol. Then you would have two police officers sitting around, when you could have two police officers in two separate cars.

Mr WING - I understand that and I am not suggesting that should happen with routine call outs, but where it is not known what to expect - if it is an emergency call out - would it not be better to have two officers there?

Mr HINE - For example you have got country station - a one-person station. They will get a call-out and it could be anything. It could be a domestic, and they will assess that information from their local knowledge, from the information they have from the radio room, from the information on data bases they will check - so they will make that assessment there and then. Even if they are on their own, they will get the call, they will make that assessment and they might turn up, and then maybe decide to withdraw because they think they need assistance.

Mr WING - Has the Police Association ever requested more cases where two officers were in the vehicle?

Mr HINE - They certainly will. We have seen in the media recently where they have relied on the coroner's findings in Victoria to require two people in a vehicle at all times, where in reality it is not a good use of our resources. And, it is world-wide - in America you quite often see single officer patrols and they are certainly a far -

Ms Thorp - Riskier proposition.

Mr HINE - Riskier - a dangerous situation. They have the approach that they would much rather have two single officers in cars, backing each other up, rather than just one vehicle.

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Mr WING - So, as a matter of principle, if you had more dual officer controls that would reduce the risk, would it, except in routine matters -

Mr HINE - You have a police officer patrolling around - it might be the sergeant, it might an officer delivering summonses. They can get called to any incident, or come across any type of matter. If we only had two person patrols -

Ms THORP - There would be fewer patrols.

Mr HINE - There would certainly be fewer patrols. You want to be able to react to an incident when they get a call in the radio room and constantly assess it - as the sergeant does, and as the individual officer does. You might say, from an assessment of all the information, that an incident only needs a single officer response. Another incident, you might say we need a two-officer response. You are constantly looking at your resources to ascertain what an incident might need. If a single officer response decides an incident is a little bit riskier than he thought, he can either withdraw himself - and we will fully support the officer if they withdraw themselves - or call for additional resources. We have the same objective as the association, and that is to keep our police officers as safe as we possibly can.

Mr DEAN - When you say a risk assessment - a risk assessment is a subjective thing. It is a difficult thing to make, isn't it, because the Victorian police officer was simply attending a simple traffic matter, a simple traffic violation - it could be a simple crash site that gets out of control, so it is very difficult for a police officer, in many instances, to make that risk assessment. When they are in the position of having to make that risk assessment, they cannot do it because they are in physical contact with, or face to face with an aggressive person. In these situations, if a police officer is on, say, general traffic patrol, will they always be two up, or if they are on general duty patrol, will they be two up? What is the position? That is the association's position.

Mr HINE - Yes.

Ms THORP - My understanding is that for routine patrols - the traffic patrols where they go out driving around making sure that everything is all right and keeping their eye on things - there would be a single officer in the vehicle. Every one of those officers is in radio contact, so if an incident should occur at Berridale or Kingston or whatever that needs the attendance of officers from that area, then they will attend, but not necessarily on their own.

What you are talking about is an unforeseen circumstance, where someone has gone to perhaps deliver a summons and got there and found a situation that was unforeseen. In that case it is the call of the officer, as the acting commissioner said, to remove themselves from the situation and make the call. None of us has a crystal ball. It is impossible to foresee anything that might happen. It is balance there between the judgement of the officer, what the routine work is that they are doing at the time, the judgement of the radio room - from the information that is coming in to them - as to whether this situation could escalate; decisions are made on that basis.

What if the Tasmanian community had to make a decision between halving all of the patrols that are out there, to ensure that every vehicle had two people in it all the time, and seeing a matching drop in the amount of police presence on our roads? This is a decision made after careful consideration about the ramifications and the parameters around any particular type of patrol. That is why it is so important to bring in things like automatic number plate recognition;

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if a vehicle is behaving irrationally or recklessly or suspiciously in some way, then click, here is someone who is driving an unregistered vehicle, or the registered owner has had their licence removed. All of those things increase the officer's awareness of the potential problems in any given situation.

Mr DEAN - Is this a matter of funding versus safety? Is that what it all about?

Ms THORP - No, absolutely not. It is a matter of very considered operational decisions on the part of the service.

Mr DEAN - Policing is a risky business worldwide. It is getting worse. The facts will identify that.

Ms THORP - How many examples have we had in the last few years where that has been the case?

Mr HINE - I think it is fair to say that it is risky and we understand that, but it is not about finances versus safety. Around this room and worldwide, police services and associations want our police officers to be safe. You cannot totally remove the risk, but the number of instances where single police officers are actually assaulted is very low. Throughout the world it is quite low. That is why you put in policies and procedures to make sure that your officers are safe.

With the automatic vehicle locator devices, we know where the police officers are. They have got their radio with them. They also have an emergency button on their radio. If they suddenly find themselves in an emergency situation, that tells the radio room not only where they are but that they need assistance. There are other protocols so that if they are off with a vehicle for longer than they should be there is an alarm that goes off to say, okay, we want to just check on the vehicle. The amount of times throughout the years where someone has been injured are very low. One is too many. We all accept that, but we are never going to eliminate the risk totally. It is always going to be a balancing act, to maximise our resources to deliver a service and to make sure that police officers are safe.

Mr FINCH - I would like to get some idea of the communication that takes place when an officer is sent to a situation - whether it is of concern or not - is that tracked? Is there a communication back with base that an officer is going to such and such a point? So - rather than an officer being sent to a point, who goes there and finds themselves in a dangerous situation there and needs to call in - is there some understanding of where that officer is?

Mr HINE - Yes. For example, when a call comes in, it goes to our communications centre. They put it into the system and dispatch a unit through a radio call. We have 55 mobile data terminals in vehicles so that they can do some checks themselves if they want to, or the radio room will do some checks. If there is an address, they can check previous history from that address, or if it is a known person they going to see, that information will be passed to the officer. Information is building and building all the time. The police vehicle then goes there - it is fitted with a device so we can track them we know exactly where they are and when they are going to it - they then have a protocol to say either they call off, or we know they are there anyway because it is mapped; they then take their radio in with them. If there are any concerns they can talk immediately back to the radio room. If there are other units in the area quite often they will drive by anyway just to make sure everything is okay. So the communication between the officer, other officers and the radio room is constant.

Ms THORP - They might be physically alone in the vehicle but they are not isolated in the sense that they are connected by radio, by police vehicle positioning and the fact that their fellow officers through the radio know where they are. These are highly trained people in a small place like Hobart. If they have been to the address before then that information is available on the mobile data terminals. They have got a pretty good nose about what is going on and if there is any concern, that is when other vehicles would be sent there.

Mr FINCH - Back in the radio room, do you ever get situations where you might have two or three incidents at the same time, maybe more, and do you have the personnel there to handle, collate the information, get the information, deliver that out and have the communication back in?

Mr HINE - Yes. The radio room use staff to make sure those matters are taken care of, so you have got a single operator dealing with a unit so therefore they will actually pass that information on to the unit concerned.

As the minister said, we train police officers. They go through 32 weeks of training; they have a policy in relation to single-officer response. They have all the equipment - whether it is baton, OC spray, firearms, handcuffs - at their disposal so if the situation turns violent they have not only got the training, they have the equipment to make sure that they can handle the situation in the safest possible way. It would be nice to be able to eliminate all risk as a police officer. Unfortunately we cannot. We want to eliminate the risk as much as we can.

Mr GAFFNEY - I suppose a greater police presence - albeit one officer per car - is actually trying to get a greater awareness out there in the community that there are police around, which increases confidence and takes away potential theft and violence; all safety issues. Minister, you pointed out if you have two officers in the car you are going to have less cars patrolling.

Ms THORP - Half.

Mr GAFFNEY - Half the cars is not going to help. Your role, Acting Commissioner, is to ensure the process is as safe as possible for officers while maximising patrols around the communities. Have you got measures in place so that occurs?

Mr HINE - That is right, Mr Gaffney. I think you have summed it up very well. For what we call a duty car in a city area, the duty car is the one that responds and is available to respond to high risk situations; there is always going to be two in there. The first car gets to respond but the other cars that are doing their normal inquiries are single officer patrols. As you said, you maximise your visibility and also your effectiveness and efficiency.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. That is a perfectly good way of operating I would think.

Output group 1
Public safety

Mrs TAYLOR - I note the performance information on the first line of Table 9.4 dealing with public satisfaction, and I see that there is no intention of moving beyond a 71 per cent satisfaction rating. Why is that? Why are your sights set so low, and why do you not intend to increase that?

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Mr HINE - I suppose those targets are actually set to say, okay, we have to maintain that. We have always been above the national average for community satisfaction. That is what we think is an achievable target. We are always going to aim as high as we possibly can. We want to make sure the community is satisfied with our services as best we can, and that is one of the ways we actually measure ourselves. That is a figure we know we can achieve, and sometimes it is a stretch target, but we always want to stretch ourselves. Our aim should never be a figure written down on a piece of paper; it should always be the maximum we can actually get.

Mrs TAYLOR - Absolutely, but I notice in 2007-08 you actually achieved 72 per cent, but your targets now are still 71 per cent going forward. I know it is only a figure, but one would think that you would be trying to improve on that.

Mr HINE - We are always trying to maximise and stretch ourselves. I suppose it is one of those things where you put down what is achievable. Should we ever rest on that? No we should not. We should always stretch ourselves to be the best we can. Nationally we always compare very well across most, if not all, of the indicators about community satisfaction ratings. We pride ourselves on doing very well across those indicators in Tasmania. We think we do a really good job. Can we ever do better? Of course we can. Should we always aim to do better? Yes we do. We certainly aim to do the best we can.

CHAIR - Minister, would you consider putting in the national average into the table next year for people who read the budget papers to know where we do sit in relation to national benchmarks?

[10.00 a.m.]

Mr HINE - We are actually required to put in a consistent set within the budget papers anyway so that is probably why we put that in, but from taking it outside the budget process it is widely publicised the community satisfaction ratings for police services anyway, so that is a separate process.

Ms THORP - But that kind of information is available?

Mr HINE - Yes, it is widely publicised every time it comes up. There is a 24-hour lockdown period the ABS gives us to have a look at it before it is actually published. It is published at the same time every year and that is certainly available through the ABS. We have no control; we feed the figures. We have no control over it and they publish it.

CHAIR - It could be put in this glossy.

Mr HINE - You will find that is one of the measures that we use to measure our performance and it is in the annual report. That is telling us what we are going to do in the next 12 months and how we are going to measure ourselves. We are not afraid of it. We think it is a really good measure and we think we are doing pretty well on that.

Mr WING - I want now to deal with specific police numbers and it is very pleasing to see there is increased for 30 additional police officers.

Ms THORP - Every year police retire or for different reasons decide to take a different career path so we have to have the training programs every year to maintain numbers, which is why the July intake it is 50. That will be the 30 additional, plus the 20 that is required to keep

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those numbers up. Then there will be another course about December, from memory, that will have additional numbers in it. So there is a two-pronged approach there; it is the maintenance of the existing service numbers but this 30 actually makes the top that you are aiming to maintain at 35.

Mr WING - That is a net increase of 30 as I have always understood, which is very pleasing. For the record, could you indicate the total number of police after that 30 increase?

Mr HINE - It is 1 247.

Ms THORP - That is full-time equivalents which converts to about 1 270 if you take into account part-timers.

Mr WING - It is not known where the additional 30 will be placed -

Ms THORP - And that must be a fluid arrangement as well because the police need that flexibility depending on where need occurs. I understand that the Kingborough area is considered an important area for more staff but I would be very loath to have us ever locked into a situation where we have exactly this number of police in any given spot.

Mr WING - I am not suggesting that but I would like to know how those numbers are spread around the police divisions in Tasmania?

Ms THORP - They have not been trained yet.

Mr WING - Not the 30 extra but the existing numbers which would be 1 217 police officers, how are they spread around the State?

Mr HINE - If I can find the document but I can certainly give them to you.

Ms THORP - I think it is important for the record, Mr Wing, to note that this is the most police we have ever had.

Mr WING - Would you like more?

Ms THORP *laughing.*

Mr WING - No, seriously, if it was affordable, would you like more?

Ms THORP - I think we need to continuously look at the whole range of issues around police in the State whether it be numbers of officers, number of support staff, people in the admin area, support through the radio room, a whole range of issues but I think we have it about right.

Mr WING - Even if additional funds could be made available you do not think it would be an improvement to have more police officers?

Ms THORP - I do not think you would ever get a minister to sit in an Estimates briefing and say that they would not like more money and more resources but I think the numbers that we have at the moment, which are the most we have ever had, and a 30 increase on our full contingent is a pretty good improvement.

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Mr HINE - Mr Wing, just to cover off the majority of the police officers, we have 180 police officers in the eastern district, executive support has 21 and human resources has 21. I can supply this to you later if you want.

Mr WING - Thank you. How many for human resources?

Mr HINE - A total of 21. Unattached, there are probably 5; internal investigations, 5; northern district, 250; operational support, 165; southern district 294; western district 234. There are various other bits and pieces that are made up without getting down to the -

Mr WING - So the operation support; what does that cover?

Mr HINE - That covers our investigating support areas like our covert areas, the radio room, marine service, our state intelligence services; those areas. So, the ones with a statewide coverage.

Mr WING - Where are those 165 officers based?

Mr HINE - For operation support?

Mr WING - Yes.

Mr HINE - In the radio room, obviously here in Hobart; marine services are here in Hobart but they have got a statewide responsibility. Our covert-type areas are in Hobart but they have a statewide responsibility as well and our State intelligence service is here in Hobart.

Mr WING - So, those 165 are all in Hobart.

Mr HINE - Yes, the majority are here but they certainly move around the State.

Mr WING - How many staff are there at the police headquarters building?

Mr HINE - As in the administration?

Mr WING - Well, both - police officers and administrative staff separately.

Mr HINE - For example, our executive support, which is a policy planning type area, let us say we call this our police administration headquarters. Executive support has 21 police officers. In the commissioner's office, what we call the ninth floor, there are three commissioners and two inspectors. Just using that administration headquarters, in project services there are three police officers so that is the State administration.

Mr WING - And the total number of police officers in that building?

Mr HINE - In that building it would be those numbers.

Mr WING - 26?

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Mr HINE - Yes, plus there is recruiting services downstairs. There are a couple working in the information technology area as well. So they all work in that building but those police officers actually do get out and do operational duties on occasions as well.

Mr WING - Just taking one of the divisions as an example, and I will take the northern one because I am more familiar with that, of the 250 police officers allocated to that area, which is basically the Telecom 63 telephone district, is it?

Mr HINE - Roughly, it is aligned to the council's local government boundaries.

Mr WING - How many would usually be available for duty at any time, excluding those on long service leave, sick leave or other reasons? How many normally?

Mr HINE - On a typical day - and I would actually have to go back and do the research because you have got various shifts at different times - Launceston division has five different shifts to work the 24-hour roster, CIB work at different times of the day, afternoon shifts, and traffic work at different shifts, so you would have to take a snapshot of a period of time to look at how many police officers are actually on duty at one time.

Mr WING - What about on average in a month? Are you able to indicate how many of those would actually be on active service, excluding those on sick leave, long service leave, annual leave?

Mr HINE - I would have to take a snapshot in relation to that. You would have to pick a month to see what the leave roster was, sick leave roster, to see how many are on duty at the time.

Ms THORP - But there would be, I would imagine a level below which you would not go. For example, if swine flu wiped out a third, you probably not let the others go on leave at that time.

Mr HINE - Yes, we have plans for annual leave to be set so that there are only certain numbers going on annual leave at any one time to make sure it is even across the district. If sick leave becomes an issue we have certain protocols in place to make sure that, whether it is to do with overtime or getting other resource from other districts, we make sure we can actually bulk to those numbers. There are plans and protocols if the resources go under a certain critical number. It is one of those contingencies you are always looking at; to say, okay, if I have a high sick leave as the district commander in the northern district at the moment you start dragging some people out of office duties. If you then think, okay, I have got less than I need, other districts start to support. There are contingencies in relation to all that. If, for example, you have a major protest on, you might have all these resources you need in the district but then you start bolstering those with other resources from neighbouring districts.

Mr WING - I understand that. Are you able to give us, even at a later time, some examples specifically of a normal week or night or day in the area? You have records?

Mr HINE - I can certainly give you a slice of what is a typical week.

Ms THORP - Like how many people were on duty last Friday?

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Mr WING - How many were available for duty out of the 250 in the northern area, say, or the southern area or whatever area you choose.

Mr HINE - We can certainly give you a slice of what is available, who is available, who was sick, who was rostered on. We do our rosters and our resource deployment according to the information that we have. For example, our CAC-starter, which is all the matters that go through the radio room, everything that has been reported historically, is used to develop our rosters. We know Friday and Saturday nights are going to be busy, therefore we have got to have more of our resources available to do those nights. We know a Tuesday might not be that busy therefore you do not have the resources on. Just because you have not got the resources on, does not mean it is not deliberate. You have to use all your historical data to say, right, when do I actually need to deploy my resources? It is about using all the information that you have.

That is where your rosters become reactive to when you actually need them. We know some nights are busier than others, we know some days are busier than others, we know our crime figures are up on certain days and that is where we deploy our resources. We know that people need to take holidays, but we try to even that out over the year. We our sick leave may be up over winter but we constantly monitor that.

Mr WING - I understand all of those factors, but I am really just trying to elicit information about the numbers who are usually available at any given time, on average, to be called on for duty when required. I am aware that there have been times, in my area, when due to matters such as illness, long service leave and sick leave that there are limited numbers for some shifts.

Ms THORP - Would it be useful then Mr Wing, to say what really happened - not just hypothetical - for the first week in June; a week's snapshot of Monday to Sunday, of how many people are available every day of that week?

Mr WING - That would be good. Perhaps two snapshots: one showing the minimum that have been available in the last year and another showing the maximum who have been available so that we get some idea of the run.

Mr HINE - We are setting up a rostering project for our 24-hour stations so that we have, for want of a better term, a number that we should have on the ground. If you and I turn up on a night shift on Saturday to work, we know that there should be x amount of people around to assist us.

Ms THORP - You don't walk in and your heart sinks and you think, gawd, half of them are away sick.

Mr HINE - That is right. We can now get those resources from traffic to help us. Instead of going out of town, they will assist the uniform to be able to respond. So we do have those protocols in place to make sure that those numbers are available. If we have different jobs on at the same time sometimes your numbers get depleted as well. There are certain protocols but I hear what you are asking.

Mr WING - On an average night in Launceston, I would be interested to know how many police officers usually on duty in patrol cars, motorcycles and on foot or at the police station? Could that information could be provided? Several of us on this committee are aware of an incident that occurred in Launceston about six to eight weeks ago where three or four citizens were assaulted in an unprovoked way by about a dozen young hooligans. A call was made to

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Launceston Police Headquarters and it took 15 minutes for an officer to arrive. To what extent, if at all, is the office in Launceston undermanned, and if so, how frequently?

[10.15 a.m.]

Mr DEAN - And it was just across the street.

Mr WING - I forgot to mention it was in Paterson Street, about one block away from the police headquarters.

Mr HINE - If you want to look at that incident specifically, we would have to look at what the other jobs may have been on. I am certainly not aware of the matter. It could have been they were on other matters, but I do not know. I am just wondering if you want me to have a look at that.

Mr WING - Yes. In addition to the information I have sought, could you provide information relating to the police officers on duty that night and where they were in relation to that specific incident?

Mr HINE - If you can give me the date and time I will certainly have a look at it.

CHAIR - Do we have the date?

Mr WING - I can give that date later.

Ms THORP - If any members are concerned about a particular localised incident there is always the opportunity to contact my office. I am more than happy to provide information where possible. Sometimes you cannot because there is an ongoing court case or things are still being investigated, but whenever there is an incident like that I encourage people to get in touch and we will get to the bottom of it.

Mr DEAN - Just on this one, could we look at the amount of assaults. In this instance, one person was hospitalised in quite a serious situation for some time. There have been many assaults committed in Launceston that are never reported. I suspect it is common throughout this State. I am talking about serious assaults. There was another serious assault that happened last Wednesday or Thursday night in Launceston, where an ex-police officer was belted and hospitalised. Unfortunately it has not been reported. What can we do to try to get people out there to report these situations.

We know the matter that Mr Wing referred to. One of the complainants, who is a businessman, was able to identify 15 other similar serious assaults in Launceston that he says were never reported. When we look at our statistics and in our returns here they are not correct. They are correct insofar as the ones reported to police are recorded here, but I would venture to say that probably 40 to 50 per cent of assaults are not reported, because people fear retribution and a number of other reasons.

Ms THORP - Could I encourage you to have a look at that sheet which I gave out there on public place assault. You might take some comfort from that, which will let you know that there have been 1 034 public place assaults since 1 July last year to 31 May this year.

Mr DEAN - That is reported.

Ms THORP - Yes, that is reported. It is a reduction by about 8 per cent on the number of reports from the previous year. A lot of that can be credited to the number of strategies that Tasmania Police are employing; the high visibility policing strategy, beat patrols on a regular basis and targeted patrols in CBD to address issues associated with antisocial behaviour. I have information here on alcohol-related initiatives and responses if members are interested. There are the PORTs in each of the districts, with the aim to decrease public disorder and enhance feelings of public safety. They are rostered on at peak times. They contribute to the high visibility policing strategy through foot patrols at major shopping centres, car parks, reserves, Hobart waterfront and other public places and streets throughout each district.

There was a lot information out recently about what happens in the Hobart mall. From 1 July 2009 to 7 June 2010, 29 assault complaints were made to police; 15 in the mall and 14 in the bus mall. Tasmania Police is involved in the Safer Hobart Partnership chaired by the Hobart City Council. There are quite a lot of these strategies going on to address the issue you are referring to.

As to whether people report or not I do not really know where we can go with that. People are supported by the police to make reports, they are treated seriously, so my only statement would be, if there is an issue, to go and report it.

Mr DEAN - We are talking about serious criminal assaults that have been committed and not being reported, that is the issue.

Ms THORP - Well it concerns me very much that we are saying that.

Mr DEAN - We hone in on these figures of reported crime but that is nowhere near what is happening. That is the concern of the -

Ms THORP - They are the only figures I have at my disposal, as you would understand.

Mr DEAN - Would you see more video surveillance, more police out on the street at the right time? This is what the public are saying, they do not see the police out there every night. We say they are about but that is not what the people are seeing. The perception is reality.

Ms THORP - You are bringing up two issues there. One is someone is assaulted, and do they or do they not report it? Now you need to treat that by saying whenever possible we encourage community members to report it if they are assaulted. The other issue is a prevention one, a deterrent effect, which you can attribute to the surveillance cameras and the visible patrols. There is reporting and under reporting and then there is deterrent and prevention. I think we need to work hard in all of those areas. There is quite a bit going on if I could just hand you these.

Mr HINE - I think it is one of those things we have always grappled with - what is our actual figures compared to what is under-reported. I think policing throughout history has always grappled with what is the real situation and I think public place assaults, the actual figures reported to us, are coming down. We have got various strategies, as the minister said, whether it is cameras, getting people out there -

Ms THORP - And they are increasing.

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Mr HINE - They are certainly increasing but one of the things we actually do from a national ABS point of view, we look at the number of reported crimes and the surveys that have been done just to try - you know when they do those regular surveys when they contact people - to see what that under reporting may be, and Tasmania was involved in that.

The actual numbers that are reported in what they call the survey report of victims, compared to the police recorded, there is normally an envelope that gives you an indication of where you are. There is about a one per cent difference between the actual survey results compared to the actual reporting, and we are just within that cusp of saying we are about right, maybe a little bit of under reporting, but statistically it gives an idea about what is the actual reporting compared to the under reporting.

Ms THORP - It is certainly not the 50 per cent.

Mr HINE - No, it does not come anywhere near that 50 per cent at all but of course these are just to give an idea, but any under reporting makes our job a lot harder. We go out to community forums and we encourage people, we want people to be able to report assaults to us or instances of concern, because otherwise if we do not know about it we cannot actually deal with it.

I think it is incumbent upon us as police and the people sitting here as community members to make sure people do report to us. We understand the fear that some people may have so we have got certain protocols dealing with certain community members to make it easier for them, but it is just one of those things that was done to determine the level of under reporting.

Ms THORP - Was it about 1 per cent?

Mr HINE - There is a statistic and I do not want to go into statistics because I glaze over as well as some other people, but it was just one of those envelopes where they say okay how bad is the under-reporting? It gives us a bit of comfort that we are on the cusp of where we may be statistically and it certainly is not as bad as some other jurisdictions.

Mr DEAN - I do not know how well we are doing in enticing people to report at least serious assaults or assaults that have been committed. I think people fear that they are going to have to make statements and go to courts and goodness knows what.

I have said there ought to be an educational program in place, a fairly strong one, that these people should report even if they do not want the matter to go any further so the police at least have the information and can use it for policing strategies. In the matter that Mr Wing referred to, as I said to the victim, that same mob of thugs and yobbos are out there operating almost every night. If people do not report it they will continue to do what they are doing and they will kill people.

Ms THORP - I think it is good to remind ourselves that when someone is the victim of an assault, particularly a serious one, it requires them to present at the Department of Emergency Medicine and statistics are kept there. There are also programs, where police are actively involved, that if people are fearful or intimidated by the behaviour of others they are encouraged to report it. We also have a program that is working very effectively in schools and colleges and all of these things are around encouraging members of the community to have confidence in the service and to report. I just think it is one of those ongoing things that we need to do.

Mr HINE - To add to what the minister says, for example at the university a few weeks ago, we had a police officer addressing different groups that may be more vulnerable than others, to try and get them to report and to make them feel more relaxed about reporting assaults or matters that they are concerned about. We are actually working with community groups all the time because we know they have different needs and fears so we are actually working very closely with them to try and encourage them to report to police. Some people are fearful about going into court; we understand that, so we need to address that as well.

Mr DEAN - We are always looking at the benchmark that is set. In this instance, of decreasing public place assaults. Are we too focused on that and not focused enough on identifying what is actually happening out there?

Ms THORP - What is important is that, as a community, we state loudly and clearly that we have no tolerance for assault whether it be something that happened in our own neighbourhood or our neighbour's so that things are reported. I think we need to use every opportunity when police are in contact with groups of older people, community forums, schools, children, to give them the message that violence is unacceptable, assault is unacceptable. If we can be encouraged by seeing the actual number of assaults go down, then that at least gives some confidence that the methods we are putting into place are working. If you were spending a lot of time and effort on those particular strategies and your statistics were still going up, I think that would be pretty disconcerting. There must be some comfort in that the number of reported public assaults are going down, but also the fact that the surveys done to try and ascertain the amount of unreported crime, in the form of assaults, is not an alarming amount.

Mr DEAN - I would argue that it is, but anyway.

Ms RATTRAY - The acting commissioner spoke of engaging with the community about assaults and reporting them. Can I ask you what your opinion is, or if you have a policy on engaging with the legal system in relation to the penalties that are applied after somebody goes to court. I believe there is a level of frustration in the community about the leniency, if you like, of -

Ms THORP - One of the absolute beauties of our system of Government is that separation of power. The police have a responsibility to apprehend criminals or people they suspect of having committed a crime, to collect the evidence and mount the case that a crime has taken place, and then I am afraid it moves into a different sphere. So, as to whether or not police get frustrated about the level of sentencing that is handed out to some of these people, I think we have seen recent events in the newspaper about that but -

Ms RATTRAY - But do you, as Minister, share that frustration? You then have the opportunity to have input into the next level, if you like; the next step in the chain.

Ms THORP - One of the beauties of our system of Government is the independence of our magistrates and judges and the discretion that they have when it comes to passing sentences. If the DPP feels that those sentences are not sufficiently strict then he has the option to take that back. That is as far as I would like to comment, because the independence of the judiciary is so important to our system of government. I am getting a nod from Mr Wing.

[10.30 a.m.]

Mr WING - Absolutely. We are very fortunate in the members of the bench, as we are very fortunate in the calibre of our police.

CHAIR - I do not disagree. I am just putting on the record that there is certainly some level of frustration, in my understanding, about what transpired.

Mr HINE - In relation to those assaults reported to Tasmanian Police - 93 up to the end of last month - 93.1 percent of those are cleared by either going to court or conference or whatever. If you are going to commit an assault in our community, so far there is a 93 percent chance of reported assaults going to court. That is one message we constantly put out there. If someone is going to commit an assault, you have got a very high likelihood of going to court. If we consider that the sentence is inadequate, there are certain judicial processes of appeal and, as the minister quite rightly said, we can do that ourselves and then go to the DPP as well. There are mechanisms whereby we can through the judicial system appeal those matters.

Mr WING - Is it possible for the police force to give any reassurance or confidence to people who have been assaulted, that they will be protected from recriminations by the offenders? A lot of people in the community are afraid to report an assault and afraid to go into court and give evidence because they fear that the thugs who attacked them will single them out and seek retribution later. I think that is a big factor.

Mr HINE - It is one of those things that we take very seriously. If someone interferes with a witness and they report it to us, that is something that we take very seriously. There are certain things that we can do, whether it is a restraining order against the offender, or bail conditions. Normally when someone reports assault, we actually put bail conditions on the offender, ordering them not to go near the victim. As soon as you breach a bail condition or a restraining order, that matter is taken very seriously and we will react straightaway and make sure the victim is protected. The courts take a dim view of these breaches - we will take the offender back to court and the court will deal with them.

We deal with victims all the time to make sure that they are reassured, to make sure that we have follow up, to make sure that they understand the process and to make sure that they understand, if there is another contact with the offenders, what they need to do immediately. So we take it very seriously, we make sure that we have follow up procedures and we make sure the legal system has got all the protections possible to protect that victim. As soon as we get a report that someone is being threatened, intimidated or approached by an offender, we certainly take action straight away.

Mr WING - Good, thank you. Is the Government prepared to consider introducing a voluntary policing system? Two years ago, at budget Estimates, former commissioner Johnston indicated that some consideration was being given to that. I hope that is still the case and that we may see some action, particularly as the United Kingdom police forces have some 15 000 voluntary police officers, and could not operate without them.

Ms THORP - My personal point of view - and it is not something that I have raised with the acting commissioner, and he can respond if he wishes - is that it is not something I will be pursuing.

Mr WING - Why is that?

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Ms THORP - Because I believe the police service is a very specialised profession, with very specialised training and I believe that police services are most appropriately provided by police officers. We have volunteer fire-fighters and volunteer SES -

Mr WING - Ambulance officers.

Ms THORP - and volunteer ambulance officers, but to retain the professionalism of the police service we need to stay with fully trained officers.

Mr HINE - We discussed it last year, Mr Wing, and my response was that we are not looking at it, and we do not intend to look at it. I think I used the example last year about an ordinary situation, a single officer in trouble in an ordinary situation like random breath testing. An ordinary random breath testing situation with a volunteer can turn extraordinary really quickly, therefore volunteer police cannot have the equipment that our police officers do. I know the police association has a very strong view about volunteer policing.

Mr WING - As they do in the United Kingdom, and it is still working as an essential service.

Mr HINE - I think in some of the areas the jury is out in relation to it - about some of the issues volunteer policing has. I indicated last year that we are not looking at it because we believe that a fully trained police service, as the minister said, is a better way to actually police the community and have a very active community reporting matters to the police. There are also the administrative overheads and other issues we would have in relation to volunteer policing.

Mr WING - I want to suggest, Minister, that there is a significant body of opinion within the police force here in Tasmania in favour of volunteer policing, contrary to the policy of the police association, which is consistent with the policy in England. I would like to ask, have you actually considered this? Have you looked into the way the system is operating in the United Kingdom, for example?

Ms THORP - No, I have not.

Mr WING - Mr Dean has been to Denver in America and I have been to England. I met in London with a number of representatives of the permanent force and a number of volunteers at the same time. There was unanimity amongst them that it was an essential, valuable service.

Ms THORP - Well, the short answer to your question is no. In the short time I have been minister, I have not looked into volunteer policing in the United Kingdom. There has been quite a bit going on, as you can imagine. As the acting commissioner said, there is a consistent position in Tasmania that it is a road we do not want to go down. I have not had it put to me by anyone in the service, in any official way, that they want me to examine that. If the acting commissioner or the association came to me with a briefing paper and options, and asked me to consider it, I certainly would. However, in the absence of that, there are a lot of other priorities at the moment.

Mr WING - Well, in terms of police numbers and the desirability of increasing them beyond what they are now, and the unaffordability, I want to suggest that it would be important for you to consider it. Mr Cox, a predecessor of yours, favoured it. I have investigated it overseas, Mr Dean has also, and I think you ought not wait from some initiative from the force. I think it is a matter that is working well elsewhere, so could I ask that you investigate it.

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Ms THORP - My understanding is that former minister Cox was not supportive of this move and he did do some investigation.

Mr WING - Well, he told me that he was quite supportive of it but because of the opposition within the police association, it was not pursued.

CHAIR - Before I move on, can I suggest that the honourable member for Launceston, in his retirement, would probably make an excellent volunteer policeman.

Laughter.

Mr WING - Yes, well that is what we were wondering about - tourism. It would be great to have the London bobby, perhaps, on the beat.

Laughter.

Ms THORP - I think you would have to be careful they would not arrest you for impersonating a police officer.

Laughter.

Mr DEAN - The volunteer police in Denver is one you ought to be looking at -

Ms THORP - Well, if you have some papers and documents that you think would be useful for me to read, I am more than happy to - I would love to see a copy.

Mr DEAN - My question is back to the one of violence. I have raised it because it is so much in the news of late, and that is the anti-social behaviour occurring within our malls. Launceston is a good example. I thought you might have written material on this. Hobart is just as bad. Why will the police not have a permanent presence in the main CBD areas of Launceston and Hobart - the malls in particular? The problems are not as bad in Burnie and Devonport and some of those other mall areas, but why can we not have permanent police in those areas during the business hours and into the night? It would satisfy a lot of concerns of the public and the people. Antisocial behaviour is reaching an all-time high again. That is the perception of the public and the people. In the mall in Launceston, for instance, some businesses cannot operate from their front rooms and have had to move their businesses off the mall into other areas and rooms within their buildings.

Ms THORP - I think it is really unfortunate when a small minority of people create so much distress to the vast majority of people by their antisocial behaviour. The issue of having a staffed booth in any of the major malls has been raised and will continue to get raised, but from an operational point of view my advice, and it is quite clear advice from the police service, is that those booths do not work.

Mr DEAN - I am not talking about a permanent police building or whatever you like to call it in a mall -

Ms THORP - Are you talking about patrolling?

Mr DEAN - We are fluffing around the edges here all the way through.

Ms THORP - Excuse me, what is the question here?

Mr DEAN - The question is what do the police see that they should be doing to get on top of this to put it to rest once and for all?

Mr HINE - There is a perception about it and sometimes it is actually not a warranted perception, that as you walk down the mall it is like a battle zone. When you walk down the mall 99 per cent of the time it is okay. It is just those odd occasions when trouble does occur. We have a number of different strategies in relation to it. There is the Stop Walk and Talk Program. Mr Wing mentioned how many police officers are in our building. They have a responsibility to get out and walk the malls when they can. Our PORT teams are patrolling around the malls to make sure they are safe. There is a CCTV program in operation in most malls. We have had a couple of instances where people have committed assaults and the CCTV has been instrumental in finding the perpetrators.

Is it a war zone or is it a blood bath in a mall? The answer is no. Do we have a specific strategy in relation to the malls? Yes, we have. Inspector Woolley in the southern district recently had a meeting with the business community discussing some of these issues. Of course we are concerned about policing in malls, because if there is a perception we have to deal with the perception as well as reality. Sometimes it is individual groups that cause another individual group to be fearful, sometimes for the wrong reasons, just because they are actually there. There may be a lack of understanding between one group and another group. It might be a younger group compared to an older group or whatever. We have to deal with that, and we are actively dealing with it. We certainly put police officers in the various malls as much as we can.

We do not think having a booth in the mall is the best use of a resource. We would much rather monitor and patrol around the CBD than sit in a booth. I often walk up to the mall myself as well. We get as many uniforms as we can into the mall. Are we going to be there 24 hours a day, seven days a week? No, we cannot. There are always going to be situations. In the southern district they have a program where if they are not on a call they will park the police vehicle at the end of the mall and walk up and down so there is a presence. We are certainly increasing our presence there.

We are dealing with the business community in the malls to make sure those matters are addressed. I was talking to one of the shop owners about these issues last week. From their perspective they said that the mall has not changed. There are always groups who sometimes fear from the others, but as a mall they said it has not changed. It is no more safe or unsafe than it has ever been. Sometimes the community perception is that it is unsafe. I was talking to another person not long ago, and they said that they did not want to go down to the mall because it was unsafe, but they had never been there. They had never experienced anything there. We have to be careful that we do not increase perceptions about how unsafe it is. But we do understand from the communities that operate in the mall that they have concerns and we need to keep addressing that.

We have several programs where we have talked to the business owners in Launceston to make sure that their perceptions, realities or whatever they may be are addressed. We understand they have an environment and a business to run as well.

[10.45 a.m.]

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Ms THORP - It is fair to say that the community perception, which is probably reasonably correct, is that the situations they see often involve young people. There are quite a lot of programs you might be interested in -

Mr DEAN - All these fluffy programs, yes.

Ms THORP - I beg your pardon?

Mr DEAN - I refer to them as fluffy programs.

Ms THORP - Community respect order, interagency support teams, U-Turn, illicit drug diversion initiative, early intervention pilot program, community conferencing, legislative reform concerning the supply of alcohol to youth in private places, youth conversation and planting, the PORTs, managing drug-related incidents in schools, support for PCYCs, the multi-cultural liaison officer program, student safety and cultural awareness task force, and police in colleges and schools. There is a lot of effort being made to make sure that young people get the message very clearly.

Mr DEAN - When the police are brought out of the courts in Launceston - and we have been told that is likely to happen in about October or November this year - will all of those police remain in Launceston and will some of those police boost the number of police that are walking around the streets of Launceston? Will there be a better and improved police presence in and around Launceston itself and in particular the mall and CBD area.

Ms THORP - The simple answer to that is yes.

Mr DEAN - So they will all remain in Launceston.

Ms THORP - I am not going to say that, because the police need to have discretion at all times to deploy their staff and personnel where they see fit. There is no doubt that the release of these officers from the courts will mean a larger pool for the police hierarchy in that area to deploy where they wish. I do not want to give the impression that we think that having those police in the court system means the Launceston area is depleted of services it should have. I do not believe that to be the case.

Mr DEAN - How many police will be relieved once the courts are taken over by private security? How many numbers?

Mr HINE - We are still working with the Justice department to actually look at those facts and figures and to get right down to the nitty-gritty. We have not got an exact number at the moment. I think it is fair to say on average there is five to six, but that is -

Ms THORP - There seems to be the perception - and tell me if I am incorrect here - that those police are 100 per cent tied up in court matters. That is not the case.

Mr DEAN - That is not the case, no.

Ms THORP - They are only in the courts when they are required. The rest of the time they are out doing police duties.

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Mr HINE - The other thing about malls - you cannot arrest your way out of these antisocial problems. You just cannot arrest your way out of a situation or a perceived or real problem. We all know it is greater than that. It is not just a police issue. You cannot arrest your way out of it - there are underlying issues as well which we need to address.

Ms THORP - Alcohol is a significant one.

Mr HINE - That is right so we have to deal with those issues.

Mr GAFFNEY - I realise we are still on support for community. We have touched on a few of the areas. There are some initiatives that the police are doing with performance reviews and the police work with councils and major events to decrease a lot of the safety issues that could arise. The minister has mentioned a number of initiatives supporting connectivity with groups like police in schools and colleges. I think that is great.

Ms THORP - And with older people.

Mr GAFFNEY - The only one I have not heard mentioned - I am not sure whether it is in this area but it is support for the community - is the role in funding and support for Neighbourhood Watches. In some areas they play an important role in being aware and connecting with groups and hot spots that might come up. How is that going, because that waxes and wanes?

Ms THORP - I think you have hit the nail on the head when you say it waxes and wanes. You usually find - from my experience and what I have been told - that there is interest in a particular community to develop a Neighbourhood Watch program, and whilst there are enough people turning up to meetings and doing the job it goes very well, but then like a lot of communities we see a community ageing and the group ageing and interest in that particular Neighbourhood Watch in a given area will wane.

It peaked in about the early 1990s with 150 Neighbourhood Watches and that has declined down to about 69 so it is not as significant as it was. One of the really good things about using Neighbourhood Watches is the kinds of suggestions and ideas they come up with to address particular crime patterns in their neighbourhood; things like letting people know where the street lighting is less than effective, pointing out areas where people might gather to engage in some antisocial behaviour, do graffiti - pointing that out to the police so it can be acted on.

Mr GAFFNEY - Do you have a budget figure for that type of thing or is that just part of a police officer's role? Because I think the more successful ones are the ones where a police officer does actually go to the meetings and is seen. They tend to be more successful because they think there is a closer relationship between the community and the police force. I am just wondering if there is a budget figure for that?

Ms THORP - There is \$15 000 budget for direct support to the different groups. From my understanding it is a local policing issue about the attendance of the local policeman -

Mr GAFFNEY - If they are involved.

Ms THORP - Yes, and if it is an active group.

Mr HINE - Nationally there has been a resurgence in relation to Neighbourhood Watch. We had one of the national conferences down here last year. They have a strategic plan. The new president of Neighbourhood Watch, Jan Dunsby, is now developing a strategic plan as well. I think it is one of those things that is getting a bit of a resurgence. They have to keep themselves active; they cannot rely on the police all the time. They know if there is a low crime rate in that area then obviously they are in control, so they are reinventing themselves to see how they can better interact with the community and better interact with other community groups as well.

We have police officers who go along to their meetings and support them but I think we have a resurgence. They are looking at their strategic plans and they are a real benefit to us in relation to reporting crime, being out there, being active in supporting the police and their community to feel safe.

Ms THORP - I will not mention the suburb because I do not want to malign it, but about eight years ago in my electorate a Neighbourhood Watch group formed and it was extremely active for several years, but there has been a real change in the amount of crime in that area - the perception of crime as well as the reality. Therefore the interest in that area in having an active Neighbourhood Watch dropped off because people were not finding that two or three houses in the street were being robbed or someone was creeping around taking the compost bin or the left-out lawnmower or the chainsaw out of the shed. Consequently people stopped seeing a real need to go along to their Neighbourhood Watch meeting and that particular group is not as active as it used to be. I know of another one also in my electorate where it is picking up because there is a perception that they can have a really active role.

It happens a lot. They are very effective when you have a population that moves in and out a lot, particularly around shack areas. If people have a shack and they are away a lot and they have neighbours who keep an eye open for them, then that seems to work really well. It seems to work well where there is a mixture in the community of young people keeping an eye out for their elderly neighbours.

Mr GAFFNEY - Indirectly that is your volunteer police force helping out.

Ms THORP - Indirectly, yes. When you add up access to Crime Stoppers and what happens with Neighbourhood Watch then Tasmanians are doing it in their own way already.

CHAIR - Minister, Pubwatch was funded in this year's Budget. How do you see that program going after the first 12 months? Is it going to be at nil cost, or are we going to lose the program after only 12 months?

Ms THORP - The commissioner has just told me that we are probably going to take that money and give it to the hospitality industry. We figure that is probably where it is better used, to work on a network whereby banned patrons, for example, are known. It came up through the police budget but we are actually going to move it to hospitality.

CHAIR - So there will not be any policing involve in implementing that program?

Ms THORP - It won't change the police involvement.

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Mr HINE - We will certainly be involved. Minister O'Byrne requested that the money would be better in another portfolio and we think it is a good idea for it to go there. We will be involved.

Ms THORP - It was the publicans who were using the money anyway.

CHAIR - So there will only be one year of funding?

Ms THORP - Like all of these projects, if they go well and the results are there then you would look at refunding them. I am loath to commit to funding something year after year after year unless we know it is getting results.

CHAIR - I know that is your position on a number of areas, Minister

The committee suspended from 10.55a.m. to 11.08 a.m.

CHAIR - How many police officers, at any one time, will need to be seconded to the integrity commission?

Ms THORP - It is an unknown at the moment. The police are committed to supporting the integrity commission but we will have to wait and see what the staffing requirements are. It would be of some concern to me if significant roles within the service have a lot of their time taken up but, having said that, I think we are all very supportive of the commission and want to see it work effectively. If we find that it is leading to a depletion of police numbers for straight police work then we will give consideration to it, but at this stage we just need to wait and see.

CHAIR - You are confident at this stage that the area will be covered adequately and not -

Ms THORP - I think I can give an unconditional guarantee that whatever the requirement, it will be fulfilled. If there is a requirement for half a dozen detectives to be working full-time on a particular issue they will be, but I will be making sure that other areas of police responsibility are not depleted. If that becomes an emerging trend we will have to look very carefully at how we cover that.

CHAIR - Are you suggesting that we will need to promote some officers to be able to fit in those roles?

Ms THORP - Not at this stage because you do not know what the kind of requirement will be until we have actually have a request from the commission to do particular work. I would imagine it would be high level, probably detective level.

CHAIR - It would be senior level for sure.

Ms THORP - Yes.

CHAIR - That is why I am asking whether you see there will be a need to promote some other police officer.

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Ms THORP - That may be the case but it is a little early to tell yet. From the community's point of view, though, they need to be assured that if there is a request from the commission for police to do specific tasks then those officers will be made available, but we will be keeping a very careful eye on that to make sure that other activities that are just as important need to be covered as well.

CHAIR - What about technology as well; obviously those senior officers will need to use some of the equipment that goes with high level investigations. Will there be enough equipment available as well?

Ms THORP - Yes, in the sense that it will be an investigation and all the resources required for that will be made available. However, as to the levels of it, the amount and how long any particular case might take, we cannot tell at this stage but we will be watching it very carefully to make sure that, one, the commission can do its job and, secondly, that there are not other areas of police responsibility depleted because of officers having to move to that. If that is the case then we will have to make alternative arrangements and that is when we may need to consider strategies like the one you have just suggested. The commissioner has just reminded me that an MOU needs to be drawn up about how it will work in terms of accessing police services but it has not happened yet.

CHAIR - That has not happened yet?

Ms THORP - It is happening.

Mr HINE - As we know, the new CEO was appointed two weeks ago. We have had an initial meeting and under the act there must be an MOU discussed in relation to that. That has not occurred yet but certainly will occur to cover all of those issues, as the minister has stated.

Mr DEAN - Back to the anti-social behaviour. The visibility of police on the street, particularly in the evening and in inclement weather, are very hard to see, so will you support a change of uniform to ensure that there is higher visibility of police in the streets? I did raise this during the Budget process.

Mr WING - Not London bobby-type capes?

Mr DEAN - Perhaps.

Mr WING - Very good.

Ms THORP - There has recently been a change of uniform. I consider things like high visibility vests in rainy situations very much an operational matter. Police have many of these things at their disposal and they use them when the situation is appropriate.

Mr DEAN - I believe and the perception of the public is, as they keep asking the question, how can we increase the visibility of police walking the beat? So, will you address that situation? I understand it is being addressed and I just wanted a confirmation, that is all.

Ms THORP - Yes.

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Mr HINE - You are exactly right, Mr Dean. High visibility is one of our cornerstones, not only in road policing but also beat policing, in the next 12 months. We went through a stage 12 or 18 months ago where we actually allowed beat police officers to wear fluoro jackets, but we are actually changing our uniform and we are about to sign off on tenders for the new uniform, which will include a high visibility rain jacket. It will also have an insert for a polar fleece to keep our officers warm and sleeves that will come out so it is a high visibility jacket. So part of that is to make our officers highly visible. We agree with what you are saying.

Ms THORP - When they want to be.

Mr HINE - When they want to be which is probably 99 per cent of the time. We actually want them out there, we want them visible, we want them walking the beat with their high visibility gear to make sure that they are. On those occasions where they do not want to be high visibility, it is a risk assessment they have to make. Your point is well made and I certainly agree with you. We want our police officers out there, to be high visibility, so whether they are walking the beat or walking up the road, we want them to be seen. That is the whole idea; to be seen and to be recognised as police officers.

[11.15 a.m.]

Ms THORP - If I may, in response to part of the question from Mr Wing today on day shift in the northern district, there are 88 members working: one commander, five inspectors, 23 sergeants and 59 constables.

Mr WING - That is the whole of the area?

Ms THORP - The northern district.

Mr WING - Thank you.

CHAIR - There shouldn't be any trouble in Launceston today.

Mr WING - That is about five shifts though, is it not?

Mr HINE - That is at this very moment. Obviously there is afternoon shifts come on and night shifts come on.

Ms THORP - This is a snapshot of what is going on right now.

Mr WING - And how many in Launceston itself?

Mr HINE - We would have to break that down again. But that is the northern district.

Mr WING - Thank you for that.

Mr DEAN - I wanted to get onto the Safe At Home position. I think that comes under this area of the budget.

CHAIR - Support to community, yes.

Mr DEAN - What is the average time that a police officer spends on a relatively minor Safe At Home complaint? In other words, where a person may have been abused without being assaulted et cetera, what is the time police would spend on that? How much police time is taken up on a more serious complaint of assault? I understand the average is about six hours and that would involve two police officers. How many reports do police have to put in when they attend one of these Safe At Home complaints? FVMS, statutory declarations, victim RAST reports, interviews; it goes on and on. Are we looking at trying to expedite these issues as best we can moving forward? What amount of overtime is incurred by police attending to Safe At Home complaints, assaults et cetera? I have a couple of questions after that as well.

Ms THORP - Okay. I would just like to put on the record that I completely support the work of police in the Safe At Home area. I think that it is important that the community understands that as a community we do not support domestic violence and that people have the right to be safe in their home.

The figures are quite high. In the last year the police attended 2 463 incidents classified as family violence and 1 254 family arguments as defined by the Family Violence Act 2004. Some 27 were recorded to facilitate a restraint order. In May 2008, the Tasmania Police contracted the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies to complete a statistical review of the risk assessment screening tool. Five recommendations were made and these are being explored.

An internal review of Safe At Home was also undertaken by Tasmania Police to ensure an effective response to family violence, as well as excellence and consistency in service delivery. A handbook for police officers has been drafted to assist members and ensure consistency, efficiency, effectiveness and good practice. What we have here is a recognition within our community that family violence is unacceptable, and that people do have recourse to the police if they are concerned about their safety. Police take it very seriously when they attend. Only last week there was an incident where the police were called to the home of some people I know, and the feedback from those family members about the sensitivity and professionalism with which it was treated by the police was extraordinary. From that point of view I do not think that when police attend domestic violence matters that this is a waste of police time in any shape or form.

Mr DEAN - I do not disagree with anything you have said, Minister. What I have asked is how much time do police on average spend on an abuse claim that does not involve assault? What is an average time that police would take to finalise one of those cases?

Ms THORP - I think that question is a bit like 'how long is a piece of string'. The police will take as long as is required for any incident whether it be domestic violence, robbery, assault in the mall, whatever. What is required is what is done and as far as I know there are no specific statistics kept to differentiate between police activity under any particular piece of legislation. I do not know if I am correct there.

Mr HINE - We could probably drag some of the indicative figures out, Mr Dean. When we first did it we knew it was about 8 FTE hours per incident but we know it is coming down. We have reviewed our -

Mr DEAN - This is the question I am asking, what have you done to review it?

Mr HINE - We have actually reviewed the policy and the protocols and rewritten some, because we know our police officers were doing extra things that were not warranted. We have

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actually reviewed that. As the minister said, we have reviewed, through TILES, the risk assessment screening tool. We know the number of incidents is coming down so therefore it is less police time spent on it, but we did the full review of the handbook just to make sure that it was contemporary. We thought, and we proved that we were probably doing a little bit more than we should have and than it was actually operational effective. We have reviewed it. I cannot give the average time now, but it is one of those things where you have to invest the time because there is a lot at stake. From a policing point of view, we think we have it about right. We do not think we can reduce the time any further, but it is something that we are always looking at because it is a really important area. If things go wrong the consequences are dire.

Mr DEAN - What overtime is incurred by police attending Safe at Home issues? It must be recorded somewhere.

Ms THORP - I hope you will jump in if I am incorrect but there are a number of police on duty at any given time. If they have not completed any given tasks by the end of their shift they would not just stop; they would go into overtime.

Mr DEAN - Minister, that is the question I am asking. How much overtime have police in the last financial year worked on family violence?

Ms THORP - Spent on domestic violence.

Mr DEAN - It is a special code. It is coded 406 within the police department and I would suggest -

Ms THORP - You would like a financial figure for the overtime accumulated by police in the course of investigating domestic violence?

Mr DEAN - There is a special code, as I understand it, that police have to identify where they have worked overtime and I think it is a code 406.

Ms THORP - In 2007-08, \$218 000 was spent on overtime. In 2008-09 that figure dropped to \$166 000 and in 2009-10 to date, \$132 000, so nearly half.

Mr DEAN - That is a huge amount of money.

Mrs TAYLOR - Is that all overtime or just on the Safe At Home?

Ms THORP - That is just for Safe At Home, is it not?

Mr HINE - Our overall overtime budget is about \$3.5 million, so this is \$132 000 out of that \$3.5 million overtime.

Mr DEAN - Can I now ask the question in relation to the VSR team - the Victim Safety Response Team. How many police are involved in that team, where do they operate from and what are their actual functions? I understand it is to follow up the next day or later on at another time. How many people are engaged in that process, how much of their time does it take and where are they?

Mr HINE - There are four per district in relation to VSRT.

Mr DEAN - Are they full-time?

Mr HINE - Yes, they are full-time. There is a sergeant and three constables and they have a vehicle allocated to them. Their roles are purely for family violence matters. They will either go to the initial scene - it is normally general duties police officers who do that - and then they will follow up the victim and the offender in relation to it. They are the checking and the follow-up in relation to VSRT. We do have specific prosecutors as well; all they do is family violence matters to make sure they build up the expertise and they follow up those matters in court as well. We have dedicated resources from the operational uniform side and also from the prosecution side, because we need to be able to support these people through from when the police attend to when they go to court. We also have the family violence assistance line as well, where we take the initial call if someone has an inquiry in relation to it.

We work very closely with the Justice department in relation to family violence as well. It is not just our issue, it is not just Justice's issue, we work in close cooperation with all those agencies to make sure it is well supported.

Mr DEAN - Family violence reports, as I understand it looking at the statistics, have not dropped -

Ms THORP - Yes, they have.

Mr DEAN - I did not think they had dropped if you looked at them overall. I could be wrong with the papers I looked at.

Ms THORP - It is fair to say that when the legislation first came into place there was quite a spike, and a lot of that was to do with people feeling they were no longer helpless - there was someone they could call if they were in fear of their physical safety. As part of the developing community awareness that you do have people supporting you, there was a spike. My understanding was that they have dropped off considerably.

Mr HINE - My information is that last year we had 3 170 family violence incidents - the year to date in the same period we had 2 899. That goes up until the end of May.

Ms THORP - It is significant and it does use a lot of police resources, but I do not think anyone is saying that should not be the case. Your question, I think, is whether there is a waste of police time with the amount of paper work, et cetera.

Mr DEAN - No, minister, with the greatest respect it is not. My question was - and the acting commissioner answered it - have the processes been reviewed with a view to expedition? The acting commissioner said they had been.

Ms THORP - It went to TILES, and the handbook is in draft form, to look at the efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

Mr FINCH - Minister, you referred to a review just a moment ago about Safe at Home.

Ms THORP - Yes.

Mr FINCH - Is that an internal document? Was it published?

Ms THORP - It was done by the Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies.

Mr FINCH - Is that document available?

Mr HINE - There was an issue about when it was published on the Internet - obviously there are some matters in relation to it that you would not want published. I am not sure if it is available, because we do not own the document - it was done through TILES. I am not sure of its current status.

Ms THORP - We can find out.

Mr FINCH - What were the main findings of the Safe at Home review? Do you recall what came out of that document that might have reflected on the policy and the Safe at Home legislation, how effective it has been and which areas were dramatic and have vindicated the legislation?

Ms THORP - There are five recommendations, but I do not have them with me.

Mr HINE - It was in relation to what we call the RAST - the risk assessment tool. That was the specific review by TILES, and five recommendations came out of that review. You would be aware that the Justice department did a full review of family violence 18 months ago, so we just did the RAST through TILES.

Mr FINCH - Can we get a copy of those recommendations?

Mr HINE - There are some issues with it but I certainly will have a look and provide it to the committee.

CHAIR - The committee can take that information in confidence.

Ms THORP - It is the issue of the ownership, is it not?

Mr HINE - Yes.

Ms THORP - He will check it out.

Mr FINCH - Another issue I would like to explore with you is in respect of a men's group that has been formed by men who feel victimised and disenfranchised by the Safe at Home policy. What is your understanding of that group in our community? What sort of support do they get through either the justice system or the police? Is there a watching brief on that circumstance?

Ms THORP - From the point of view of what we are examining today - which is interrogating the budget for police - it is not directly connected. The legislation is not gender-specific. The legislation says that no-one should act violently towards another person, whether it be a man on a woman or a woman on a man. But, I understand that the support group you mentioned is active in the community. It is not covered off in the police budget, however. As far as I am aware, it is more of a social community issue.

Mr FINCH - I was probably just undecided on the issue of support for those people who feel that they have not been dealt with fairly by police actions.

Ms THORP - People have always got the capacity to complain, through the complaints procedure, if they feel that is the case - right up to the level of the Ombudsman. If there are charges laid, they can rely on the fairness of our justice system. If a man is accused of something and goes to court, he has his own supports with his lawyer. If he is guilty, he is guilty and if he is not, then he is not.

[11.30 a.m.]

Mr FINCH - Are those people who are feeling disenfranchised by the system making complaints to the police, or are they waiting until they have their day in court?

Mr HINE - We do get some issues where people raise concerns and we deal with them as we normally do. I am not aware of a large number of complaints in relation to family violence but, as in any court case, there are victims and there are offenders, and one party may feel aggrieved. You are dealing with a situation where emotions are very high, so obviously we will look into any issues that are raised with us.

Can I just clarify, it is one sergeant and four constables in each district, so five in total.

Mr FINCH - Thank you.

Mr WING - Minister, you said that if a man is guilty, he is guilty, and if he is not, he is not. The bail provisions in the legislation dealing with family violence are very contrary to that, because a person charged under the family violence legislation is not entitled to bail unless the court is satisfied that he or she will not recommit the same offence. That has caused a lot of concern. It seems to be unique to Tasmania. Is the Government giving any consideration to making that fairer?

Ms THORP - For the purposes of interrogating the Budget for police and emergency services, I am not sure about the specific relevance of that.

Mr WING - It comes up under -

Ms THORP - It is the task of the police to enforce the law and if the law says that someone needs to be charged - just remember that not everyone gets charged as a result of a Safe at Home call out.

Mr WING - I think this probably comes more properly under support of judicial services but I checked and was given the authority to ask it here. But, I am happy to deal with it under support of judicial services later if you wish.

Mr DEAN - In December 2009, Minister, notice was given that a number of commanders - I believe it was two commanders - and a number of inspectors were to be made redundant within the police service. Were commanders made redundant, were inspectors made redundant - I think those officers identified an interest in redundancy. Was there sufficient interest demonstrated? What did happen?

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Mr HINE - Mr Dean, about 12 to 18 months ago we identified that we had one extra commander position for the cold case unit - there was a commander in charge of the unit, an inspector and a number of sergeants and constables. We identified that we did not need a commander in charge of that unit - it was moved under the operation support unit - so we had one surplus commander's position. We had 10 commanders and 9 commanders' positions. A redundancy package was offered to all commanders. One commander took that redundancy so we were down to 9 commanders with 9 positions. We also had a number of inspector positions that were in excess of our requirements. We have reduced our number of inspectors by 5, but only one inspector took redundancy - so one inspector and one commander took redundancy.

Mr DEAN - How were the others retrenched, and what happened to the other five you said you had to get rid of? Through natural attrition, was it?

Mr HINE - Just natural attrition. We offered redundancy to all the inspectors and all the commanders and only two took up the offer.

Mr DEAN - I will just ask a general question on the number of police suspensions that may have occurred, the number on sick leave and workers compensation. Could we have those general areas covered again, sick leave in particular?

Ms THORP - We will take that on notice - other redundancies, suspensions, demotions, sick leave, workers compensation and work injuries.

Mr WING - How did you come to have so many surplus inspectors, for example?

Mr HINE - We did a review of our positions. Our attitude is that if we have someone in an administrative position, does that position require it? We have identified four inspector positions that we amalgamated, so those inspector positions turned into constable positions which then turn into frontline positions. You rationalise your administration positions; we had five that could go out into the field. We did not need the commander position so the money that is saved goes into a constable position. We have moved them without any detriment to the delivery of service and administration of the department.

CHAIR - Was that in line with the budget management strategy that was put across all departments?

Mr HINE - Was it the main driver? No. Was it one of the drivers? Yes, but it is good business if you can actually save money through having less positions in administration. It does force you to look at those things, but without detriment to delivery of good service. Obviously it is a factor in any decision you take and any money you can save can be put back into frontline policing services. That is not to say that inspectors are not important. They perform a very important role in our organisation and they do contribute to frontline policing as well.

CHAIR - How much accrued annual and long service leave the agency is liable for?

Mr HINE - We certainly have that figure.

Ms THORP - We will provide it to the committee.

Output group 2

Crime

2.1 Investigation of Crime -

Mr DEAN - Minister, in this area there has been an increase of about \$3 million? Why do uniform purchases fit into this area?

Ms THORP - Because it is equipment.

Mr DEAN - Is it related to dress?

Ms THORP - For forensic upgrades and protective equipment.

Mr HINE - Because uniforms go across all budget output groups.

Ms THORP - The financial support required is across all of them and not in just one spot.

Mr HINE - That is right.

Mr DEAN - I have asked this in every Budget since I have been in parliament: what is the status of the Piggott Wood & Baker inquiry? Did it conclude? Is it still going? What happened?

Mr HINE - As you know it is a long and complex issue. Mr Wilkinson stated that it has just come across his desk in the last 10 days. Mr Wilkinson obviously has to discuss it with the people involved. It is finalised and it is the process of being finalised for all those involved.

Mr DEAN - It has been eight or nine years. It is beyond me and a lot of others as well as to why.

The special operations group are called out to assist the minister with frontline policing. As I understand it is used on a fairly increasing basis. Is the call out for SOG increasing or remaining static? If it is increasing, are we seeing more violent crime, which might be seen to be the situation from reports in the paper? Is it time for the SOG to be made permanent within this State.

Mr HINE - It is not increasing; it is about the same. I think we have had about 10 call-outs during this financial year. It was about 14 for the last financial year. Five of those were high-risk incidents.

Mr DEAN - I am not challenging reasons why they were called out.

Mr HINE - I am just giving you a bit of background information. Five were for their capabilities. We have 28 permanent members now which is the highest number we have had for a long time. They are a highly skilled, highly dedicated group of people and they do an excellent job for the community. It is probably fair to say that there may have been a reluctance many years ago to use them but now we are using them when we need them. They are dedicated, highly trained professionals and they have an excellent standing around the Australian community in relation to special operations groups. I suppose that it is a fairly constant in relation to the number of call outs. We certainly have the highest number of members that we have had for some time.

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Mr DEAN - In the Budget handed down for the current financial year was the police force required to make a number of changes with their resources or staff to meet the requirements of the Budget? Did this impact in any way on criminal branches in this State or indeed any other service provisions required of uniform police?

Ms THORP - I think that the member will recall that when the efficiency dividend was required of each of our departments it was quite publicly stated that it would not impact on frontline services and I am assured that is the case within police and emergency management.

Mr DEAN - So we saw no cuts in the area of the criminal investigation operations with administration staff?

Ms THORP - We absolutely minimised the impact on frontline services to make sure we were putting community safety first.

Mr DEAN - Weren't the savings made within the police service and how was that done?

Ms THORP - They did.

Mr DEAN - How was it done? What areas of policing?

Ms THORP - The department reviewed State Service support and reduced the establishment by some 25 positions. Of those 17 occurred by way of voluntary separation agreements.

Mr DEAN - State Service, were they?

Ms THORP - Yes. The principle areas where positions had been reduced were corporate support where work loads could be managed through more appropriate use of technology. As an example, by providing officers with access to mobile data it has been possible to reduce out of hours requirements for some call centre staff. There was a review of the police rank structure which saw one commander and five inspector positions abolished. There was a review of shift allowance stand-by availabilities with a saving of another \$0.4million. Vehicle allocation, \$0.3 million. It has had the highest allocation of vehicles per officer in the nation. While most of this can be justified due to economies of scale a review of the vehicle fleet identified the opportunity to reduce it by 23 support vehicles. Some savings have been made by cuts to travel of about \$0.5 million. There was work around procurement policies which led to a saving of another \$0.6 million and there is continuing review. One of the things that is happening with some of the proposals under this budget, particularly around barter management, is that there are more technological efficiencies which means you can get by with fewer people.

[11.45 a.m.]

Mrs TAYLOR - With crime stories appearing in the media can you confirm that Tasmania is still a safe place to live and what is the Government doing to reassure the public about community safety?

Ms THORP - I think all of us get disturbed by some of the stories that we see in the press on a regular basis - not that I am having a go at our beloved members of the fourth estate. It can be alarming for people, particularly if they see a row of stories over a period of days or weeks that seem to be around a particular form of crime, people can get really frightened. I think people should be reassured by the fact that we are below the national rate of offence categories for

attempted murder, manslaughter, sexual assault, kidnapping and abduction, armed and unarmed robbery, blackmail, extortion, unlawful entry with intent and other forms of theft. The quite frightening serious crimes such as sexual assault, kidnapping, attempted murder et cetera are actually well below the level.

As I said earlier the level of assaults in Tasmania has gone down steadily for about five years. The most prevalent places for assault actually are residential locations so whilst there might be a community perception it is out in the public area it is 47 per cent in residential locations and the next most likely is actually on the street. Retail or shops is right down around 9 per cent.

There can be a perception but I just do not think it rings true in the sense that there are statistics to show that we are well below the national average in those very serious crimes that are so often on our televisions and in our newspapers.

Mrs TAYLOR - What is the Government doing to reassure the public about that?

Ms THORP - I think this is an opportunity and we also go through these things in annual reports through the National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing, which happens independently. It is fair to say that 96 per cent of Tasmanians do feel safe in their homes during the day and after dark about 87 per cent, so while there are concerns within the community perception and reality are two different things. Tasmanians worried about becoming a victim of physical assault in a public place total 31 per cent compared to a national average of 38 per cent, which is in fact the lowest in the country, and 45 per cent are worried about being a victim of housebreaking which is well below the national average and again the lowest in Australia.

What we need to tell people is take care, be sensible, pass those messages on to your family and friends but do not walk around thinking that Tassie is a dangerous place because it just is not. Most of the things that get up people's noses, that annoy people, are speeding cars and hooning. That tops the list at about 76 per cent of what irritates people, where sexual assaults are at 9.

CHAIR - What about loud music, Minister? Where does that come on the list?

Ms THORP - I reckon they are the boom boxes in the noisy cars, aren't they? I suppose what we need to perceive is that we have the lowest rates in serious crime in the country. People's feeling of safety, against national surveys, is amongst the highest and when it comes down to those crimes that people think are most likely to happen to them, or gives them the greatest irritation, the top one on the list is people hooning. I think it says a lot for our community - not that I am approving of hooning but I would much rather have our community concerned about that than about other more serious crimes.

Mr DEAN - I have two very important questions - one on gambling and one on prostitution. Minister, is the police investigation continuing into the so-called clients involved with the 12-year-old girl we have heard so much about? A terrible situation; what stage is it at? At the same time you might cover the inadequacies that currently exist in prostitution law. I would be interested to know where it sits with the police.

Ms THORP - You mentioned three quite separate things there. With the first one, the actual events leading up to the commencement of police involvement, are being covered off by the Commissioner for Children and I am expecting - with another of my hats on - a report from that. As far as the investigation into the criminal activity that was around, that is an ongoing

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investigation and it will continue until all issues are resolved. Around the prostitution issue, the police are using the laws and powers they have at their disposal, but you would be aware that the Attorney-General has raised a review of that legislation which may lead to a change in the role that the police play within it. As we speak, there are certain expectations of police around the area of prostitution and within the powers of the law it gives them; that is where they operate.

Mr DEAN - On the criminal investigation, Minister, there are lots of questions being asked. Why has it taken so long? Is it because of a lack of evidence or identification?

Ms THORP - I will not be commenting on ongoing police investigations.

Mr DEAN - I do not want to know that but I want to know how far it has advanced. What stage is it at? You say it is ongoing, but the Piggott Wood & Baker inquiry was ongoing for eight years.

Ms THORP - Well, if there is work to be done, the work will be done and it will not be concluded until all that work is completed. It is ongoing.

Mr DEAN - Minister, does the police service retain or keep statistical data relative to gambling crime? I ask this question every year and I was promised by a previous commissioner that the department would start recording statistical data on gambling. In other words, the amount in gambling crime or crime that can be directly associated with gambling; do we have that statistical data? If not, why not?

Ms THORP - We do not have that data, no.

Mr DEAN - Why not?

Ms THORP - Because it is not collected.

Mr DEAN - Why not?

Ms THORP - When every policeman fills out their form in and around an investigation they do not fill out a subjective box that says this crime may be directly related to gambling.

Mr DEAN - But where it is directly related to gambling, as many of them are, why is that statistical data not recorded separately?

Ms THORP - That kind of information is often used as a defence when people get arrested and they go to court for a crime. In their defence, their lawyer may well say this person committed this crime because they were addicted to gambling or whatever but within the realms of police their investigations are about whether or not a crime has been committed, whether a robbery, fraud or whatever has been committed.

Mr DEAN - Is there any reason why the department cannot start collecting data detail in relation to crime directly related to gambling?

Ms THORP - A decision would need to be made -

Mr DEAN - In other words, appropriation of funds.

Ms THORP - about how much extra police time would be required by that individual policeman when they are filling out their report.

Mr DEAN - A tick in a box?

Mr HINE - I think we discussed this last year, Mr Dean.

Mr DEAN - We did; and the year before.

Mr HINE - I did not promise that we were going to in fact -

Mr DEAN - No, you didn't.

Mr HINE - I actually said that we do not intend to because changes to systems would be required and that development time and money was better put into other issues. So the short answer is no, we do not intend to collect that information.

Ms THORP - It is too subjective.

Mr HINE - Yes. My answer to that really has not changed from last year.

Mr FINCH - On this subject, I might get the same sort of answer. My curiosity was raised recently in respect of a case where a chap employed by TOTE or a Keno operation got himself into a gambling issue. He used quite a lot of money and lost money. I am just wondering who actually oversees that? Is it the gaming commission who looks after that? Do police only get involved when a report comes through from a Keno or a TOTE operation. Is there something more proactive that the police can be doing to try to protect people from getting themselves into circumstances where they might misuse the money, or is that the role of another organisation?

Ms THORP - That would be much more a regulation from company practice, from within TOTE itself. The involvement of police is only - as it should be - in investigating crime. Until a crime is committed, there is no real role for police in this area. I think it would be a bit of a blurring of their role. I can understand the importance of police being in preventive roles in terms of patrolling the streets, for example, but not to be going into places of work and checking out people's books to see if there is anything untoward happening there. There are other regulatory regimes around gambling that would cover off on that.

Mr FINCH - I would hope that the Government would be taking note of that as well and putting those safeguards into those operations so that people are protected from themselves.

Ms THORP - We get this kind of crime happening all over the place. I think there was one recently in one of the water boards up north where someone did some illegitimate transactions and there were consequences to that. Whenever there are people working in positions of trust we are always open for that trust to be abused and unfortunately it happens. Whether or not gambling has been the trigger; whilst that is unfortunate, that person has chosen to break the law so then they need to expect to be investigated by police.

2.2 Poppy security -

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CHAIR - Table 9.6 in relation to poppy security indicates there has been an increase in the acreage that is going to be under production of poppies. Do you have an understanding of how many acres that increase is going to be? Is it small or is it significant?

Ms THORP - In excess of 23 000 hectares were sown this year, which is a big increase on last year, which was 15 752 hectares. Poppy security is taken pretty seriously. It is managed through the Poppy Advisory Control Board within the Department of Justice. Field officers play an active role in crop security by monitoring the crops. Tasmania Police also plays a critical role in all aspects and introduces a 12-member taskforce during the growing season to provide security, liaison, investigative capability and support of the industry. The detective inspector, Southern Drug Investigation Service, is a PACB member.

The average number of poppy capsules stolen yearly between 2004-05 and 2006-07 was just under 12 000. The average number stolen from 2007-08 to this year was 2 624, which is a considerable reduction particularly when you consider -

CHAIR - The increase in acreage.

Ms THORP - Yes. In 2009-10 there were 33 interferences; three people were charged and the number of charges was 13.

CHAIR - Do you consider that the allocation to this particular area is sufficient to cover the increase?

Ms THORP - Yes.

CHAIR - There are no issues. I can report that I have done a ring around to some of my growers and they have no concerns with this area.

Ms THORP - That is good to know.

Mr DEAN - Will there be any additional resources required of police relative to the increased acreage that will be planted this year?

CHAIR - That is the question I have just asked.

Mr DEAN - What resources are provided by the industry to police in the security that is necessary by police? Are they provided with vehicles from the industry? Are they provided with any resources at all?

Ms THORP - I am aware that the police provide security liaison and investigative capability but as to the support back the other way I will need to check that out for you. Do you have that at your fingertips?

Mr HINE - No. I do not think that we actually get any funding apart from that liaison and their own role.

Mr DEAN - There used to be. A number of years back, vehicles were provided by the industry to police for the extra security. Obviously that does not occur now.

Ms THORP - Was that the case?

Mr DEAN - It certainly did.

Mr HINE - I think you are right, Mr Dean, but that was going back a number of years. I am not aware that that continues.

CHAIR - They now award that for the best poppy grower.

[12.00 p.m.]

Mr DEAN - You are probably right.

CHAIR - That is true. It is a very salubrious award.

Mr HINE - Can I go back to one issue as I have an answer here about the RAST. We were talking about the Safe at Home review publication - it is available online now at www.safeathome.tas.gov.au/occupationsafety.

CHAIR - I will let our secretary know.

Mr DEAN - The other question on the Poppy Task Force was that, whilst the conversions that are occurring are not large, are they conversions in a particular area or are they happening right across the State? I refer to the word 'conversions' with poppies - it is stealing with anything else.

CHAIR - Are you sure it is not consumption?

Mr DEAN - Well, probably both.

Ms THORP - For the 2009-10 season western district, 15 diversions totalling 3 025 capsules; the northern district, 17 diversions totalling 1 727 capsules; the southern and eastern districts, one diversion totalling 20 capsules, but it is very noteworthy that of those 1 883 were recovered.

Mr DEAN - Does the low number from this area simply relate to the acreage difference in the locations?

Ms THORP - That would be my understanding, because the farms tend to be up north.

CHAIR - It is something to do with the good soil, I believe.

Mr DEAN - The better part of the country tends to be up north, you are right. Thanks, Minister.

2.3 Fisheries security - State and Australian Government -

Mr FINCH - Minister, I am referring to page 9.4 and table 9.2. The item - expenditure on fisheries security - concerns the trailerable police vessel replacement program. The largest figure is over \$6 million for the 2012-13 year. Could I get an explanation of that project, and a timetable for its full implementation?

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Ms THORP - The capability of Tasmania Police Marine and Rescue services will be enhanced by the purchase of new vessels and trailers. The replacement project began in March 2010 and will continue over the next three financial years to 2012-13. The funding of \$800 000 will allow the purchase of six new vessels and trailers, and new trailers for some of the existing fleet. The funding for the project will be supplemented by the sale of replaced vessels and from the sale of two vessels seized from fishery offenders who engaged in illegal abalone and rock lobster fishing.

Mr FINCH - The full implementation is going to be by 2013-14, or is it ongoing?

Ms THORP - It is 2012-13. These things are ongoing, but this is an opportunity we have taken, through this budget process, to concentrate on trailerable vessels. We may find at the end of this project that they are all in pretty top condition, and whilst there will be ongoing maintenance there may not need to be the same focus on this item in the next Budget.

Mr HINE - Yes.

Ms THORP - This should see us pretty right.

Mr FINCH - How many are trailerable?

Ms THORP - We are getting six new ones with trailers, and new trailers for some of the existing fleet - 38 all up. Tasmania Police has 38 marine vessels and that includes trailerable vessels and ocean going vessels.

Mr FINCH - Not all trailerable, though?

Ms THORP - No, they have a whole range of different strength and capacity vessels for different activities.

Mr FINCH - Minister, can you apprise me of how much of the vessel replacement work is being awarded to Tasmanian manufacturers?

Ms THORP - We have not got it. We have a local supplier building the trailers, but as to the advice on the actual vessels themselves, I would need to take that on notice - because it goes through tender.

Mr FINCH - It goes through tender, and so it is open to any manufacturer and producer of those items?

Ms THORP - Yes.

Mr FINCH - Do we have any detail of those successful tenderers and who were doing the replacement?

Ms THORP - It has not happened yet.

Mr FINCH - So, it is up for tender at the moment?

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Mr HINE - No, as the money starts flowing next financial year there will be \$300 000 available, the following year there will be another \$300 000 and the year after that there will be \$200 000, so those tenders have not been done yet.

Mr FINCH - Right, okay.

Mr HINE - There are some trailers being done under the Treasury guidelines as the cost is between \$10 000 and \$100 000. If we get three quotes over \$100 000 for an item, it has to go to full tender.

CHAIR - Why would you build the trailers if you do not have the vessels to put on them?

Ms THORP - Because some of them are replacement for old trailers on existing vessels.

CHAIR - They are not for any of the new vessels, as yet?

Mr HINE - No. We are reviewing our trailable vessel fleet to make sure the right vessels are in the right spots. There are a variety of circumstances - we need a review to make sure that we have the right vessel, the right vehicle, the right trailer and the right crew in each location.

Ms THORP - Some things happen almost historically and the boat ends up being used somewhere - communities understandably get very attached. These sort of things have to be done pretty sensitively to make sure that the community has confidence that the resources in their area are right for them.

Mr HINE - We are doing the whole review to make sure we have those matters covered off.

Ms THORP - That will be in consultation with the fishing industry and other interested bodies, so that they have their input.

Mr FINCH - That is my last question on marine vessels - I am going to move onto something else.

CHAIR - I have a question on marine vessels. It might cross over into something further along, but since we are talking about rescue vessels for communities and you have done this hand out. Minister, I am interested to know, when you talk about the process of identifying where appropriate vessels are situated, what consultation will you have with communities. I refer you to the recent sea rescue off Bridport, when two young men were asked to take their vessel out and provide a rescue service, because the appropriate police vessel was not available.

Ms THORP - I do not know the details of this incident.

CHAIR - Is there going to be a process that ensures we do not risk the life of a member of the public, undertaking the rescue of another.

Ms THORP - As the acting commissioner said, the strategic placement of the vessels is the subject of a review and that review is being held in consultation with the fishing industry and marine safety organisations. That would be the local rescue service, the one based at Dodges Ferry and all the different volunteer brigades around the State.

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Mr HINE - We have primacy for search and rescue on the water, but we also use available community resources. We might not have all the assets at the right time, at the right place all the time, so we have an arrangement with the fishing industry, with other volunteer groups, and the private industry - a very good arrangement, so that the local police officer knows who to contact if they do not have an asset available. We have primacy, but it is also about the coordination necessary to get the best resources mobilised to rescue someone.

CHAIR - It would be a pretty brave person who would refuse to help in a rescue.

Mr HINE - It is up to the police officer coordinating a rescue to assess the situation, and make sure they are not sending someone out who will have to be rescued themselves. We would not do that. The police officer making the assessment takes that into account. We have many occasions where the police officer near the water will commandeer or co-opt someone to assist in a rescue. It is part of their job to make sure they have the capabilities and the right vessel to conduct the rescue. We cannot have police vessels in every area, so we have to make sure that we have the best vessel available at the time, where it is needed. There are many occasions where we use other vessels to assist us in rescues, and sometimes community members may crew one of our police vessels, if we need their assistance. We offer a very good service in search and rescue. Sometimes you are not going to have the best resource available, and the police officer has to make a judgement to use a fishing vessel, or use AMSAR resources - whether it is a helicopter, plane or other vessels in the area.

Ms THORP - It sounds like you are concerned that these young people may have been almost coerced into going out to help with a rescue.

CHAIR - I am suggesting that when you live in a small community you would be loath to turn down any local request from any police officer. Your own instincts would be that you would want to assist, but are we putting lives at risk purely with volunteers because we do not have the adequate infrastructure available in particular areas. This is just one instance and there could be other areas around the State that also do not have the adequate resources to cope with any rescue.

Mr HINE - That is one of the things that we will look at. We have also had instances where the local community has not been used and they want to get involved. That has been a real issue about them not being involved in a rescue when they actually thought they could have helped, and possibly could.

Ms THORP - Judgment calls.

Mr HINE - It is a judgment call. There has been some debate about where a community was not involved. So we get into that community and make sure the local police officer understands what assets are there and who they could call upon if they need to.

Ms THORP - And call upon appropriately.

Mr HINE - That is right, appropriately. And also our current assets. That is going to be taken into account when we enter the review of what vessels we need and also what crew and training our police officers need to operate some of these vessels. You are much better to have a trailable vessel that can be moved from point A to point B very quickly rather than have something that has got to go by water to get to a rescue situation because that takes longer.

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CHAIR - Right. So A, how long is the review expected to take and then B, given some of the difficulty we have had with replacement vessels before today, and I instance the *PV Fortescue*, when can the community expect an appropriate vessel to be available.

Ms THORP - These are replacement projects. That is the other thing to consider. It is fair to say that there are boats all over the State owned by police, there are not hundreds of them, and there are strong links with sea rescue and the volunteer coastal patrols and people like that. There are strong links with MAST and the fishing industry. I think the review is pretty well along in terms of where these vessels will be placed and which ones will be replaced.

Mr HINE - And let us not forget that there is a helicopter service as well. Sometimes it is actually quicker to get a helicopter for a sea rescue rather than try to get a boat into a remote location. The review is in its final stages to see where we are going to put the trailable vessels.

CHAIR - Three months, six months, 12 months?

Mr HINE - It is going to be out to tender within three months so we want to know before we get to that stage what boat needs to be replaced and what sort of replacement vessel is needed. So within three months we are going to get a tender.

Ms THORP - Where will it go.

Mr HINE - We will work back from there. It is one of the tools in a police officer's armoury that when a search and rescue situation comes up we have specialised coordinators in each area and they assess what assets they have, including the fishing industry, the volunteer areas, our own assets and also the helicopter service.

CHAIR - Minister, are you comfortable with the fact the safety obligations of a general public person are adequate in a sea rescue operation?

Ms THORP - It is always going to be variable. I would like to think that the community involved in the rescue, including the police and whatever other emergency services are involved, because it can be broader than just the police, would use common sense and would be referring to the capacity of the people. It is all very well to have people eager to help but if the vessel they want to take out is not up to it, or they have been drinking, then it would be a judgment call on the police and also the common sense issue for the remainder of the community. Some of these things get very emotional. There was a very tragic loss of life around Nubeena some years back where three family members went down and every man and his dog was out in his boat looking for them. No-one could have controlled that or stopped some of those people from going out. They were insistent on it. It was a big job for the police officer at the time.

[12.15 p.m.]

CHAIR - I appreciate that, but this was at the request of a police officer in the area. I hear what you say but I am just saying that we -

Ms THORP - I would be very concerned if I thought that community members were either feeling in any way intimidated or coerced by an officer to go out in conditions where they did not feel safe in a vessel that they did not think was up to it. So, I do not think any of us would be very happy to hear about that.

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Mr DEAN - My question to the minister is on the PV *Fortescue*.

Ms THORP - It has already, if I may say so, paid for itself by saving two lives.

Mr DEAN - Are you aware of the engineer's report completed by Alan Muir & Associates Pty Ltd that was done in relation to this vessel, a report that appeared on 12 October 2009? Are you aware of that report?

Ms THORP - I have not read it but I understand that report was given to the previous minister.

Mr DEAN - That is a damning report in relation to the police vessel *Fortescue* and I need to read the first part of that report and invite an answer from the minister.

Ms THORP - You are aware that this is an operational vessel?

Mr DEAN - I understand that it is an operational vessel but I want to quote from this report:

'The PV *Fortescue* does comply mostly with the purchase specification, except for a few critical errors and some non-critical cosmetic areas. The vessel can be used as a limited offshore patrol vessel providing that an operating envelope is developed to encompass the endurance duration of the vessel, sea state and the attendant induced motions on the crew, as compared to selected allowable criteria and the habitability duration of the accommodation as perceived by the crew. The defects and deficiencies identified can be remedied. An inspection and maintenance regime, more stringent than would normally be warranted, will need to be imposed.

The Tasmania Police Service have been poorly served by the designer and by Marine and Safety Tasmania. The design and boat will do, with limitations, but she is not the best or ideal vessel for the intended purpose. Some of the construction supervision by MAST seemed to have been sparse or non-existent. The TPS should have provided and insisted on an independent knowledgeable owner's representation throughout design, construction and commissioning.

A short finite life should be determined for the *Fortescue*, and the documented issues, errors and shortcomings of all areas could possibly be addressed in the replacement and any other TPS vessel.'

That is a damning report. There are other details in this report that might -

Ms THORP - It also directed us to make the changes that it asked.

Mr DEAN - The question is, because they have said it does not meet what Tasmania Police wanted and what they expected, will you continue to persevere with this vessel or will you get rid of the damn thing and start again to provide Tasmania Police with a vessel that they need and are deserving of?

Ms THORP - There has been some testing of the vessel, as the member quite correctly points out. There have been extensive sea trials, physical examinations following concerns raised

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with different reports. The tests and examinations, that the member correctly points out, identified a number of issues, in particular in relation to vibration and capitation associated with mounts, rudder assemblies and the vessel's operating range. They were identified.

The vessel has undergone a number of successful modifications and rectifications in order to ensure it meets the needs of Tasmania Police Service. Some minor modifications are yet to be completed. Strict operational maintenance guidelines were developed for the vessel. The final cost was \$1.6 million and this includes the modifications and rectifications. Both the procurement process and the subsequent deployment of the vessel are being audited by the Auditor-General. Consultations and discussions have been held with key members of the Tasmania Police and a final report is anticipated in July of this year.

You are quite right; the police actually commissioned the very report from which you are speaking.

Mr DEAN - It is a damning report.

Ms THORP - You do not put out a report expecting everything to be rosy. When you ask for an examination, you want it to be warts and all. The report was warts and all and it did identify some things that needed changing. Those changes were made.

Mr DEAN - The engineers have examined this boat and carried out a very close inspection of it and say it does not, and will not, meet all of the requirements of Tasmania Police, as were required in the initial stages. They are saying it will have a shorter life because of the fact it does not meet all of those standards. Really what they are saying - or I am saying it for them - you need to get rid of them and start again.

Ms THORP - I completely disagree with that.

Mr DEAN - It has been an absolute disaster from the beginning and it will be while ever they have possession of the boat.

Ms THORP - I think we cannot get away from the fact though, honourable members, that this boat is operational, and only in the last few weeks it went to the rescue of some other officers who were in distress and it saved them. It is money well spent as far as I am concerned.

Mr DEAN - Well I think you have an argument against that, Minister.

Mr FINCH - I am going to table 9.6 on page 9.8. We do not read as much as we used to about convictions for illegal fishing, particularly abalone, although I did note in your handout that one vessel is being sold because of abalone poaching and there is another vessel available as well. We have had massive penalties in the past. There is a drop between 2007-08 and 2008-09 in that table. I see there is a projection for 2010-11, which sees a big drop from what was a little bit of a spike in the target of this year, but it is going down to 1 000. The question is, are there fewer infringements these days in general terms?

Ms THORP - From July 2009 to the end of March 2010 there were 33 000 at-sea inspections completed around the state. They included inspections of vessels, rock lobster pots and other fishing gear. Some 1 018 fishery and marine safety offenders were identified and all of these people have either received cautions or full infringement notices or have been proceeded against

in court; 5 799 sea patrol hours were completed and police vessels *Van Dieman* and *Fortescue* contributed a total of 1 923 hours to that number.

My advice is that there is a move to really concentrate on the more serious end of the spectrum. I think it is fair to say - I do not know if there has been any surveying done of it - the amount of time and work that has been put into informing the community about safe behaviour at sea seems to be getting through. You might want to contribute to that but the perception that is coming through to me is that is the case.

Mr HINE - We are certainly now concentrating on the high end of the market. When I say high end; the serious offences. There has been a decrease in the number of offenders that we have caught because we want to concentrate on the upper end; those ones committing more serious offences. It has worked in a number of cases as well.

The minister quite rightly points out that the issue of safety on the water is getting out there. There are not too many boaters I would imagine who have been out there who have not been checked on a number of occasions. In fact some of the complaints we get is that they get checked too often so we have got to have that balance as well. I have certainly been out there when I have seen police officers going around checking for the safety equipment and fishery offences as well. We are certainly having a better look at prolific and more serious offences and offenders as well.

Mr FINCH - So that 1 000 is the move away from the low level minor offences to more significant ones?

Mr HINE - Yes. We will still look at those issues but we are certainly looking at that other end as well.

Ms THORP - That is where the real damage is done. It is distressing to know that even down in areas like the Tinderbox reserve, which has recently been expanded; there is still poaching going on there.

Mr FINCH - We hear a lot these days about sustainability of our marine fish stocks. Many species do seem to be threatened and of course the more restrictions that have to be introduced the more pressure there is on those regulations. Could we see an argument for a need for more fishery security enforcement in the future?

Ms THORP - I think that is a valid debate and I think we need to have it. Many people in the community believe that if you are going to make something an offence then you should be frightened of being caught committing the crime that matches that offence. I can only speak from my experience of what I see of people doing the wrong thing when I am out on the water, but I tend to come from the point of view - and I hope I have the support of others here - that education is better. If people can see the true value of protecting our marine resources and do the right thing, then our police can concentrate on the serious end of the crime scale in this area.

Mr HINE - I will just add to the minister's comments. Every police officer has a responsibility under the various acts to secure the sustainability of the fishing industry. We have a very close working relationship with the various fishing industry groups. Our marine people work very close to those, so that the information that we get from the community and from our own police officers ensures that we are targeting those who are doing the wrong thing. It is not just the

marine police, it is every police officer and the marine industry itself that provides us with the eyes and ears out there as well.

Mr FINCH - Going back to table 9.2, on page 9.4, that refers to the State and Australian governments, can you give us any detail of how fisheries security is divided between the two, and that cooperation with the Commonwealth authorities?

Ms THORP - The Australian Fisheries Management Authority contracts Tasmania Police on a fee-for-service basis to provide compliance and enforcement activity in certain Commonwealth administered fisheries. Marine and rescue service officers conduct both sea and air surveillance patrols of Commonwealth marine reserves adjacent to Tasmania in accordance with contractual obligations between the Australian Government, the former Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and Tasmania Police. It is almost a contract basis.

Mr FINCH - So what financial advantage does that give to Tasmania; what are those contracts worth?

Ms THORP - It is fee-for-service so I do not think that there is a profit base there.

Mr HINE - It is about \$400 000 a year so it is user pays. If they require us to police the industry and police certain things, then they give us certain boundaries then they pay for that service.

Ms THORP - There is no profit involved in that so that \$400 000 would represent the effort expended by Tasmania Police in carrying out the terms of the contract.

Mr HINE - We certainly get a benefit. We are out there policing our waters on behalf of the Commonwealth and is also patrolling out there as well. It is a win-win situation.

Mr DEAN - As I understand it there are a number of benchmarks that apply to all police - or most - in relation to policing of the fisheries side of things. I am not aware of what the benchmarks are.

Ms THORP - We do not have benchmarks for fishing.

Mr DEAN - Contrary to the information that I have.

Ms THORP - I trust the word of the acting commissioner.

Mr DEAN - Well, I asked the question and you are saying that none apply, so I would say that I will be asking the questions of this in another place at another time.

Ms THORP - We have a minimum number of sea inspections to do but we have exceeded that by 10 000 already.

Mr DEAN - As I understand it, where uniformed police have a fisheries component attached to their stations - for instance in Bridport and some other places - they have a certain number of inspections that they are required to make. What that entails is the police inspecting the same people all the time. I am asking whether that is really contributing to controlling illegal fishing

activities in the State? With the change to the more serious side of things that is identified in the budget papers, will any of those vessel inspections and landing point inspections change?

Ms THORP - I find it interesting because you base your question on anecdotal evidence. I think I will pass to the commissioner on that.

Mr HINE - Next year we have no benchmarks for the marine side of things. There are certainly indicators; we need to have a look at what we are doing. This financial year we did have a benchmark for total sea inspections but we are not doing that next year, so in reality there is no benchmark next year about the marine industry -

[12.30 p.m.]

Ms THORP - From July.

Mr HINE - From July, as in next month. We still have the indicators we need to have a look at, but the emphasis is in the top end of the market so we are not actually benchmarking it. We are listening to what is going on and where we can put our policing resources and therefore we need to adjust that benchmarking. You are right, I think we were concentrating on some things that were diverting from the other things, so that is why we have reviewed it. We were listening to some of the boating community. We were inspecting people, you know, sometimes a couple of times a day -

Ms THORP - If they are out a lot.

Mr HINE - If they are out a lot - but we certainly listened and we want to concentrate on some other areas and therefore we would need to adjust that as well, our benchmarking process, as we have in a number of other areas. I know you probably want to touch on the next output group.

2.4 Support for judicial services -

Mr WING - I want to deal with the family violence aspect that I raised in an earlier item. First of all, have there been any false allegations and if so how many in the last year?

Ms THORP - False allegations?

Mr WING - False family violence allegations to the police?

Ms THORP - How would the police determine that?

Mr WING - Well, they have charged people in the past with making false allegations. I want to know whether that has happened in the last 12 months and if so, how often.

Mr HINE - I have not got the exact figures but we do know there are some that are false. Then there is the question about what purpose is going to be served to actually charge someone, so we make that determination as well. I have not got the figures with me but we always look at some of the issues in relation to it. Some of them are misleading, sometimes false, sometimes there is actually sufficient evidence to be able to charge someone with that. Then you have got to look at what the outcome is going to be in relation to that as well, so we have to weigh all that up

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to make sure that we are actually doing the right thing by that matter. Sometimes charging someone with a false report is not going to help the situation at all.

Mr WING - Could we start with the number of false allegations that have been made in the last 12 months.

Mr HINE - We can do some research in relation to it but I do not have those figures at hand. We certainly know there has been some false ones, but actually getting the evidence to charge someone is often difficult. You might suspect but you might not be able to prove it. We would not keep figures on what we may suspect, but if we actually charge someone - I think the figures are pretty low - that is a different kettle of fish. I can certainly get you the number of cases where we have charged someone for making a false report or perverting the court of justice or those charges.

Mr WING - Yes, I would appreciate those figures. Also, is it possible to determine the number of cases where there has been a false report but, for various reasons, no charges have been laid?

Mr HINE - We can; again, sometimes it is a judgment call. You might have the evidence but it is like any crime that we get. If we cannot actually prove beyond reasonable doubt or take it to the stage where we need to go to court, it falls in that same category. We may suspect that it is false or misleading, but can we get enough evidence to actually take it to court? Sometimes the answer is no. Therefore, we cannot actually say it is proven false; we may think it but we if have not got enough evidence to prove it then of course it will just sit in the category where we have not advanced the matter.

Mr WING - Are there any cases like that, where it is considered likely to have been a false report and therefore no action is taken against the alleged offender?

Mr HINE - There are categories in relation to that, again, but we have got to be really careful about what we think and what we can prove. We do not actually categorise them as we think it is false but we cannot prove it.

Mr WING - I am not talking about the ones that need proof; I am talking about the situations where, say, a woman complains against a man for family violence and the police investigate it. They feel that the complaint is false, and decide not to proceed against the person making it through uncertainty about the outcome, but because of that feeling that it is likely to be false, no action is taken against the person complained of.

Mr HINE - I think if we actually extend that to any crime; if we have not got the evidence we just cannot move it forward and we cannot actually take it to court. I know what you are saying but it is very hard to actually put it in such a category; to say, well we think it is not, we have got to say, okay, what can we prove and what can we take to court and what have we got as sufficient evidence.

Ms THORP - Quite often, police turn up at a domestic residence because there has been some fear around, someone is frightened and they have rung. The boyfriend is outside or the fiancée or vice versa, then at the end result of that visit there are obligations on all parties. It is not simply a matter of police coming in; sometimes it is fairly obvious what the situation has been and in others, all the participants need to take some responsibility for what has happened and what

may happen. For example there might be an apprehended family - what is the correct term? You have got to stay away but it is not a restraining order.

Mr HINE - Family violence orders.

Ms THORP - Family violence order. So in this hypothetical the obligation may be for the young man involved not to come near the house, particularly after dark or whatever, but the young lady in question, I would say, you are not to send text messages and provoke this person, you are not to ring up and invite them around in direct contravention. In my experience it is very rarely - only in extreme circumstances - where it is one person who has committed all the wrongs and the other person is the completely innocent party. Probably the best things I think that come out of these investigations, albeit time-consuming ones that the police are involved in, is they really give people a talking-to and explain to them what their obligations are if they do not want this trouble to escalate. I think it is almost immeasurable, the kind of harm that is avoided by these police spending their time and effort talking to the participants rather than waiting until there is a full on physical assault before they get involved.

Mr WING - The reason I am asking these questions is because of the unusual nature of the bail provisions in the legislation, which I understand is peculiar to Tasmania. I attended a parliamentary conference in New South Wales soon after the legislation was introduced, and the police and welfare workers were very surprised to know about our legislation, which provides that once a person is charged, that person is not entitled to bail unless the court is satisfied that person will not commit another offence. That has caused concern to courts in this State. That is why I am asking these questions. Let me ask you, Minister, in view of this; will you and the Government consider amending the bail provisions to provide normal provisions applicable to other offences, so that the injustice that has arisen in so many cases in this State as a result of that will not be repeated?

Ms THORP - I refer back to my earlier comments, that sometimes we are not seeing the value of the work that the police are doing within the Safe at Home program. Nearly 2 500 visits made to family violence; 1 254 have been defined as family arguments and only 27 reported to facilitate a restraint order. It is not as if we have got this - please jump in if I am incorrect here - but I do not think we are looking at a situation where thousands of people have been refused bail upon being charged. I just do not think that is the case.

Mr HINE - People are arrested for different things. If they are arrested for an offence, as in an assault, that is a different thing to getting arrested for the taking out of a family violence order. About 50 per cent of the locations where we are called people are taken into custody, so it could be for an offence or a crime, or it could be for a family violence order. The police officer who goes to the scene has to make that assessment and whether it is to relocate the victim, relocate the offender, arrest the offender, take out a family violence order or put the person before the court. So there are a number of processes.

Back in 2008 we won a national award - justice was included in this as well - for the program because it is seen as a best practice situation. So we won an award for it and, as police, we do our bit and then justice obviously have a very important role, as do the courts. I understand what you are saying but it is hard to give a black and white answer to say those ones falsely accused a partner in relation to a family situation, so we have to make that judgment call at the time.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Mr WING - I have moved on from the falsely accused one to the bail. I am only asking about the bail and I commend the police for the excellent work that has been done here. I have no criticism of the police but once a person is charged with a family violence order or domestic violence offence then these unusual bail provisions apply which puts an undue onus and responsibility on the courts and they are finding difficult.

Mr HINE - Police can actually issue a family violence order so they don't go to court and those court applications for the family violence order, so far this year out of the total incidents of 2 800, only 324 actually went to the court application process. So, again, even when they are arrested there can be the police issue a family violence and then those ones going to court, and that is what you are talking about - when they go to court for the bail conditions.

Mr WING - Yes, once they need to apply for bail, if they are held in custody, how many of the family violence orders the police issue involve bail?

Mr HINE - Family violence orders where we issue it is 1 586 and the ones that actually went to court application were 324.

Mr WING - And the ones the police issue, what happens about bail?

Mr HINE - They are actually bailed with a notice to say, 'Okay, this is your bail notice', and we give the conditions that can apply or need to apply, otherwise if you breach it, you can get arrested.

Mr WING - Do the police need to be satisfied that that person will not re-offend in that way before granting bail?

Mr HINE - Yes, there are certain criteria and if there is any consideration that they are going to re-offend, obviously you have to take that into consideration and put them before the courts.

Mr WING - That is fair enough if that is the way the bail matters are determined. But our legislation provides that in domestic violence charges, bail shall not be granted unless the court - and it seems the police too - are satisfied the person will not re-offend, and courts have complained about that. That is the point I am making.

Ms THORP - Nothing has come to my attention that says that we have a problem with it.

Mr DEAN - That was a score of 25 under the RAST report. Under the RAST report, if they get over 25 they have to be detained.

Ms THORP - Yes, and that was what was reviewed.

Mr WING - And that is still the situation.

Mr DEAN - It is still the case.

Mr WING - That is what I am asking. Will the Government act on this to change those provisions which are unorthodox and create imprisonments.

UNCORRECTED PROOF ISSUE

Ms THORP - There was a review and it was decided that the provisions were to be changed because the one that the police give where people are not remanded, they are out on bail, and then it is a judiciary decision in the court.

Mr WING - And the judiciary are hampered by that restriction. That is what I am asking, will Government -

Ms THORP - No.

Mr WING - Will not change that.

Ms THORP - Not from the policing point of view. That is not our role. Our role is to enforce the law as it stands and if the law changes then the police will respond accordingly.

Mr WING - But that comes under your jurisdiction with this item - family violence incident report.

Ms THORP - We are responsible for the enforcement, not the act.

Mr WING - All right, I accept that, thank you.

The committee suspended from 12.45 to 1.47 p.m.