



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B**

Hon. Roger Jaensch MP

**Thursday 8 June 2023**

### **MEMBERS**

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Jane Howlett MLC

Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Chair)

Hon Rob Valentine MLC

Hon Meg Webb MLC

Hon Josh Willie MLC



## **IN ATTENDANCE**

**Hon. Roger Jaensch MP**, Minister for Education, Children and Youth, Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

### **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

Tim Bullard	Secretary
Jenny Burgess	Associate Secretary
Kane Salter	Deputy Secretary Business Operations and Support Services
Jason Szczerbanik	Deputy Secretary Continuous Improvement and Evaluation
Jodee Wilson	Deputy Secretary Support and Development and Support Services
Trudy Pearce	Deputy Secretary Children and Young People
Liz Jack	Deputy Secretary Keeping Children Safe
Zoe Laskey	Assistant Director, Strategic Policy and Projects
Katrina Porter	Manager of the Office of the Secretary
Chris Simcock	Executive Director Youth Justice
Claire Lovell	Executive Director Children and Families

### **Libraries Tasmania**

Sue McKerracher	Executive Director
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### **Office of the Education Registrar**

Katharine O'Donnell	Registrar Education
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### **DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET**

#### **Aboriginal Affairs**

Mellissa Gray	Deputy Secretary, Community Partnerships and Priorities
Steve Gall	Director Aboriginal Heritage
Caroline Spotswood	Director, Aboriginal Partnerships
Louise Wilson	Executive Director, Policy

### **DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH**

#### **Renewables, Climate & Future Industries Tasmania (ReCFIT) - Energy & Renewables**

Anton Voss	Chief Executive Officer, ReCFIT
Sarah Russell	Director, Climate Change
Glen Dean	Director Finance
Travis Boutcher	Manager Budget

### **DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT TASMANIA**

Jason Jacobi	Secretary
Vanessa Pinto	Chief Operations Officer
Namidja McKenzie	Chief People Officer

**Environment Protection Agency (EPA)**

Wes Ford                                      Chief Executive Officer

**Environment**

Sophie Muller                              Deputy Secretary, Environment, Heritage and Land  
Jo Crisp                                      General Manager, Environment, Heritage and Land  
Damien Norman                              General Manager, Analytical Services Tasmania

**Threatened Species**

Shannon Troy                              Program and Project Manager

**Land Tasmania**

Sophie Muller                              Deputy Secretary, Environment, Heritage and Land  
Stuart Fletcher                              General Manager (Land Tasmania)

**Parks**

Will Joscelyne                              Acting Deputy Secretary, Parks and Wildlife Service  
Alice Holeywell-Jones                              Acting General Manager (Park Operations and Business Services)  
Tory Ross                                      Director (Tourism, Experience and Visitor Services)  
Danielle Poirier                              Director (Major Projects and Infrastructure)

**Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (RTBG)**

Kathryn McCann                              Chair, RTBG Board  
Yann Gagnon                                      Director

**Wellington Park Management Trust (WPMT)**

Dr Christine Mucha                              Chair, WPMT Board  
Amy Russell                                      General Manager

# PUBLIC

**The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.**

**Mr WILLIE** - Your department will be significantly impacted compared to other departments given the size of it though.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Look, this is something that we'll take seriously. Every department is different, Mr Willie, in regard to the breakdown of where the public facing services are and what the back of house is. We need to work on clarifying with Treasury their directions regarding this and working through the implications for our budget, and we'll manage that.

**Ms WEBB** - What would that figure be, actually, for this department if we were to be applying it in 2024-25? In anticipating what the budget is likely to be for the department that year, the efficiency dividend of 0.6.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We can't speculate on future budgets, but -

**Ms WEBB** - Well, certainly. But if we thought it was about the same as this year, what would it be approximately?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know if the Secretary has been given sufficient information yet from Treasury about details of how it would apply to be able to project that. I'd ask Mr Bullard.

**Mr BULLARD** - So we've only had one discussion with the head of Treasury about that. Obviously, the dividend sits in Finance-General at the moment, and there will need to be discussions about how it's allocated to agencies and what those parameters are. We've also got an indication from Treasury that there is an additional funding DPAC around keeping children safer, and that still needs to go through a process to be split up.

We're also aware that there is a commission of inquiry and that there may be an additional allocation regarding the recommendations that come from that. So, at the moment, there are too many parameters in play for us to be able to provide advice about exactly what that impact will look like, but obviously once we get through the budget process, we'll be working with Treasury around that. We do have 12 months to plan for it.

**CHAIR** - Note 3 on page 39 of the Budget papers, referring to education, talks about the increase in the funding to support a wage agreement outcome, so I'm assuming that there's some wage negotiations going on that will need to be addressed. Is that correct?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for the Secretary to speak to that.

**Mr BULLARD** - Mr Salter may wish to provide further information. Yes, we've been through, and are still in, wage negotiations. There has been an agreement around the teacher agreement, but Mr Salter may want to update on the other agreements.

**Mr SALTER** - Yes. So, the only agreement that continues to have aspects negotiated, relates to child safety. The rest of the agreements have been agreed and are being implemented.

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

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. I don't think it's in the Budget papers. Correct me if I'm wrong, but the FTE levels of the department - the FTEs and headcount, separately, and vacancies - that is, fully vacant as opposed to people acting into the role. Also, can I get in one question, those that are accessing health and wellbeing programs - or EAP is it, I suppose - and those on Workers' Comp. So, there's a few questions in that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you want me to just stick with the first couple, perhaps? Just on the FTEs and headcounts and vacancies. Let's deal with that first.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I'll -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Now, while I ask that question, it would be handy to know - I mean, obviously you have new initiatives that are in the budget which will require staffing. Can we somehow separate those out so we've got comparisons between last year and this year? Then the new initiative staffing, to give us a number on that; how many staff are being employed as a result of the new initiative, as opposed to general operations. Can I put it that way? Is that fair?

**Mr JAENSCH** - How about I start and then we can top up with -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Anything I -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. I'll give you some overview and then we can go into some of that detail. The advice I have is that for the Department for Education, Children and Young People, FTE is 9366.54; headcount, 11 883 as at 31 March this year, which is an overall increase in permanent and fixed term employees of 684 FTE from 31 March 2022.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Of the 684 additional FTE - this is reporting from a former Department of Education perspective - 501 of those are staff transferred from the former Department of Communities Tasmania.

**Mr VALENTINE** - 501.

**Mr JAENSCH** - 501.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll go into a little breakdown of education staff.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, that'd certainly be helpful.

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is probably we've got to do the whole lot. I've got here, since 2014, additional staff employed in our schools, 412 FTE teachers, 528 teacher assistants, including education support specialists, and 50 school administrative staff.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, what's that? What are these figures for? 2014?

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - Since 2014. Increases since 2014.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Increases. Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. Additional staff employed.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's the numbers. The majority of teaching staff, 96 per cent, are working in schools.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Now, what were the other -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. Well, just basically asking for these figures to see what the movement has been, and that's fine and you've spread out the education which is good because this is the first year you've had Child and Families as well.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So that'll be good for the record for next year. So, the vacancies. Those that are vacant simply haven't been filled? In other words, don't have people acting in them?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - Workers' Comp, as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, that was the next one.

**Mr WILLIE** - Sorry.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So, vacancies and Workers' Comp across the Department for Education, Children and Young People.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. Let's stick to the education side at this stage.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just education.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Then we can look at the Child and Family if there's a figure on that as well, separately.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're going to have a series of these. So, are you going to pass them up and down or are we going to work through you? I'd like to work through you please, Mr Secretary. It saves me handling -

**CHAIR** - Saves some pink paper.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So, vacancies.

**Mr BULLARD** - So, I'm going to have to break it out into different segments, and we might not be able to provide comprehensive vacancies, a total number, because of the different ways in which they're accounted for. But in school, I imagine?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. Yes.

**Mr BULLARD** - So, in school positions. Teacher positions in Term 1? In Term 1. So, if that takes you to around the 31 March date, it was approximately 80 vacancies in school. Out of school positions, we would need to - could we do a breakdown? I'm just looking at Mr Salter because that would be allied health professionals and out of school corporate positions.

**Mr SALTER** - Yes. We'd have to get that figure.

**Mr BULLARD** - Then Ms Lovell could talk to vacancies in other Children and Family Service, but I note that they're running at about 10 per cent at the moment of total workforce. So, the number would be - it's between 10 and 11, which is running at a vacancy rate of FTE equivalent of around 24.

**Mr VALENTINE** - 24?

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Positions that are vacant?

**Mr BULLARD** - Positions, yes. Well, as at per last date.

**Mr VALENTINE** - As at that, yes.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes. So, Kane, have you got anything that you wish to add?

**Mr SALTER** - I've got the Workers' Compensation details.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, Workers' Complainant was one I've asked.

**Mr SALTER** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for that to be answered, yes.

**Mr SALTER** - For the period 1 April

**Mr VALENTINE** - This is for school education, or this is across the department?

**Mr SALTER** - It covers both, but it does also give a breakdown. For the period 1 April 22 to 31 March 23, there were 479 new Workers' Compensation claims lodged. This is an increase of 44 when compared to the previous reporting period which totalled 435, that 435 being the former Department of Education comparison. The above figure of 479 -



## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Could you lean over a little bit? You're quite soft and your voice -

**Mr SALTER** - The above figure of 479 includes 52 claims from children and families and youth justice. For that same period, breaking down the 479, there were 370 new Workers' Compensation claims that were of a physical nature and 109 that were related to stress claims. On a positive note, there was a decrease in stress claims made by teachers from 52 to claims in the previous reporting period to 39 claims in this period.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The number accessing health and wellbeing service, or is it EAP in your department?

**Mr SALTER** - Yes, EAP is the correct term. We would have to take that one on notice, or try and get an answer during the course of the morning.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And a gender split, if that's possible. Is that possible?

**Mr SALTER** - I'll have to take advice on that, given there's a level of confidentiality about - yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Of course. We don't want to identify anyone. But if you can give us a gender split, that would be interesting to hear.

**Mr SALTER** - Yes. And just on the -

**Mr VALENTINE** - And that would be education and child and family separated out?

**Mr SALTER** - We'll seek to have that categorisation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're happy to take those matters on notice, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you, minister. I appreciate all of that.

**CHAIR** - Ms Howlett.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, with more students than ever before staying in education and training until they meet the school leaving requirements, what is the government doing to improve pathways and options in senior secondary education in Tasmania?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much for your question, Ms Howlett. Under our government, there are now more ways than ever before for young people to complete their education in Tasmania. We continue to create engaging and meaningful senior secondary pathways for learners through innovative approaches to teaching the Australian curriculum. Future focused senior secondary accredited courses, and greater investment in vocational

learning, including Vocational Education and Training, or VET. In 2020, then Minister Rockliff, now our Premier, released Tasmania's government Vision for Vocational Learning and VET for school aged learners to 2030.

The vision committed to all learners in Years 9 to 12, irrespective of where they live, having access to high-quality, personalised, customised, and localised vocational learning and VET opportunities to support their career and their life aspirations. Since the release of the vision, the government has established seven industry advisory groups who provide advice and guidance to the department on new course development, resources to support the curriculum and VET programs that are suitable for school-aged learners, increased VET opportunities for students in Years 11 and 12 to access 67 full VET qualifications that prepare them for work.

We are invested in the department's own registered training organisation to improve governance and centralise administration, and ensuring teachers of VET have more time to teach and spend less time on compliance activities. With record low unemployment and a booming economy, we've got record numbers of school-aged learners in apprenticeships and traineeships as well. This is something which is changing over the last couple of years. In the 2022-23 financial year, we had 768 full time apprentices and trainees, and another 443 school-based apprentices and trainees. That's a total of 230 school-aged learners in Vocational Education and Training linked to employment.

These younger people are already on pathways to a bright future in their chosen field. The government recognises the importance of young people making informed choices as they progress through their schooling from Year 9, exploring and building their pathway into future education and training and employment. That's why we continue to strengthen career education, and particularly the transition from Year 10 to 11 with a range of online supports, including Careerify, a new career information website that provides Tasmanian relevant career education and guidance to our learners in Years 9 to 12.

The department supports schools to strengthen their career education provision through the delivery of the Graduate Certificate in Career Development to school staff, and there are currently 67 qualified career practitioners working in our schools. This is an increase from 46 qualified career practitioners in 2021-22. The government also provided the Beacon Foundation with \$2.24 million for 2022-23 to support schools to arrange work-based learning opportunities for students, again reducing the workload on teachers so that they can focus on teaching. We have an increased focus on alignment of learning with industry needs, ensuring the 26 new senior secondary courses are future-focused and fit for contemporary and emerging industry needs, globally and nationally, as well as locally.

As well as these great offerings, the Tasmanian government has now extended all government secondary and combined schools to Years 11 and 12 as of the end of last year, reducing barriers of distance and disadvantage for more than 1 100 senior secondary students in 2023. Senior secondary students now have unprecedented choice in where and how they study to meet their personalised learning needs based on their individual pathways. Thank you for your question.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thanks, minister, and thanks member. Mr Willie.

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I don't think you'd find people in this room or in Tasmania that don't agree that we need to improve literacy outcomes, and the targets are noble ones, of the government. But I'm interested in whether you can point, in the budget, to the system-wide explicit teaching of phonics and the coordination and investment you committed to in March with the Premier. I know that there's money in the DPAC part of the budget for the framework and the recommendations, but where's the support and coordination in our schools?

There's no mention of this in the key deliverables, and I know from my own experience engaging with schools, it very much seems ad hoc, the approach. So we hear this rhetoric from the government about changing teaching practices. It's not what I see in every school and it's not what I hear from the many teachers that I know. Have you some comment on that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Willie, and thank you for your support for more consistent, more focused focus on literacy teaching in our schools and across our primary school system. There have been a range of initiatives, of course, over recent years and new investment, including \$16.8 million in 2022 allocated for in-school quality teaching coaches, plus six literacy lead quality teaching coaches. You've heard the announcements that we've made recently. You'd be aware of the Literacy Advisory Panel's recommendations, which we're adopting in full.

There's been a range of our professional learning planning which has been held over pending the release of those recommendations so that we can ensure we are aligning our professional learning investment with the recommendations of the panel. The advice from AERO, the Australian Education Research Organisation has been helping us with some quality assurance on the systems we currently have for teaching literacy, as well as for upskilling our workforce to deliver that. There is some work underway right now to ensure that that's refined before we roll out those programs. I'll throw to Secretary Bullard to provide some additional insights there.

**Mr BULLARD** - Mr Willie, the point that you make goes to the heart of the matter, and that is the consistency in classroom practice.

**Mr WILLIE** - Even whole-school approaches, minister.

**Mr BULLARD** - Whole-school approaches and down to the classroom practice. There are a couple of things which are underway. Obviously, the Literacy Advisory Panel's work is fundamental to this, the research that they have undertaken and the consultations that they've undertaken has provided a very, very clear view of what needs to happen in regard to ensuring that there is whole-school leadership and a very clear approach around what good literacy teaching looks like. We haven't waited for the panel to bring its findings. We've been working with the Australian Education Research Organisation, starting with the teaching of literacy in years Prep to Year 2, around what good looks like. What that's allowed us to do is go to our scoping sequence, have that reviewed by AERO. They've made some very, very practical suggestions around what's taught but even things like the order in which letter sounds are taught and the best approach to take. That's provided us with the guidance we need to ensure that now we align our measures, our review of classroom practice, but also our training.

We've also introduced the Year 1 phonics check. Every student in Term 3 will undertake that check and I think there were over 4000 last year that did. We've also put into - and this

comes to whole school, into the performance development plan of every principal, a reading target which requires them to demonstrate in their school growth. It is context specific so we're not saying everyone has to have the same target.

We're also looking at how we provide those second chances to learn. So we know that young people, at the moment, unfortunately, are entering Year 7 without the literacy that they require to participate fully in the curriculum. Part of the negotiated agreement with the AEU was around having additional support through education support specialists in Year 7, with a particular focus on restarting reading and ensuring that then, as we move into high school, that there's discipline and appropriate literacies being taught.

You will see requirements around what is taught and how its taught. You will see requirements around attending professional learning and training, not choosing to go, that ensures that the practices that you bring into your classroom are evidence based. You're already seeing measures, and they're in this year's budget papers, around progressive achievement testings. We are looking at every school and every student, and how they're performing. You will see where we believe that schools aren't making the expected gains. There will be interventions that the department puts in place to ensure that we're lifting all learners.

**Mr WILLIE** - The minister's not at the table at the moment, so I don't know who I address my next question to.

**CHAIR** - To the minister.

**Mr WILLIE** - To the minister. What sort of accountability is there for school leadership and schools minister? From what I can see, there's a lot of announcements, there's supports being made available to change practice. It's not necessarily transferring into a change in practice in every classroom.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Willie. In the context of literacy, you're referring to?

**Mr WILLIE** - We're talking about literacy, yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So this is one of the things about the way that our school system runs here that we are very proud of and it works very well, is that there is a high degree of delegation to the local level for ensuring that the delivery of education works for the particular school community where we're teaching and where our learners live, and their families. That means that our principals and their leadership teams in those schools have scope to ensure that they're being relevant and appropriate to the people that they are engaged with directly. And that's a real plus and a positive of our system.

What is has meant though is that sometimes there's divergence in the methods that are used and the consistency in the application of things like our approach to teaching literacy. What that's meant is that we've got some schools who are doing amazing things and getting great results.

**Mr WILLIE** - I agree with that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Sometimes they are schools that have had the great privilege of having senior experienced principals and teachers in place with stability for a long time developing up

their systems. And they're getting some great results. We have other schools where there's a lot of turnover in leadership and in senior and experienced staff.

So that's why our government has made it a priority that, whilst we're getting good results in some places, we've got lots of resources for our teachers to use and schools to use, there is not consistency in the methods and the results in the teaching of literacy in our schools. That's why we've adopted a push for a more standardised approach and a requirement that by 2026 that's been adopted uniformly across all the primary schools in Tasmania.

Now that also applies not just across all schools but across all sectors of learning. In each of those sectors, we're going to need to be working with, say, the Catholic education system on how they will apply and report on their adoption of structured teaching of literacy. The independent schools as well. A smaller number there, but less of a system, more of a group of individual schools. We have good relationships with them and they're keen to work with us on this. Across our own school system, the department is going to be introducing a mechanism by which our schools are able to demonstrate they have adopted and applied consistently those principles and structured teaching of literacy.

Now there's a couple of mechanisms which have been explained to me by which we could do that. I understand that that is still a work in progress but it maybe that Mr Bullard or one of our other leaders at the table can provide an update on how we are going to ensure accountability for delivering the standardised approach. Thank you.

**Mr BULLARD** - You've cut to the heart of where we are as an organisation. We've got a very clear evidence base around what needs to happen and now we need to ensure that it's happening with integrity in every setting.

**Mr WILLIE** - And bringing people with you too.

**Mr BULLARD** - Exactly, and that's about good change management and good improvement because every teacher every day is what we want to see. I think you'd agree that no teacher comes to work wanting to do a bad job.

**Mr WILLIE** - No.

**Mr BULLARD** - However, there are a range of approaches, depending on how that teacher was trained, what the leadership in the school's been like or is like, what their lived experience is that feeds into that. Absolutely we are putting in place accountabilities. I've referred to the principal PDP goal. We haven't had a system goal previously. We've had schools putting forward and principals putting forward what they'll be measured on. There's a reading goal for every single principal in every single school.

We can do that now because we've got the progressive achievement testing. Yes, NAPLAN's national but we needed something that had more depth and integrity that we could run through every year level that would help us measure growth from, you know, how you're going in Year 3 to 4 to 5 to 6.

We've got our approach to school improvement. Evidence based requirements about what we need to see in schools. But more importantly, in coming to the minister's point, it's not every school that needs that intensive level of support. So we are categorising our schools

and we do know that there are schools that do need intensive support. They are not performing at the level that we expect but they're also trending down.

Through the course of this year, we've put in two roles absolutely focused on those schools. So the director's improvement partnerships, one north, one south. Their only job is to lift those schools and leverage the resources of the whole organisation to do so. The other thing is, too, that there's been point in time monitoring; has for a long period of time gone on through the department, you know, through things such as the Eddy dashboard. That's been great. But we've now moved to a governance structure where there are eyes constantly on that data so that we can put in place immediate supports where we see schools are slipping.

We want to keep the high performing schools where they are and celebrate their success. We want to celebrate those schools who might be below where expected but are trending up. But for schools that are either stationary or trending down, we want to take immediate action because, you know, that's learners there who are potentially missing out.

If you came into the agency now, I think you would see a range of measures that we're putting in place to ensure really good accountability but also effective targeting of support. And just finally, and I did mention it, the professional learning that is tied - or training, actually, that is tied very tightly to the expectations is a suite of work that's underway. So of course, there's lots of professional learning you can attend, but what is actually going to change your practice positively in line with the expectations of the approach.

**Mr WILLIE** - That's my next question, minister. Is professional learning being made available to all teachers in the primary years for this change in literacy approach? Could you tell me what the total professional learning budget is for the next budgeted year, please, and maybe even a breakdown of the professional learning that's being made available to staff would be great.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay. As I mentioned in my first answer, there is a program of professional learning around literacy that is being reviewed at the moment in light of the Literacy Advisory Panel's recommendations, and we're receiving advice also from AERO on refining that. I understand that -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, AERO?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The Australian Education Research Organisation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Independent research organisation that provides advice to governments on their -

**Mr WILLIE** - It came out of the education council.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. It's owned by the education ministers, yes. That's a very useful touch point for us to make sure that we get this right. We're reviewing that at the moment to ensure alignment with AERO's recommendations and the literacy advisory panel's recommendations, which we've adopted as well. That'll be rolled out across our schools. In regard to the budget for that program of work, I'm happy for the secretary to respond to that.

## PUBLIC

**Mr BULLARD** - On the procurement, having worked with AERO and around the scope and sequence, we've also absolutely agreed that we need to have training packages which support that scope and sequence to be delivered with integrity. We're about to go out and procure services for that training package. The package will go from prep to Year 6. It will be a requirement that every teacher take part - classroom teacher take part in that training package. It will also have with it some classroom ready resources, lesson plans, training vignettes, modelled lessons, to support the classroom teachers to move away from their current practice to better practice where that's required. We would need to take on notice - are you asking for -

**Mr WILLIE** - The total budget for professional learning.

**Mr BULLARD** - Moving forward?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, for the next year.

**Mr BULLARD** - The next year, yes. Regarding literacy. To do with literacy, yes?

**Mr WILLIE** - Perhaps if we could get the two years. So the year just gone and the next year, and a breakdown of all the different professional learning that's provided to staff, and I'll throw in another question because I'm going to lose the call in a minute.

**CHAIR** - You will.

**Mr WILLIE** - The FTE for the professional learning institute, please.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy to provide that - take those matters on notice.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Armitage has a question.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair. My question's with regard to the expansion to Years 11 and 12 in high school. Just wondered how that's going, the numbers - if I could have the numbers in our high schools in Year 11 and 12. I'm assuming you might want to take that on notice. You've actually got it at your fingertips.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Someone can bring that up. We will have it at our fingertips.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - How are we going with courses for Year 11 and 12? I know that's always been a difficulty in our colleges, getting sufficient trained teachers for some of the courses. I'm just wondering how it's being managed in the high schools.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay, thank you. I had the opportunity to provide some overview on that in my response to Ms Howlett's question just a moment ago. So on the record of -

**CHAIR** - I don't think you provided any numbers, no.

**Mr JAENSCH** - A discussion around our senior secondary pathways, the options that are available to our young people.

**CHAIR** - That's probably more in your little black file. Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's just such a lot of a good story to tell here. I want to make sure that I'm not missing any bits. All of our government secondary and combined schools now go to Year 11 and 12 as of last year, reducing barriers of distance and disadvantage. So there are more than 1100 senior secondary students in 2023 in those schools. They have, as I was saying, unprecedented choice in where and how they study to meet their personalised learning needs, and we're really proud to have provided options for young people to get more years of schooling, to finish their schooling in their town where they live, without having them or their families to make a decision to move, or to travel long distances to attain Year 11 and 12.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - With respect, I appreciate the broad statements, but I'm probably really wanting to know the numbers that are actually staying at those schools, but the subjects they're actually able to do as well, and whether there are specialised teachers. I know there's a real shortage of specialised teachers in the colleges, that they've always had problems. I'm just wondering how you actually manage that in the high school system, or are they online? Which obviously isn't as good as having a teacher, I don't believe, in the classroom with you as being online.

**Mr JAENSCH** - While my department hunts down some hard numbers to provide you with, because the circumstances are going to be different in each of these extended schools. What we are seeing is a lot of collaboration between schools and between - and with schools and colleges working together in collectives and regional partnerships.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are they having the advantages at the high schools that they would have at the college? I guess that's probably a difficult one for you to answer, but I'm just wondering if they've got the number of courses -

**Mr JAENSCH** - What we are trying to ensure through the extension schools is more options to suit the very broad variety of individual needs that our children and young people have. Now, interestingly, the data doesn't show that our extending schools to Year 11 and 12 has cannibalised the college enrolments. Our college enrolments are strong still and growing. But we've got a cohort of young people for whom there was nothing before who weren't on their way to college, who didn't have another plan, weren't moving directly into an apprenticeship or into work, and missed out on education.

They're the group that we've now got in front of us, and we need to offer them a wide variety of options. Some of those can be delivered in their school from teachers delivering their courses. A lot of that depends on the numbers who are demanding each of those courses. Importantly, those teachers are not recruited and dedicated just to that small number of students in that subject area, but they're shared within the school environment, and they're shared across schools and in these collectives with colleges as well. There's some really good partnerships and innovation happening where our colleges are working with our schools to ensure that they're extending as much as possible those opportunities to our young people.

Our schools and colleges work positively together in seven regional partnerships across the state to support student transitions, access to diverse learning pathways, and increasing engagement to the end of Year 12. Regional partnerships strengthen collaboration between schools and colleges in relation to student transition from Year 10 to Years 11 and 12, and they



also help to facilitate shared enrolments between school and college sites to enable students to access learning opportunities which meet their needs.

34.6 per cent of students undertaking any part of their enrolment at a school that is extended are shared between providers. This lets them access more specialist facilities, more regional course options, engaging and relevant local learning options and study over several sites. We've gone and lifted the participation of our young people in Year 11 and 12 in the life of this government, and there's ongoing work to ensure that we're providing a full range of options for them, both in their school and Year 11 and 12 subjects, but also through those other pathways with apprenticeships and vocational education training as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's all right. Just to make it clear, if I could have the enrolment numbers, the teaching allocation, and the attendance rate for each extension school.

**Mr JAENSCH** - For each extension school?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - If possible, at all schools.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can we take it on notice?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

**Mr JAENSCH** - For the 2022 school year? Because we work in whole years.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's fine. That can give me an indication.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay.

**CHAIR** - That will give us a follow up question for next year, minister. Which are always useful.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm just checking if the secretary wants any more detail before we confirm that. We're happy to take those questions on notice. What I'll just note as a - and you'll be familiar with this approach, is that when we're breaking down to individual scores across the state, and we're talking about things like attendance data and the rest, we have a bit of a principle where we've got very small numbers, that there might be a cut-off where we don't report below that, just because it can lead to identification of children and families in our schools. But that's a principle that you'd be -

**Mr WILLIE** - Enrolment of five or less?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Where the cohort's less than that.

**CHAIR** - Any of the documentation that the minister would like to provide to the committee can be held in confidence. That's always an option.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - If any of those areas, you feel there's some sensitivity around that, the committee will always hold that.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think we have a good understanding of the need to manage these things.

**CHAIR** - Absolutely.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll present information in that context.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - With the schools and the extra room and space obviously required, how is that being accommodated in the schools? Have we managed to find classrooms for these? Have we needed to do some extra building work, or are some still very short on rooms, some of the schools for these extensions, or are the numbers so low it doesn't really matter?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Salter can give us an update on the programs that have addressed that need.

**Mr SALTER** - In terms of the capital requirements, the government has invested a significant amount to enable -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Do we have a figure?

**Mr SALTER** - Yes, I can get that figure.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy to take that on notice.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes, thank you. That's a figure for capital investment to accommodate Years 11 and 12 in our various schools. Thank you, Mr Secretary.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I have a series of questions about students with disability. May I put them to you. I'll try and move through them quickly. It's mostly data I'm asking about, I'm not necessarily needing a description of the things that I'm referring to. I'm interested, first, how many students with disability are currently enrolled in Tasmanian schools, including those who do not receive funding as part of the reasonable adjustments model?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Sorry, what was that last part of that question?

**Ms WEBB** - How many students with disability are currently enrolled? Not just those receiving funding as part of the reasonable adjustments, but overall. Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The advice I have in front of me says that they're up to seven - one moment, please, Ms Webb. Just confirming, because there's a couple of different ways of counting.

**Ms WEBB** - That's fine, minister. No problem. Just as a heads-up, the next question I'm going to ask, while we're looking at that, is relating to the total budget allocated to support students with a disability. I'm looking for information for the 2022 year, last year, and this 2023 year that we're in, because I know you do it by calendar year. Is that correct? Would that be the way to ask for it?

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's correct, thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Then I'm going to ask for some breakdown questions for that total budget, so that might help people looking things up on budget figures.

**CHAIR** - The budget responses are available, I believe.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, we can go to that one. I think we should -

**Ms WEBB** - I'll just flag it, if we can just have the answers as directly as possible, that'd be good.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for you to go to the budget figures for this year and last year.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, but then I have a series of questions underneath that, so I'd prefer to get the - if you've got the answer to the first one ready, I'd prefer to get that one so we don't lose track of it.

**CHAIR** - I was just trying to facilitate some efficiency.

**Mr JAENSCH** - All right. We'll start with that with Ms Burgess on the number of students with disability.

**Ms BURGESS** - Thank you. The total number of students with disability are 7634.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, and then -

**Ms BURGESS** - Of those, there are 5869 that receive a level of funding to support that. Broken into those areas of extensive, substantial, and supplementary, and from there, there are a group of students which are categorised and under the heading of quality differentiated teaching practice. Those are 1765.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm interested to get that breakdown of those categories, the supplementary, substantial, and extensive. If it's best provided in a table, because you've got it in a table, that might be easiest to give us to it that way.

**Ms BURGESS** - I'll give it to you in a moment. I just need to double-check it against the online figures.

**Ms WEBB** - Totally fine.

**Ms BURGESS** - Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I'll just reiterate the budget ones. I'm interested in the total budget allocated to support students with disability in 2022, and then 2023. Then I have some sub-questions about that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I have some of those numbers in front of me. In 2022, the total allocation for students with disability was \$98 242 018. In 2023 school year, total allocation for students with disability is \$102 080 070.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. In terms of that allocation, can you give me a breakdown to indicate where that - how that breaks up into the reasonable adjustments funding, things like budget allocated to support teachers, or other elements and other ways you can break it down for me further.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand that this is the allocation to students, and that there is an additional allocation for supports in schools. I'll just get Mr Salter to confirm that.

**Mr SALTER** - Yes, but can provide that breakdown as requested.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm really just looking for a full breakdown of that information, because my question about the total budget wasn't just about - was about anything that's budgeted to support students with a disability in schools.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. In terms of the 2023 figures I gave you, I said \$102.1 million, that's funding directly attributable to students with disability. The total funding, support funding for students across schools is \$148.5 million in 2023. We'll give you that breakdown, but there's the headline.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Can I also ask how many - I'm interested to know for 2022 and 2023, both those years, how many applications for funding under the reasonable adjustment model were declined?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We don't have those numbers at the table, but what we have got at the table now is the breakdown of - further breakdown of that funding for students with disability, which I'm happy to ask Ms Burgess and Mr Salter to -

**Ms WEBB** - Sure. It sounds like it could be messy to read it in. If you have it in a table form, it's probably quite helpful for us to receive as a -

**Ms BURGESS** - There are only three figures, so I'm happy to read them in. This was for the 2023 school year - extensive 731.68, substantial 2 366.28, and supplementary 2 661.93, and that's been a lift in each of those categories since 2022.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm quite interested to see that comparison figure, if I could.

**Ms BURGESS** - Do you want me to read the 2022 figures so that you have them side-by-side?

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. If we're not having it tabled, then yes.

**Ms BURGESS** - For extensive in 2022 668.25, substantial 2 309.45, and supplementary 2 311.53.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. That is a jump. Isn't it?

**CHAIR** - I do have a supplementary. Mr Willie, is your supplementary in this area, or is it -

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - It's really education, but I'm happy for the member to finish.

**CHAIR** - All right. Thanks.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We do have more budget breakdown for you in response to the questions that you asked, if Mr Salter could respond.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. If it's a lengthy one again, and it's in a table, it's easiest to take it that way probably.

**Mr SALTER** - It's not lengthy, but I think it gives the context for the question. The minister advised for 2023 the total was \$102 million.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Mr SALTER** - Of that, \$90 million for teachers' support and the direct funding -

**CHAIR** - Just a little over thanks, Kane. I know you're not as keen on the microphone as what we are.

**Mr SALTER** - \$90.8 million is for staffing and direct funding for reasonable adjustments. Breaking that down, \$39 million is for 230.7 FTE support teachers and 91.2 FTE teachers in support schools. The balance, \$51.7 million, goes to school resource packages for schools to make reasonable adjustments, including them making decisions on the level of teacher assistance required. The rest of the \$100 million includes \$7.7 million for disability services across schools, and \$3.5 million for early childhood intervention services.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I appreciate that detail. So then the question that we still had open was around applications for funding under the reasonable adjustment model that have been declined. Numbers for 22 and 23.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll take that on notice. If we can provide it before the committee rises, we'll provide it. Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - That's fine. My follow up question to the numbers is going to be in relation to reasons for being declined. If there's categories of reasons for being declined and how that looks across those numbers. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll provide that if we can, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - I just have another disability related question. I believe that there was an independent review. Has there been an independent review completed of the reasonable adjustments model by KPMG, minister?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The KPMG has undertaken their work. That advice has been provided to the department. I'm aware of it. The department is providing me with some advice on that before we take the next steps.

**Ms WEBB** - Will there be some form of public communication about the outcomes of that review or evaluation?

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, there will be.

**Ms WEBB** - So that it's clear to those who might have participated.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There will be, and the government's response. Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - Will you release the report to the public?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Do you have a timeline on that, minister?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't have a hard timeline, but I expect it will be within the coming months.

**Ms WEBB** - In a matter of months, okay. In relation to students with a disability, how many have been suspended in the 2022 year and year-to-date, in 2023?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We should have that number for you. It will be by school year, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, I said 2022 and then year-to-date 2023.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. The advice I have, Ms Webb, says that for 2022, number of students with disability suspended was 1027 students. I don't have a number with me for 2023 to date, but I do have just a little context which I think is important that we put on the record. We acknowledge that the proportion of students suspended is higher for students with disability than for students with no disability. Overall, suspensions for students with disability have tended to fluctuate, but numbers have - there's been an overall increase from 2020 to 2022. But this is in context that suspensions for students without disability has also increased.

When we look at the data a little deeper, we can see that the highest number of suspensions do tend to occur for students with a disability who require substantial adjustments, and these students are more likely to be suspended than students who have no disability status. It's a complex matter also, the issue of suspensions, and reasons for suspensions as well. It might be of interest to the committee to note that there is a very broad range of circumstances under which students may be suspended, and it is always a very last resort option for a school to suspend a student. It's chiefly in regard to the safety and wellbeing and the ability to learn for the students in that school, and the staff.

It's not always associated with violent or antisocial behaviour. Also, disobedience with instructions, any contravening of rules and policies and illegal behaviour, and one of the areas of increased suspensions that I have noted has been in the area, for example, of vaping in our schools. Those sorts of things. So when we talk about suspensions generally, they're made up of a range of different reasons, and what we've also seen recently is some more effort to ensure consistency in the approach of using suspensions in schools as a way of keeping our schools safe.

**Ms WEBB** - How has that consistency been sought then? What measures are being put in place? I'm interested.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. No, there's policies and procedures to do with this, and I'm happy for Mr Bullard to make some comment on that.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr BULLARD** - Certainly we've been looking really closely at suspensions in schools because we saw a rise in the data and we needed to understand why that was. Interestingly, speaking to my colleagues in other states and territories, they have seen similar patterns. And again, they've seen a major driver or contributor to those suspensions being physical violence against another student. It is a national issue and here as well. One of the things that we have done is monitoring those suspensions. We've also done some analysis on why and looking at, does it relate to occupation, socioeconomic status, regional and remote or urban, and the gender and age of those students it appears to us, looking at the data, that it's Years 7 and 8 where it's occurring mostly, and it is more in the south than in the north.

We've got a group that is looking at that and going into schools. As you'd appreciate, some schools, the suspensions are stable, some have dropped, but there are some where they have gone up, to properly understand what they've got in place. Where we believe that there are other approaches that could be taken other than suspending - so, for example, tried behaviour management practices in that school, or alternative learning opportunities, then we're supporting the school to put those in. But we do recognise that in a number of cases, it does directly relate to the safety of either other students, the student themselves, or staff and that the suspension is appropriate.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, clearly though, the opportunity to manage an in-school suspension and have a child still attend school, but potentially be separated from other students if there's an issue around risk or safety, is a preferable option. Because having a child sit at home for a week or two -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Absolutely.

**Ms WEBB** - It is obviously not the right option. Is it simply a matter that schools simply don't have the resources and the staffing to be able to provide in-school options to have those management approaches at play? I'm asking this because I think distinctly, I'm aware of situations where schools would prefer to manage things internally but have identified they don't have the option from staffing and resourcing points of view. Is there some sort of way you monitor or measure whether, currently, suspensions are occurring when, but for inadequate resources in a school, they could have been managed in school?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Ms Webb. I'd ask maybe for Ms Burgess or Mr Bullard to be prepared to speak about our internal review capabilities around things like suspensions, and attendance as well. I'm aware that there's some groups that have been set up to do that. Obviously, the circumstances of every school will be different and unique, and they'll change over time as well. I'm sure there is a factor where the availability of staff resources to provide supervision, one on one, for young people who might otherwise need to be suspended, is a fact that they need to weigh up. That's part of the decision making that our principals need to make in each case as it arises. There's a lot of judgment involved there, and resourcing and availability of supervision for individuals who may be separated from their peers in the school, is one of those factors as well.

So, I note that concern and that interest. I will ask the department to make some comment on how we monitor and review suspension patterns in our schools. But one of the other matters that I did just want to bring into the record as well, in this discussion regarding the proportion of students suspended who are students with disability. One of the things that we need to keep in mind, is that the number of students who are identified as having disability, and are receiving support and adjustment for their disability, has been growing year on year as well. And, for example, where Mr Burgess referred earlier on to the number of students with disability related funding in our schools being 5760-odd, five years ago, the number was 2626.

Year on year, our data shows that the number of students who are identified as having disability, and those disabilities being assessed and responded to with adjustments, is growing at a greater rate than the total number of students is growing. Therefore, the proportion of students with disability in our schools is increasing. Not necessarily because there's more disabled young people, but because we're recognising more things as disability that we can ameliorate with appropriate adjustments and responses. These are the sort of matters we need to bear in mind when we're looking at trends in things like the incidence of suspensions or even just the numbers of students with disabilities.

**Ms WEBB** - I don't think it gives us much comfort, minister, to know that now that we're identifying more students with a disability, we're still suspending them at a higher rate than students without disability. I don't believe you're asking us to have to take comfort from that, knowing that that's what the data tells us.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well, maybe part of the story here is that we now realise that more of the children who have been suspended historically, we're now recognising have disability as part of the explanation of their behaviours, and we now have a needs-based model for responding to those.

**Ms WEBB** - Yet we're still suspending them at higher rates than their peers without disability. We're still doing that, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Perhaps they're the same kids. We're just now realising that more of them have disability.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm not talking about a trend over time. I'm talking about literally right now, point in time, we suspend children with disability at a higher rate than children without disability. That's a simple fact from your data in schools.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I've tried to provide some -

**Ms WEBB** - I don't know what comfort you're asking us to take from that, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm asking you to take any comfort, Ms Webb. What I'm just doing is trying to create a more complete picture of the data that you're referring to, and the trends that you're referring to, so that we understand it.

**Ms WEBB** - I didn't refer to a trend once in this discussion, minister, just to be clear. I didn't once refer to a trend.



## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - You're talking about proportions of children with and without disability who are part of our -

**Ms WEBB** - At point in time, I asked for last year and this year.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - I didn't talk to trends back to when we maybe classified disability differently. I'm not pointing to trends. I'm pointing to a point in time now. And the fact of the matter is, we suspend children with disability at a higher rate than we suspend children without disability. I'm trying to find out more information about that, particularly whether it's a resourcing issue.

**CHAIR** - So, the question's been put. We would appreciate an answer. If that's not available, then we need to move on.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - I've got a supplementary, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I've got a number of questions waiting.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So, again, in the majority of cases, Ms Webb, a school's decision to suspend a student with disability comes down to safety for that student and for others. Because it's an individual school decision, the department is focused on increasing staff capacity to support students exhibiting unacceptable behaviours, and the department continues to invest in supports and coaching and professional learning in the area of inclusive practice and trauma-informed practice to build staff capacity to support students with a disability to remain safe and engaged learners.

Schools can also access tailored support through the school support and wellbeing teams and the inclusive practice teams. Key initiatives there include partnership with the Australian Childhood Foundation, working in partnership with the University of Tasmania, to deliver comprehensive professional learning for trauma-informed practices in our schools. Since its launch, 2400 staff members have participated in online foundational training, and 600 staff members have participated in workshops. The other matter that you raised was how we are monitoring and looking at patterns in suspensions. Does the department have any comment on that?

**Ms WEBB** - I don't believe I asked that question, actually.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay. I thought you did.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. I was asking about the degree to which you monitor whether it's a lack of resourcing in schools that contributes to a decision to suspend a student rather than to do something in school to support that student safely and their peers safely.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'd be happy for Mr Bullard to answer that if he has an answer.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes, we are monitoring schools. It's interesting to note that in 2022, 18 schools accounted for 60 per cent of suspension. So, that raises a question around what's going on in those schools and also where we need to provide focus. I think there are a couple of things going on. So, you've gone to resourcing. I'd actually suggest, in some instances, that it may be the training of staff around behaviour management de-escalation. Certainly, the trauma funding and the trauma-informed approach that the ACS delivered goes some way toward addressing that, as does over 400 students experiencing trauma being individually supported now within the system.

There is another thing at play though, and this goes to the in school, out of school suspension, which we are looking closely at through a review of the policy. That's what you might call a legal or unlawful behaviour. So, at the moment, the policy says if you're caught smoking at school, you need to have a suspension off site. I think for some of those matters, there would be other ways that we would want to address that behaviour now, by maintaining that young person on site and actually working with them around -

**Ms WEBB** - Because, of course, sending them home - it's really going to help them not smoke more, isn't it?

**Mr BULLARD** - That's right. So, it's become clear, especially around vaping and around smoking - and vaping in particular - that, to me, that doesn't seem a proactive approach. There are other things we could be doing. So, absolutely ask that we look at those procedures. And that, you know, safety is paramount. Behaviour which leads to safety issues, yes, but are we doing enough in terms of our strategies to work with the young person?

Illegal behaviour, I think where it doesn't pertain to the safety of others, we need to look at very closely, and make a decision about what support, say, through school nursing, we could be providing to assist the young person to see the dangers of the behaviour that they've engaged in. So, we've asked that that work is done, and it is actually underway. Through the course of this year, we will have clear principles, parameters and expectations for managing of suspensions. You will see a more contemporary approach.

**Ms WEBB** - Can I just clarify? Because when you use data, it's important to understand enough to interpret it correctly. Eighteen schools accounting for 60 per cent of the suspensions; what proportion of the student population do those 18 schools account for?

**CHAIR** - That's a good question.

**Ms WEBB** - Because if they're the 18 biggest schools, perhaps they account for close to 60 per cent of the student population. So, I'm just wanting to understand the data.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That is a good question, and we can get that information for you.

**CHAIR** - Can that be sourced?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I do know some of those schools are not the biggest.

**Ms WEBB** - Because it sounds dramatic, but it might not be.

**Mr JAENSCH** - They're not the biggest.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Thank you. Mr Willie had a supplementary, then I'm going to Ms Armitage, and I've got everyone lined up, including myself.

**Mr WILLIE** - Just to get some additional information on top of the member for Nelson's questions. She asked about the knockbacks. In terms of students who had their learning plan reviewed - I'm not sure whether you collect this data - but how many of those increased support and how many of those decreased support?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for Mr Bullard to answer that if he can, or to - if we hold that information without having to go and -

**CHAIR** - Are you talking about the declined reasonable -

**Mr JAENSCH** - So, do you have an answer you're able to give, or should we take this one on notice?

**Mr BULLARD** - I can provide the answer. In terms of applications that were not approved through moderation, and this goes across schools from kinder to Year 13, I can advise that there were 586 moderations that resulted in non-approval, and that was in 2022. Just to remind you, I think Ms Burgess had the figure of total. But it was in the high 5000s for students that were moderated for funding.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So, that'd be 10 per cent, or thereabouts?

**Mr BULLARD** - 5869. The reasons for not approving, which I believe was also a question, was that there was no evidence of disability at this time. That evidence of adjustments for 10 weeks in the last 12 months hadn't occurred. So, a reminder that for a decision to be made on the necessary adjustments, those adjustments need to be demonstrated for 10 weeks, and there was no evidence for 10 weeks in the last 12 months where the student had been previously moderated. I think that answers Ms Webb's question. And then your question was the movement?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mr BULLARD** - And so that would be where had students moved -

**Mr WILLIE** - Up or down in terms of support.

**Mr BULLARD** - Up or down. It would be in terms of adjustment level. So, we would need to take that on notice. Hang on, and there's more. Sorry, just back on the reasons. So, category 1 was no evidence of disability at the time; category 2, no evidence of adjustments for 10 weeks in the last 12 months, noting it doesn't have to be consecutive weeks; category 3, not evidence of adjustments for 10 weeks in the last 12 months, where the student had been previously moderated that has recently been disengaged from education across the last 12 months, and they do not have 10 weeks of adjustments because they haven't been in attendance in the setting; category 4, parent does not give consent to include their child in the educational adjustments disability funding model.

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - In regard to the movement of students? Take that on notice?

**Mr BULLARD** - We will take that on notice.

**Mr WILLIE** - In regard to suspensions the minister said 1027 students with a disability had been suspended in 2022. Can we get the number of incidents as well? While we're talking about suspensions, can we get the whole cohort of suspensions, up until this point this year, broken down by grade? If we can have other vulnerable cohorts, like out-of-home care and Tasmanian Aboriginal students? I've heard the Secretary talk about an increase in students being suspended for vaping. If we could get those numbers too, please.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Willie, 2022, number of students with disability suspended? The number I gave you before was 1027.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Number of suspension incidents, 2732.

**Mr WILLIE** - 2732. So, we're seeing repeat suspension for a lot of students there for students with a disability. Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. In terms of the other questions, I just asked about suspension rates for whole cohorts. Are we able to get all of those, or?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I swear that information exists.

**Mr WILLIE** - It's been provided in previous Estimates, minister, to the year to date.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll provide those. You wanted suspensions by year level.

**Mr WILLIE** - Suspensions to the to the year to date by year level, and other cohorts like kids in out-of-home care, Tasmanian Aboriginal students. I've heard the Secretary talk about an increase in suspensions for vaping, so if we could have the number of students suspended for vaping as well. I ask my standard questions here, Chair, that I usually ask. In regard to the number of students suspended for bullying, assaults between students, assaults on teachers from students, harassment, bullying or stalking of another student, and then there's the suspension of harassment, bullying or stalking of teachers. I know that you've got all this data because I asked them about every six months.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Where we can. Just a couple of things that the - and I think it's possibly easier for us to take these on notice.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And we'll take off the record of your written notice.

**CHAIR** - Request.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - Those items, the type of data I think I have in front of me, is showing that we can provide full year data for 2022. I think you asked for 2023, to date.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, to date, which you have provided in previous Estimates. Usually, you take it on notice though.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We could provide the term 1 data.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So a complete term data.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just in terms of qualifying that. And in terms of some of the bracketing that you've referred to, you've spoken about vaping. I'm not as clear if vaping is a standalone or if it is captured within tobacco or smoking.

**Ms BURGESS** - Correct, minister. It's captured in a number of different ways, so it could be categorised under tobacco possession, illegal drug use, or it could also come in into the disruptive behaviour category.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'll put that in the question in writing to you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. So, I don't think we've got a line item for vaping as such.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay. It is a concern, vaping in schools, and it's concerning to hear that there's an increase in suspensions for kids vaping.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - We can come back to that in a minute or keep going from that, Chair.

**CHAIR** - I think we need just -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Sorry. It's illegal behaviour and that's the context for it.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. Okay.

**Ms WEBB** - It's awkward, isn't it? Such an awkward requirement.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is.

**CHAIR** - Interesting. Thank you. Mr Valentine, you've got a purple tick here.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, there you go. That's excellent.

**Ms WEBB** - What's a purple tick for?

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - It means he's been waiting a long time.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It means it's his last rodeo.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I've consulted with the Chair on this, and it really is an overview question, but the same people are at the table, so if it's possible. So, over the -

**CHAIR** - Well, it's all in school education.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, this is agency, really - indexation of agency allocations over the 2023-24 Budget and forward estimates of indexation rates for operating services. Appropriations are as follows: Non-wage costs, 2 per cent per annum, excluding medical and surgical supplies, which is indexed at 3.5 per cent per annum. So, the questions are, why are non-wage costs for agency allocations indexed at only 2 per cent per annum at a time of close to 7 per cent cost increases represented by the CPI? That's the first question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Valentine, I don't know if you've had the opportunity to put this question to the Treasurer. I think very much this is -

**Mr VALENTINE** - No. We don't have the Treasurer in our committee.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Because it's a cross-government matter, and, really, I think probably the Treasurer is better qualified to answer the question of why and how those -

**Mr VALENTINE** - So, maybe it's an opportunity to put it on notice on the floor or something. I can appreciate the issue there, but it does actually pose a problem for you as an agency as to how you're going to manage to fill the gap, if I can put it that way. Do you have any initiatives which will be implemented to cover the obvious funding gap? Not forgetting that there is also an efficiency dividend that's going to be put onto the department, so that makes it even more impacting. How are you expecting schools to be able to cope with what obviously will be a funding shortfall in real terms?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We will need, as we go into the year, to be factoring these and other changes into our operating budgets and our planning for the future. I'll be taking advice from my department on what our options are and our strategies for accommodating these requirements. But the thinking behind them and the reasoning for them, they're questions that the Treasurer is best to answer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's still a problem though, isn't it? I mean, it's going to be a significant issue, to be able to fill that 5 per cent gap in funding, in effect. There must be some strategies that you have in mind to be able to address that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think there will be a range of options and there will be decisions that we need to make. Just the same with any business, any organisation, any household, has changes to their circumstances from time to time and they've got to cut their costs to suit. So we'll be doing the same, and I think it is part of what Tasmanian taxpayers expect that we are constantly doing. It's their money. They want the services, but they also expect that we are prudent managers and that finding some savings from time to time and working within stricter guidelines means it is something that all Tasmanian households are doing right now. They expect that we would be doing it in the management of their money and their services as well.

**CHAIR** - Your next question.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The next question is about the total cost of merging parts of the Department of Communities into the now Department of Education, Children, and Young People. So what has been the total cost? Have you got any understanding of that that you can share with us, or that you can provide on notice if given the opportunity?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It certainly wasn't undertaken as a savings exercise, as some had indicated in the outset and in the early days, and I think that we've now got very strong support from all quarters for the merging and the creation of the new Department for Education, Children, and Young People. There were no job losses, and I understand that the budgets and budget allocations have been distributed to the receiving agencies as well. So we've inherited the books of the parts of the former Department for Communities Tasmania as part of that washup. In terms of the costs of the transition, are you referring to things like the changing letterheads and -

**Mr VALENTINE** - I mean, that all comes into it. So maybe that question; what proportion of that - well, we don't know what the full cost is. If we had an idea of the full cost, it would be great.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. The secretary's advice to me is that those costs were fully absorbed by the departments in making that transition.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So there's no extra impact on the budget is what you're saying, in that sense?

**Mr BULLARD** - No, there was no additional allocation made for the transition. So a lot of it was human resources.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**Mr BULLARD** - As you'd understand, moving people from one system to the other, updating payroll, ensuring that the IT was on a stable platform, accommodation in place.

**Mr VALENTINE** - All the back office stuff.

**Mr BULLARD** - We prioritised the transition from around six months before 1 October and continued to do so. We've had to put extra energy into getting those tasks done, and I'd like to thank actually the staff that put particular effort into bringing the agencies together, and we had a very smooth transition.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I can say after working in the state service for a long period of time, it takes a lot of effort to do these things, and I've been through a lot of government department changes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would back up the secretary's comments, and there's a number of those people who are in the room here, and even at the table, who have put in an extraordinary amount of work to make sure there's been a smooth transition. All the other staff whose departmental home and identity as a part of this, it's disruptive, but it's been during a difficult

## PUBLIC

time in terms of our work as well, and I really want to acknowledge their willingness to make it work.

**CHAIR** - The Legislative Council will be experiencing its own transition next May when the member leaves. So let's move on.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It will be like losing a lung. I could provide some advice, if you like.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. Can we get a figure on what proportion of the costs - you're saying the total amount, basically that there's a human effort that's basically been provided, but what about costs for rebranding, logos, promotional materials, marketing, stationery, websites, resources, digital assets and other renaming expenses resulting from the change to DECYP; have you got any figures on that that can be provided?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for the secretary to speak to that.

**Mr BULLARD** - At the end of this financial year, we'd have those figures. I just reflect; so in terms of some of those costs that you do expect to see, I think the electronic age has served us well in terms of being able to update, for example, my letterhead by just changing the electronic template.

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

**Mr BULLARD** - Certainly, in terms of the website as well, yes, people were working on that. They were people who were already within the agency whose job it was to maintain our website. We would need to get a figure on the interim brand.

**Mr VALENTINE** - How about I put it on notice and you provide me with a response on notice as to the physical cost.

**Mr BULLARD** - So you're looking at the actual costs of reprinting, signage, et cetera?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. Logos. There's the redesigning of logos, promotional materials, marketing, stationery, websites, all of those sorts of things.

**Mr BULLARD** - Directly related to becoming the new agency.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Directly related to the change.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So can we have that on notice? I have a question on the education side. Can the minister explain why additional in-class support, teacher assistance and education support specialists listed in table 2.1 - no. I'll ask this one. Sorry, forget that. Following the introduction of additional in-class support, teacher assistance and education support specialists, how many classes per week across all Tasmanian public schools and colleges will have just one adult, being the teacher, in the classroom supporting student learning in 2024 and 2025?

**CHAIR** - As the minister will understand, members have various sources where their questions are arising from.



## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - They're provided to us and we ask the ones that are pertinent.

**CHAIR** - We do.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. I will give a high-level answer while the department is working out how to answer the how many adults in a classroom in the next two years.

**Mr VALENTINE** - How many classes per week across all Tasmanian public schools and colleges will have just one adult, being the teacher, in the classroom supporting student learning in 2024 and 2025?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just for context then; so across the budget and forward estimates, there is now \$36.6 million for increased in-class support for teachers, with 66 extra in-class support positions in 2023, rising to 100 in 2025. A further 25 education support specialist positions introduced in 2023 supporting our teachers and giving our teachers assistance and more opportunities for career progression.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I think the question is related to the gap. And they're all good initiatives.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And I'm not knocking that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's those classes that will only still have the teacher and not the support teachers necessary to be able to do the task, that's all.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So they're additions to the existing, and then I think we could hazard a statistical answer to your question in terms of how many classes there are. But it may be that Mr Bullard has got a more elegant solution to answering your question.

**CHAIR** - I think this is really looking into the future, which is going to be a bit of a challenge, but if the minister believes that someone can provide that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll answer it to the extent that we can here and we'll see how we go with that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you want me to put it on notice?

**Mr BULLARD** - No, I think where you're going with your question is supporting teachers better in terms of in-class support and there's an underlying assumption that you may have made, and I don't assert you have, but that every teacher needs a teacher assistant in their class from Kinder to Year 12. In fact, what we know is that every class is different and some classes, depending on their student make-up may need two or more teacher assistants/

**Mr VALENTINE** - Other may need, what, none?

## PUBLIC

**Mr BULLARD** - Well, in colleges, for example, none. The way in which we make the allocations is in terms of allowing schools to make school based decisions around the classes. The additional in-class support that is set out in table 2.1 that you referred to has been worked out on an allocation of 40 hours per year per teacher in every school. So there will be an additional allocation available. However, how principals and school leaders decide to deploy that resource will depend on the need in their context and we don't monitor that. That's a school-based decision.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Clearly you don't have the information about how many classes have outstanding need available to you, I suppose, so it's a difficult question to fully answer.

**CHAIR** - I suspect on any given day they need more need than others.

**Mr BULLARD** - I think there are some parameters that we can use but that's how we fund. So we start at an individual level, which is the student, we make a school resource package allocation on the basis of the needs around aboriginality, English as an additional language, regional and remote socioeconomic status, et cetera. That allocation is then made to the school.

On top of that, there's students with disability, there's trauma funding, there are other allowances that are made. And now on top of that, there's this additional funding stream that goes into every school which allows them to purchase more in-class support for the teachers, but again, how they split that up. The principal and the teachers know best around what the need of a particular class is.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With the explanation, I think we're not going to get a clear figure either way and so I won't put that on notice. You've given the explanation on the record.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I think we might start sharing around, so thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, I'll come back to it if you've got -

**CHAIR** - Hold your thoughts and if we get back to it, we will. My question is around specialist teachers for our schools and, just as an example, no music in one of my schools. No matter how hard the school tried to source a music teacher, they were not able to secure one. I'm just interested in what the department is doing to assist those schools, particular in the more remote and isolated, and some rural areas that don't seem to be able to attract some of the specialist teachers that are really important for student learning.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Chair. Just give me one moment here.

**CHAIR** - And I'm happy to provide the example at the morning tea break but I won't name the school right now. But I'm sure there are others that are experiencing the same challenges.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I've got some related matter here, but there's some urgent work going on. Starting with this, by way of overview and then we can drop into a bit more detail. MyCareer is the title of a system solution that has been introduced to capture and report on the special capabilities of our employees across the system including teacher qualifications and their experience. Development of MyCareer began in 2021 with the first stage involving

integration of previously incompatible data sets as a foundation for properly reporting on teacher specialisations.

Data on teacher qualifications and teaching experience aligned to learning areas for this year is now available for secondary and senior secondary sectors, as of the end of March. Having this data will enable Tasmania to more effectively participate in and realise the benefits of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan and, when we link it to other data sets like the Australian Teacher Workforce Data set, we'll have access to better workforce planning information and that'll help us with our workforce strategy for the department as well as informing our tactical responses to shortages in areas of need as well.

So that gives us better understanding of where we are in terms of the skills available to us in our workforce and planning for them. Mr Bullard, would you like to add some more detail on what we're doing with that information?

**Mr BULLARD** - So it is really difficult at the moment around teacher workforce with teachers with specialisation. The minister's outlined that we have now got a data set and we continue to ensure that the integrity of that is improved year on year, which allows some forward casting which we haven't previously had about which teachers with which specialisations are currently available but also, I think more importantly, is those that maybe about to retire or want to move to other schools. We have an escalation protocol that goes into learning services. They do try really, really hard to get teachers including specialist teachers but we have to accept at the moment that -

**Mr WILLIE** - Just a teacher's good in some circumstances.

**Mr BULLARD** - I think we've been open around the teacher challenges, or the workforce challenges. I've already said to Mr Willie, he's very welcome to come back. Tried to recruit him before his last election but unfortunately that didn't come off. Always welcome.

**CHAIR** - I think he might have another job in mind we probably need to move on.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes, we do accept that there are challenges. We are working to fill those gaps. We do have a medium term strategy so that we are proactive.

**CHAIR** - I know this might not - I mean, you know, I've been around a long time now and that maybe starting to show, but in previous times, teachers were actually assigned to a school, or assigned to a cluster and they would carry out some of the specialised services. What happened to that approach? I mean, it appears that there's just a pushback now and pretty much teachers can teach wherever they feel free to teach.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'd ask Mr Bullard to give you a departmental operational response to that but one of the things that we do realise is that we are in a sellers' market.

**CHAIR** - A tight market.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And we're not only competing internally from sites to where teachers want to go, we're competing with every other sector who wants the same clever -

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - I know. Victoria offer relocation costs and additional funds, I know all that though.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And the tourism sector wants people. And, you know, everybody wants bright young people that we would hope to attract and retain in education. Mr Bullard, do you want to?

**Mr BULLARD** - I think there are a couple of things at play; (a), teachers do work across schools, so specialist teachers will carry a load at various schools in a region and they can -

**CHAIR** - That happens with sport and that type of - human movement I think it's called now. We had a sports teacher, now they have a human movement teacher. Or that may well be out of date as well.

**Mr BULLARD** - So that's certainly there. I think going to the other matter around transfers, we've been working with the Australian Education Union for a period now around trying to reach an agreement on teacher transfers. So certainly, the position that we need an agile workforce that can be moved between schools but also, too, need to respect that, you know, teachers get attached to their particular location and they make life choices to do with that. But we are continuing to work with the Education Union around ensuring that they have that balance.

**CHAIR** - Sometimes people don't realise that they'd actually really enjoy a particular place until they're assigned to go there, you know. But anyway, that's a statement, not a question. I'll ask the member for Launceston for her question. Thank you. I'm mindful that we're going to break at 11 for a cup of tea.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair. I don't think the issue of truancy's been addressed.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Attendance.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, truancy, basically. I know it was a little different over COVID times because a lot of people were working from home but, obviously, now they're supposed to attend school in the main. So, how is truancy tracking? Have you got any numbers?

**Mr WILLIE** - Conciliation conferences.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes, I've got those. I've got that written down too. I think last time we asked about conciliatory conferences.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Bullard, please.

**Mr BULLARD** - Thank you, Mrs Armitage. Can I just clarify? Are you talking about non-attendance? Truancy has a particular class of non-attendance, which is where individual students don't attend school and parents tell us they've tried to get them to school and they're unable to. So, that's truant. A school refuser.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Okay. Right. Because my thought about truancy was every now and then, they decide not to go. Their parents think they're at school, but we might see them in the

mall, or we might see them somewhere else. They're being truant as opposed to saying they're not going to -

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think you may be talking about attendance, rather than truancy.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes. So, truancy, I can indicate, is less than 0.1 per cent, but that's where the parents would ring in and say, 'I've tried to get them to go'.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's where we have the conciliatory conferences, as well, with the parents and the student?

**Mr BULLARD** - Certainly, that is one element where there is a conciliation conference, but also, conciliation conferences occur when parents fail to provide an authorised excuse for the student to attend. So, in terms of attendance, there's explained, authorised. So, there are a range of reasons under the Education Act and Secretary's instructions which are fine, i.e. you're unwell.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - How are we going with the ones that don't actually have that?

**Mr BULLARD** - So, you're looking at unauthorised.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The ones that miss a couple of days here and there because they're in town with their friends.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. It's a strange thing, isn't it, to say, 'Why did you miss school?', 'Oh, I was in town with my friends'. You're actually legally meant to be in school.

**Mr WILLIE** - It's very visible in the community, though, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is.

**Mr WILLIE** - Like, in my electorate, there's kids that should be in school all around the CBD during the day.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Nationally, particularly in secondary school and the more senior year levels. This is a national trend and has been since COVID. I think that we're seeing some improvements recently, and this year, in attendance levels increasing again, but they're still far lower than where we want them to be and where they were some years ago. But we're not alone in this. Right around Australia, this is something which is affecting our school populations.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I know the previous member for Windermere used to be very on to this, and I think from memory, he would even go into these areas and talk to these students if he saw them.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Absolutely.

**CHAIR** - Once a copper, always a copper.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I know. He's very enthusiastic about all these matters, and he's -

## PUBLIC

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So, do you still have - and I know some schools do, or perhaps, when my children were at school. Some schools used to have teachers that would go into the city if they're not teaching at that time and catch up with students and ask them. So, do the schools still have people that go and chase up students?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have very dedicated principals and schools who follow up with students, and we support them wherever there is particular need.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Or put the authorised officers - not even actually parents, but go and see the children in the streets, and 'Where are you, why aren't you in school?'.

**Mr JAENSCH** - How do you speak to that, Mr Bullard?

**CHAIR** - Somebody from the learning services area.

**Mr BULLARD** - Well, they're normally social workers, so, under the Education Act, you can be an authorised officer. That gives you the power to approach children who aren't at school, and request a reason, and also to work with the student to return them to school. So, yes, they are still part of the system. Did you want to go to -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Some numbers would be good if we've got it, just to get an indication of whether it's actually getting worse or whether it's staying static or whether maybe it's improving. Particularly now that we're trying to keep everyone at school.

**Mr JAENSCH** - As I mentioned earlier, and while the department looks for an updated figure, that there has been a national decline and in -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - A national decline in attendance as opposed to an actual decline in truancy.

**Mr JAENSCH** - In attendance, yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - In non-attendance.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes, in non-attendance. No, no, in attendance.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority shows that national school attendance rates for Years 1 to 10 have decreased from 92.7 percent in 2014 to 86.5 percent in 2022. That's nationally. So, that paints that background decline. In 2022, for Tasmanian state schools, the daily average attendance rate for Prep to Year10 was 83.6 percent. So, we've had a similar pattern, and we've been below the national average, but following similar trends.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So, what are we doing to try to address it? Obviously, we're trying to address keeping students at school, Year 11 and 12, but what are we doing to try to keep students attending school?

**Mr JAENSCH** - One of the things you might have seen on the telly and in print -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I don't watch it, but that's all right.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I was very pleased to launch, for the first day of term 1 this year, our Every School Day Matters campaign, which we have seen TV advertisements, and I think it's also being used on social media as well. It's just very positive messaging about the importance of face-to-face learning for kids in schools, reminding parents who may have become used to kids being home and doing some learning and supporting learning from home during COVID, that schools are safe places for their kids to return to. But also, that their education outcomes are better when they're in school with a teacher in front of them and peers alongside them. It's better for their socialisation as well, particularly those kids who might have been spending more time at home and developed some anxieties about being out of the home as well. Part of that is being in a school where that socialising is part of basically their education and development during those years as well. So, we've been putting -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Apart from those messages -

**Mr JAENSCH** - This campaign has been out, and there's also been, as I understand it, supports for schools where there have been particular issues with attendance. We can see that statistically. The department's been able to support those schools. Mr Bullard might be able to speak to that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I understand that you've got TV and you've got social media and you've got print media. But are we actually finding out from the students why they're not going? Are there any particular reasons? Are they being bullied at school? Perhaps some of them are struggling at school. I know that I've done parent help in the past with remedial students and some of them just couldn't actually see what they were doing. They needed glasses and didn't want to wear them because they thought they'd get bullied. You know when you're actually going to the schools and helping, you discover that they actually not working well because they can't see, or they can't hear. Are we actually finding out from the students themselves, apart from trying to say to the parents, 'Your children need to be at school', why the students don't want to go.

**Mr BULLARD** - Certainly, as with suspensions, we've put a very high level of energy into the department on understanding why. We've built an analytics tool which provides the system and schools with a higher level of information about who's not attending, and absolutely starting that conversation with young people about why they can't come. Through the Child and Student Wellbeing strategy, every school now has a support and wellbeing team, and the support and wellbeing team, which is made up of a lead advanced skills teacher plus the student support social worker and psych, are analysing that data, and making contact with young people, and trying to understand what additional supports can be put in place.

We recognise that we are only part of the solution though. There are reasons outside the control of schools about why young people are not attending, and absolutely, we need to be working with other agencies to address issues such as transport, family stability, housing, et cetera. I do understand from the data that has been provided that the intensive support looks like it might be paying off. We are seeing a lift which is moving us away from last year's trend in terms of that attendance. We are going to be relentless on this. It has to be a focus to get every young person to school because we know not only can they learn, but we can start to put some of those other wraparound supports to give them some safety and some stability.

## PUBLIC

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Right. Thank you. I know that the Chair is anxious for - I've got one quick question.

**CHAIR** - Well, do you want to finish yours, then we'll go to a break.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just around attendance, while we we're here, I've just had it pointed out to me that we do have a positive sign for term 1 this year.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That it's improved.

**Mr JAENSCH** - 87.8 per cent. I gave you 2022's.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Which was 83.6. 87.8 for term 1 in 2023 is higher than we had in 2021.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Let's hope next year when we ask you the questions that it's continued to rise.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Maybe we're starting to get the bounce.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I was quite interested to hear that some students only have to go to school one or two days a week, which I found quite amazing. The situation that, obviously, we're trying to keep them in school but the fact that they legally only have to go to school one or two days a week, and then they've got five days that they can do all sorts of things, and obviously get themselves into trouble and not be at school. Does this come under you, or does it come under a different area? But what is the reason that some students only need to go to school one or two days a week? This is mainly high schools, I've noticed, the one's that I've heard about.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Mr Bullard to talk to the legality or the policy, but our view would be that they'll all do better with more school.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - More time in schools, learning face to face.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - How is it that we can allow them to be legally only have to go to school? I won't go into how I know that, but yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I suppose, the corollary of that is how do we legally force them to be in school?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But it's a legal requirement to go to school.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - All of a sudden, we're telling these students they only have to go this one day. One student told me you only have to go on Wednesdays, only have to go on Fridays.



**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Mr Bullard to respond.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes. If you could explain it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Also, perhaps, to link to some of the re-engagement programs we've got.

**Mr BULLARD** - Certainly. Thank you, minister. It is a legal requirement to attend school. It's also legally under the Education Act, you can apply for a part-time enrolment, and they are approved by either myself or Mrs Pearce. Part-time enrolment comes through for a range of factors. It might be to do with anxiety. It might be to do with having been totally disengaged from school. It might be to do with your current circumstances, your stability, family stability, etc. Our aim in providing a part-time enrolment is to engage you in something so that we can provide support, build your confidence, assist you with, if you have psychological issues or housing issues, assist you with those and get you back to school longer term.

I think one of the things, though, since the Act came in was looking at where you are engaging in learning. Certainly, in 2016, when the Education Act came in, it was engaging in a school-based learning mostly, with some, what we call, tier 4 provision. We now have a whole range of ways that you can engage in that learning. There is tier 4 provision right across the state. We work with 54 reasons around hands-on learning. There is vocational learning opportunities. We've got to get a hook for a young person to want to come to school and learn, and we have found that sometimes part-time enrolment is what will do it.

It's very different to say to a young person 'you're required to come for one or two days a week and you've been doing that,' and that success, then say, 'We require you to come for five and you're only coming for two.' We've just got to build the confidence of the young people and the supports, and part-time enrolment is one way that will do it. To be honest with you, I would prefer to have a child there, or a young person there one day a week than not at all.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I had one student two hours - it wasn't one of the normal schools - but two hours a week. I hate to tell you what they told me they were doing the rest of the time.

**CHAIR** - All right. Thank you for that. We will suspend our broadcast and break, and be back ready just a tad before 20 past 11 to finish education. As you can see, we haven't made it out of 1.1 yet, and we do need to move on. Thank you.

**The Committee suspended from 11.04 a.m. to 11.21 a.m.**

**CHAIR** - Before I hand back over to you, minister, I omitted to introduce Aleira Chalker who is assisting Mr Secretary today. Aleira is fairly new to the Legislative Council and doing a fantastic job, so we would like to welcome her as part of the Leg Co family.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Hear, hear. She has a wonderful future here, I'm sure.

**CHAIR** - Minister, it is my intention to get out of 1.1 and get on to 1.2, which is early learning. I'm really keen to hear from my members to see if there are any other burning questions on 1.1, because we need to get this done before the lunch break, and we've lost three

## PUBLIC

minutes already on our lunch break. Thank you. Have you got something, Mr Willie? And I expect that Ms Webb has something.

**Ms WEBB** - No. Sorry, I'm keen for us to get to children and families and youth justice.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. I'm just interested, minister, what the status is of the Years 9 and 12 Project is.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Willie. I'll bring up some information on that.

**Mr WILLIE** - While you're doing that, I might ask some other questions. How many new accredited courses were planned for next year and how many will be delivered? And the same for 2025.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, please.

**Mr BULLARD** - You just said clarity. Are we talking about TASC accredited courses?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, accredited courses, yes. It's my understanding the department develops a course and then they submit it to TASC for accreditation.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I can give the update on the Years 9 to 12 Project while Mr Bullard is looking for that other -

**CHAIR** - If we can have it as concise as possible, that would be very much appreciated.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. To ensure our young people are engaged in learning in Years 9 to 12 is tailored to students' individual needs and interests and aspirations through high-quality, relevant, accessible and engaging programs that link to their future. The department is working to ensure that all our young people engage in education and training until they successfully complete Year 12 and transition to the next phase of their life, whether that involves work, further education or training.

The Years 9 to 12 Project is in the final stages of closing, with a public report to be made available highlighting the key achievements and next steps for the ongoing work stemming from the project. The project helps to foster positive working relationships between the department, Catholic Education Tasmania and Independent Schools Tasmania. The project led to a series of positive outcomes, including a cross-sectoral approach to high quality, contemporary education preparing students for further study, work, and life in the 21st century outlined in the Years 9 to 12 curriculum framework, a shared vision for vocational learning and VET in Tasmanian schools to 2030 which led to the development and implementation of the vocational learning in Tasmanian schools framework.

Cross-sectoral professional learning program highlighted by the TAS Ed Talks online series of conferences which featured acclaimed national and international speakers and were attended by hundreds of Tasmanian educators. An increased focus on alignment of learning with industry needs culminating in industry area advisory groups established to ensure that new senior secondary courses are future-focused and fit for contemporary and emerging industry

## PUBLIC

needs globally, nationally, and locally. In regard to TASC and accredited courses, do you want a report there? 26 senior secondary courses from the Years 9 to 12 Project have been accredited in 2021 and 2022 and are being delivered by schools in 2023. A further 15 courses have been accredited for first teaching in 2024.

**Mr WILLIE** - How many were planned though, minister?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's as planned.

**Mr WILLIE** - So all that were planned were delivered?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's what I've just had confirmed.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr WILLIE** - Hang on. I've got some more. You may or may not have this data, but what's the average cost for each course to be developed in the levels? I'm happy for you to take some of these on notice if we're short on time. Can I have the number of students enrolled in each subject? I'm talking Years 11 and 12 accredited courses here. This question you might be able to talk to now because I know the courses weren't developed for a number of years and the TASC legislation is relatively new. How is the independence of TASC is maintained in accrediting courses.

**Mr BULLARD** - Could I ask Ms Burgess on the first -

**Mr WILLIE** - Obviously, you're developing them and there may be a need to refine at times, and I'm just interested in how that works.

**Ms BURGESS** - Mr Willie, I believe that a number of those questions are actually related to TASC and the different output.

**Mr WILLIE** - I've got some for the TASC side.

**Ms BURGESS** - So some of those are -

**Mr WILLIE** - But I'm interested in the department's side of this, which is developing the courses.

**Ms BURGESS** - With regard to how the courses are developed, there is a team which sits within education that develop those courses in consultation with representatives from across the three sectors. The cost would be related to the employment of those people and any levels of relief that were required. There wouldn't be a standard cost.

**Mr WILLIE** - A subject level, yes.

**Ms BURGESS** - It would be specific based on the subject area that as being developed.

**Mr WILLIE** - If I can have the student enrolment numbers for each subject?

**Ms BURGESS** - Is that for -

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - For accredited Year 11 and 12 courses.

**Ms BURGESS** - For government schools, we could provide that if you needed to - if you were interested in the total enrolment, that would be a question for TASC. We can only provide data for the government school system. While we support the services of TASC, we do that through TASC. I wouldn't be able to provide that as a department, only for -

**Mr WILLIE** - And at subject level.

**Ms BURGESS** - Only for the government schools.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, that's okay.

**Ms BURGESS** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - I can just take the government schools and I can - I'll ask some questions at TASC when we get them too.

**CHAIR** - If we ever get there.

**Mr WILLIE** - How does the department go about maintaining the independence of TASC. Obviously, you're developing the courses, you're asking TASC to accredit them. At times, I would assume the department might not meet the requirements and they have to come back to the department. So how does that process work and what systems are in place to protect the independence of TASC in their accreditation role?

**Ms BURGESS** - I can provide comment, but I would suggest that you should also ask that of TASC. From our perspective, we have a framework of courses that we are developing, and then we develop those with the guidance of TASC with regard to the accreditation framework they have developed. Then there is an independent process where that is reviewed by a group of people and feedback through a to and fro process around the standards, accreditation standards. So TASC has developed that and is independent in the standards that they require to be delivered and we work to respond to those and the feedback from TASC.

There is, as you would anticipate, a level of understanding and negotiation with regards to that. With regard to the curriculum element, there are elements that TASC hold firm to, which are around the quality assurance of courses, which is absolutely fully within their remit.

**Mr JAENSCH** - In terms of TASC as well, you'd be aware that, yesterday, I was able to announce the new chairs of the schools-based board for that.

**Mr WILLIE** - I saw the press release, yes. There's no need to cover that again if we're running short of time.

**Mr JAENSCH** - But again, in ensuring TASC's independence, the appointment of respected, independent chairs and skills based boards is part of maintaining the integrity of that system as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - And I've got some questions on allied health professionals.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Can you just ask the questions and we'll put them on notice?

**Mr WILLIE** - I can put them on notice. They're the normal ones that I ask around referral times and things like that. But I can put them on notice if we're short of time.

**CHAIR** - We'll put those on notice if that's all right with you, minister. Otherwise, we're not going to meet our timelines today. I have one last question in 1.1, and then we're going to 1.2, which is early education.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, so there are a number of questions which I don't have to, obviously, ask and I could put on notice but it's in relation to the school resourcing standard. So is the government committed to reaching at least 100 per cent of the minimum school resource standard for public schools as required by the National School Reform Agreement? And if so, by when?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Valentine, Tasmania's on track to meet its obligations under the current agreements that we have with the commonwealth regarding our component of funding. We've extended the existing agreement by a year. The new incoming government extended the term of the existing agreement by one year to give us time to reset around a renewed agreement and the next steps for that. The government, federally, has indicated it wants to chart a course to 100 per cent full Gonski levels of funding, and we've commenced engagement with them on the detail of what that looks like and what they intend, and what the implications are for our future state commonwealth bilateral agreements. So there is a broad commitment to move towards 100 per cent funding. It's not captured in the current agreement, as you know, but it's been signaled as an objective of the agreement that'll replace it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is there any component in this current budget that is particularly put aside to enhance the percentage that we currently have towards that 100 per cent, or not?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have a baked in gross commitment. We have a locked in 10-year agreement with a year on year - a 10-year commitment under the six-year agreement which binds us to uplift in our commitments year on year under that agreement.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So in this budget, is there an amount set aside specifically to address reaching the 100 per cent.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, to address the growth that we're committed to under the existing agreement.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There is?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do we know what that figure is?

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, the commitment that's reflected in the budget is the commitment under the current agreement to reach out component of schools funding under our bilateral agreement with the commonwealth.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. I think I've got all I'm going to get from that. But I do have other questions around the percentage of national school reform bilateral agreement funding. I'll put it on notice. Is that fair?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think that the answer that you're - so in terms of the budget that we're

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**Mr VALENTINE** - Is this in answer to my earlier question?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Salter, are you able to provide a bit more information in response to Mr Valentine in terms of what's in the budget in front of us that takes us to the next step of our commitment?

**Mr SALTER** - Yes, so that commitment being over that 10-year period to take the state contribution to 75 per cent. So the additional amount in this year's budget from the state is \$10million which, over the preceding years, is an accumulative additional \$38 million going in to meet the government's commitment.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So to you, minister, after 10 years, are we expected to be at a hundred percent or am I hearing that we're going to be at 75 per cent?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It depends on what the new agreement will be. At this stage, the agreement is that we are on a trajectory over 10 years to reach 75 per cent and the commonwealth has obligations against that as well to reach 20 per cent. The expressed aim of the new federal government, which we are supportive of, is to go 100 percent and that will be what we address through renegotiation of our agreements.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Over the coming year.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - If I have any further questions on that, I'll put them on notice. Are you happy with that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. 1.2 Early learning. Mr Willie.

### 1.2 Early Learning

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I'm just after some clarity around this area. We had the Premier make an announcement, I think it was at a Liberal council meeting, about universal access to early education for three year olds.

**CHAIR** - As in the minister's overview this morning.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, and we've got the Working Together initiative. So I'm interested in the expansion of that and how many places there will be. I know you're taking expressions of interest. And then we've got this other element now - it seems like it's being worked out after the Premier's announcement - this universal access to early learning for three-year olds. It's my understanding that it's going to be a pilot program to start with and this will be not for that vulnerable cohort, the healthcare card, out of home care and Aboriginal and Torres Strait islanders. And that's a pilot. I'm interested in how that's going to work because the funding in the budget certainly doesn't suggest universal access yet.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, thank you very much. I'd be very happy to provide an update on the range of matters and you have correctly identified the universal access to early learning project, as one thing, Working Together is separate. It has similar objectives but it's got a very targeted approach and it has a different timeframe as well.

We know that early learning gives children the best possible start in life and we're proud to support our youngest learners on this journey. We're progressing work to achieve the universal access to early learning in the year before kindergarten for all three year olds in Tasmania. Through April and May, the department has been consulting across Tasmania to clearly understand community views and needs on expanded early learning. During community engagement, over 330 responses were received either at one of 32 workshops held in 25 cities and towns across the state or through an online survey.

Some common things identified through consultation include that early learning needs to be holistic and inclusive with flexible access to suit the needs of children and their families; communities want early learning through a village approach with a mix of services provided locally; Aboriginal cultural practices should be embedded into service delivery and design; and service providers are to be appropriately skilled and have attributes and knowledge to provide quality early learning opportunities for every child and inclusive of their family of community. They want them to be place based and flexible in local areas, and transport is a key to accessing them.

We've been gathering a range of feedback from around the state and this has been happening, driven by a co-design planning group which is co-chaired by Associate Secretary Jenny Burgess, who's with us here today, as well as Ros Cornish, who I'm sure you will know. They've now looked at what the feedback has been on that and are plotting the next steps on the journey.

This includes identifying a number of trial sites, that we hope to identify in the next couple of months, and establishment of local enabling groups in those targeted communities to commence those trial sites in operation around the state next year. They will be chosen to sample a range of different settings in which we hope to be able to provide the access to early learning for three-year-olds in very different types of settings with different combinations of early childhood education and care providers providing a service in their own existing premises, where they exist and where those services can be expanded to have greater capacity.

Where they don't exist, potentially, those service providers will be operating in other settings, including, potentially, in schools, where they don't have their own footprint at this stage, and a combination of variations in between.

So, we want to be able to sample urban and suburban populations, but also remote communities as well, where we might need to be more creative about how we provide the universal access that we're talking about. While that's underway, we're also expanding the Working Together initiative, which is a different project, but which has got similar overall objectives. It provides free access to early learning with additional wrap-around supports for children in the year before kindergarten. It targets in particular, families with complex needs, creating the right conditions for access to early learning. In some of those cases, this access can make more of a difference for those kids and those families than for others in the community.

The program currently provides 120 places for children across a range of ECEC services, and we'll be expanding that to 240 places in 2024, and 360 places in 2025. So, it's complementary to expanding access to early learning for all three-year-olds, and together, they'll help put us on the path to ensure that there is universal access to early learning in the year before kindergarten for all Tasmanian three-year-olds.

**Mr WILLIE** - So, where you're going to provide the universal access with existing providers, how will that work with the activity test for some families? Where you have certain requirements for work and study?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's one of the key matters that we're working through right now, and it's also happening against the backdrop of a fair bit of change in this area nationally, and in other jurisdictions like Victoria and New South Wales and Queensland, where they're on a similar road to us, but they've got a different starting point because of how they operate. For example, with our kindergarten in Tasmania being offered as a right to everyone in schools, we've got a different starting point from there.

So, I'm engaged closely with Jason Clare, the federal minister, and we're watching very closely what's happening, particularly in Victoria and New South Wales, but also in jurisdictions like South Australia and Western Australia, who have some more similarities to Tasmania when it comes to our provision of preschool, if you like. We want to make sure that with this expansion, which is a journey that everybody's on, that we're getting the full benefit of additional Commonwealth investment in expansion of early learning as well, even though we've put a different starting point to the other states.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay. With these trial sites, how many kids and families are you hoping to pick up with those?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Could I ask if Ms Burgess would be able to provide a little bit more detail there? Because she's been at the bleeding edge of this work.

**Ms BURGESS** - Thank you. We're not yet at the stage that we will know the numbers. We've met the co-design group on Monday where we talked through what the criteria would be and the principles underpinning our decision making about where the trial sites should be. From that perspective, which geographical location that they should be in? We will be prioritising areas that are currently not well-served by early learning for three-year olds. From



there, we will then work through the local community and establish local enabling groups to actually determine what the model will be. So, we'll be doing that through the latter half of this year.

From there, we will be able to work it out - we already know the cohort demographics in those areas. Then it will be about what will be possible from a service delivery point of view, always prioritising the education and care sector where they've got an established service in that geographic region. We're not at that numbers level yet. It will probably take us two to three months to get there working with the co-design group and the local enabling groups. Then we'll be able to model costs associated with that delivery.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So in delivering universality, we recognise that every place is different and we're going to have to be very flexible. As Ms Burgess has outlined, the approach of the co-design way of working is that we're doing this with in the early childhood education and care sector. We are growing their delivery where possible. Where they aren't or can't deliver, we're going to need to work on a range of hybrids to ensure -

**CHAIR** - Or not willing to.

**Mr JAENSCH** - As yet, and we need to work on growth. But the priority will be to deliver by and from them, where possible. Where it isn't, to engage them in a different hybrid approach, including on what sites we deliver these services.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm not sure if I ask it in this line or it might have been the one before, but I promised the mayor of Flinders Island that I would raise this. In terms of the childcare there, and the issues that the island is having there, have you had any -

**CHAIR** - You're stepping in my patch.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, I know. I'm sorry.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You need to be very careful of that.

**Mr WILLIE** - I did have a meeting with the mayor and the general manager via zoom, and I know that members of the Legislative Council were there recently and it's a huge issue for the island, and I'm just interested in your engagement on that issue and what's being done there. Sorry, member for McIntyre.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - It's all right. I did raise it in my contribution to the Budget speech as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - But I'm a person of my word, so I had to raise it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - To both of you, my advice is that Thrive Group Tasmania Incorporated, previously known as the Northern Children's Network, operates the early education and care service on Flinders Island - Whitemark Early Learning Service - and have done so since the inception of the National Quality Framework in 2012. Thrive, as the approved provider, can make business decisions relating to the operational days and hours relating to the number of enrolments that they provide for. The education and care unit in the department, the regulator

of the sector, is aware that the service is currently restricting hours due to challenges with staffing and the ECU -

**CHAIR** - And space. There's a facility not fit for purpose. That's obviously not in your note, so I'm helping you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, but I take it on notice. The ECU is aware of issue that over the years, Thrive Group have engaged with the council on the island to discuss a partnership to support accommodation options being included in employment contracts, and to support staff taking positions at the service and keeping them there. We've been advised by them that they've not been able to successfully negotiate an arrangement there. Our department is arranging a meeting between the council, the service provider and the principal of the Flinders Island District School, and the school principal has indicated that department land on the school site could be a possible solution. That's where those discussions are at and we'll progress them.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Because the principal is very supportive of the facility being on site at the school.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. That's not an uncommon arrangement around the state. We've done that.

**CHAIR** - No. It happens in Dorset.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It happens in lots of places, yes.

**CHAIR** - It happens in lots of places. So, let's make it happen on the island. So, that's a question for Mr Salter to have in his budget request. Any other questions?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Later on, we'll get a question about how do we decide where money should go, and you've just answered it.

**CHAIR** - Yes, that's right. I'll move now to 2.1, which is Libraries.

## **Output Group 2 Libraries Tasmania**

### **2.1 Libraries Tasmania**

**Mr JAENSCH** - Madam Chair, could I please invite Ms Sue McKerracher to the table, please.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Sue.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Minister, I think I'll start off with the new performance indicators of the percentage of people who use libraries, Tasmania's services and programs in the last 12 months. Minister, do you believe this will form an aspirational figure going forward? To

develop goals to get greater and greater numbers of people engaging with libraries. What constitutes engagement?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Before I pass to Sue, I'd like to just put on the record. I've only been minister for Libraries for just over a year now and Sue and her team have found lots of opportunities to involve and engage me in that and I've learned a lot about libraries and their potential. I see them as essential social infrastructure in our communities right across the board, noting that they operate in a changing world as well, and how we deliver the content of our libraries to our communities is constantly changing.

I'm really pleased with the way that Sue and her team have responded to that and are breathing new life into the ways that libraries interact with our people, particularly with young people, and particularly the way that we're working with their technologies to ensure that libraries are part of their world as well. So we are very ambitious and aspirational for engagement with libraries. I'd be very happy though for Ms McKerracher to -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Would you like me to ask the question again or are you right? Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - To speak about the performance and the trajectory.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - And the new performance information that's in output group 1 on page 27 where it's listed.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - Thank you. If I deal with the change to the performance information first.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes, that's fine.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - In common with libraries around Australia, what we're looking at now are outcome measures rather than input measures. So it's not about how many books we buy or how many books people borrow but actually how does that affect their lives. So the new measures are in order to measure that impact on the wellbeing of Tasmanians. So that's the aim of these new performance measures.

What I'm very pleased to say is that there was a little dip during COVID. Again in common with other libraries around Australia but in the quarter January to March 2023 we were seeing an average of 7000 people per day coming through our library doors and that's actually an increase of 17 per cent on the same period last year.

We're also seeing, and you spoke about engagement. We're also seeing physical book loans going up, e-book loans going slightly down but kind of hovering at that 25 to 30 per cent. Program attendance increased. We've run 1021 programs during the first three months of the year, and we've increased attendance especially in the early learning area. There are lots of ways that people do engage with our libraries, whether it's coming in to read the newspaper, whether it's coming in to borrow a book, whether it's coming in to use the technology, or to participate in the many programs we run. I think the beauty of the library system across Tasmania is that we have the benefits of the state-wide system, which no other state has in the way that we do here, but at the same time, we've got very much local delivery.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So how are you measuring - I noticed there's a survey. So how do the surveys go out, or who gets the survey? I'm just reading in the footnotes that it is via survey. So how do you do that? Will you be randomly choosing people? Phoning people? Emailing or when they come in? How will it be worked out?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - We've used several methods. So in March we did an online survey of library members and we had 2829 -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I must admit I didn't get one, and I am a library member, so there you go.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - I will note that, thank you. We had 2829 responses to that and at this point we're looking at the results of that survey. We've also got surveys around our adult learning service. We've got various surveys which are being done. We don't want to over-survey people because that's very irritating. We've also used an omnibus survey, so we also tacked a couple of questions onto the 2610 survey last year to find out how people are using us. There will be a number of ways that we will use survey data to feed into these performance measures.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. Can we be assured, minister, that not meeting the targets won't ever be used as a justification for cutting resources or funding to libraries Tasmania. Yes or no?

**CHAIR** - And we just need a simple answer. Wonderful, it's what we like.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Okay. Looking down my list, because you have answered a lot of in the part. According to footnote 1 on page 27 the auditor-general recommended in 2016 that performance measures moved away from activity measures towards outcome measures so why has it taken so long to implement the auditor-general's recommendations. Well 2016 he recommended it and we're actually 2023.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Sue's arrived now, and we're doing it, and I've arrived now as the minister with responsibilities.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - I can also answer that at a national level. I was involved in discussions with other library services, which did commence around that time, and it has taken until this point for most library services to actually adopt those outcome measures.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So does Libraries Tasmania keep a complaints data as well and if so, how many complaints have you had probably for the past financial year?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - We do deal with complaints. I would have to take that on notice, I'm afraid. I don't know the exact number, but we do have incidents in libraries, and we do have the odd complaint. I will say that the satisfaction level with libraries is over 90 per cent as a consistent measure.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can I get an indication - it'd just be interesting to know, what type of complaint is it? Because you don't have the book that someone wants? Or what would the type of complaints be to the library?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - Sometimes it's about people not being able to use their card because, for example, if they haven't used it for two years and they come back to the library and they want to use their card. We're very good about keeping our database current so that we're reporting strong membership figures to you. We don't keep members live for five years, so if they've not used a card for two years, they may well come back and find that their card isn't working. It's a simple fix for us to reactivate that card, but that may be something. It can also be about behaviour of other clients in libraries, and sometimes we do have challenging behaviours in libraries. It's really variable. It's very rarely about the quality of the staff and the welcome that they receive.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So the reason you don't keep the cards live for more than two years. Two years doesn't seem very long. Is there a cost to keeping them live because I know that I might use mine, I used to use mine online and borrow book online for the car for when I was driving to Hobart and then all of a sudden, my car didn't have a CD player which totally threw me, so I had to do it differently. But it might be two years. So why is it only two years? Why not longer?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - I think we've been a little bit overzealous potentially in saying that we want to be absolutely accurate in our membership figures but potentially looking at a slightly longer period might actually be more customer-focussed so we are looking at that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Or more encouraging. Yes, I guess it may turn into a question, minister. Would you not consider making it perhaps 10 years, or - I can't see the reason, and while I understand you want to keep knowing the number that you've actually got, but I would've thought that it could disenfranchise some people or perhaps - if people can't use their card. I know if I went online and couldn't use my card, I'd be a little annoyed not realising it'd be cut off. So it'd be good if you could consider - I just can't see a reason that you would not keep people live to encourage them to use books whenever they happen to go in.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Look, I'm open to all the feedback and advice, and the best ways forward with that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I just can't see the benefit in keeping it two years.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would hope that we aim for a relationship with the users of our library services where we're seeing them very week.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And that there's no surprises when something expires or its due because we're in a conversation with them all the time, because the library is part of their routine and their ongoing lifelong learning.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But it could be a bit like education, as Mr Bullard said. Sometimes you give them a hook. They might need to come back after a couple of years, and it's a bit disappointing if your card's expired and you have to actually go in, and you want to do it online and it won't let you do it online because you have to go in and renew your card, so I would see a benefit if you would consider.

**Mr JAENSCH** - As a valued library user, we'll certainly listen to your feedback on that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, minister. Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I just have a question around online access centre funding.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - I'm aware there's been some funding cuts or there's been no increase in funding which is presenting challenges to some of our online access centres - I'm looking to see what's the rationale behind that and how can some of our centres remain open if they're not being appropriately funded?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The online access centres are part of our family of initiatives managed under libraries. The original network of 65 online access centres was initially established in 1997, I understand, particularly for people in rural and regional areas to have access to computers and to get online and develop their digital skills, where they might not have them at home or people in their households who have those literacies.

**CHAIR** - I think we're all well aware of the establishment and the reason behind it. It's just keeping the doors open.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. Over time, the number of centres has decreased to 19 now from the original 65 as other opportunities have emerged for people to access those similar sorts of services, and as the background level of familiarity and the ubiquity of working online has come to be. So libraries are increasingly delivering digital access and supporting those skills.

**CHAIR** - There is no library at Meander, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. But many centres that were originally collocated with libraries are being incorporated into libraries. The NBN has increased access for many Tasmanians, and other types of community organisations and businesses are delivering digital access and skills as well. Of the 19 community-managed online access centres that are currently funded, three are collocated with a library, a further six are in the same community as a library, two are in locations which also have trade training centres, and there are 10 locations where there is not an obvious duplication.

What we've done as a government is continue to renew the existing funding for the current suite of 19 centres. The level of funding has been maintained. There is, I think, another 12 months or so in the current agreements. June 2025. So there is still a way to go. But I think it's important that we're also reviewing the relationships that we have between libraries, online access centres, and other similar service providers where they all occur together in the same town, compared to where we've only got one, and we need to make sure that we're providing that universality of access.

So we do have situations that have brought to our attention, like in St Helens, and I've had conversations with local members there and with the mayor as well, and also with our Minister for Small Business, Madeleine Ogilvie, who has a role in some of the online digital ready for business type delivery under the Department of State Growth.

**CHAIR** - The minister suggested I ask you this question.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're working together to work out how, for example, in a place like St Helens, we don't have a - well, not we don't have, but how we maximise the benefit, minimise the duplication between having an online access centre and a library, and the delivery of online support and skills for small businesses within the same building.

**CHAIR** - My focus was -

**Mr JAENSCH** - But all funded separately and possibly duplicating. I'm hoping -

**CHAIR** - My focus is on those communities that only have an online access centre.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - And don't have a library or any other facility that they can use.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right.

**CHAIR** - That's my focus.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand there's around 10 across the network where they don't -

**CHAIR** - So they should have increased funding.

**Mr JAENSCH** - What we need to understand is what they need and what role it is that we want them to play.

**CHAIR** - So that will occur?

**Mr JAENSCH** - During the life of the current funding, we have the opportunity to review some of those settings and reset the arrangement so that we're filling the gaps and we're reducing duplication.

**CHAIR** - So we're keeping the doors open.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Access to the service is the most important thing.

**CHAIR** - The door has to be open to access the services. Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're even talking about the doors being open 24/7 at some sites for things. So that's another conversation for another day.

**CHAIR** - I don't think my Meander community are looking for 24/7. They're just looking for the current door to be open for the time that it's currently open.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Indeed.

## PUBLIC

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Perhaps you could expand though on the 24/7. That would be interesting.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Might I ask Ms McKerracher to make a comment on that, because she's got some interesting new concepts that she has been working on.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - Our library managers are very aware of what's going on elsewhere in the world and elsewhere in Australia, and there have been some exciting developments trialled elsewhere of later opening, earlier opening, for libraries where there's the opportunity to allow a community to access those buildings when the buildings are actually unstaffed. So we are talking about a couple of trial opportunities. Obviously, there is a risk piece to work through, because you need to be sure that people are safe and can -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - A bit like a 24-hour gym, isn't it?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Exactly.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - So we may not go 24-hour to start with, but we could certainly go until 9 pm in a couple of our sites. So we are looking at the feasibility of a couple of sites, one of which is in the north west, and I'm hopeful we'll have more information this time next year to share with you, possibly even a trial.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You can't say which sites at this stage?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - I'd rather not, if you wouldn't mind.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Through you, Chair, I'd love to have one at Sorrell.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There you go.

**CHAIR** - There we go. There's the second one.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So this is thinking about students who are in school during the day, people who are working during the day. They've got their evenings though, and do they have to wait until Saturday morning to go to the library or rely on their lunch break? How do we make sure that the library is there when they need it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We'd love one at Launceston as well, so let's put a claim in.

**CHAIR** - So there you go. You might as well say it. If you're going to have for one, you've got to have it for everybody.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Absolutely.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We need to get it right, but that's one of the exciting new ideas that we're thinking about.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, minister.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We'll move to 3.1, which is education regulation.



**Output Group 3  
Education Regulation**

**3.1 Education Regulation**

**CHAIR** - Mr Willie, I know you've got a couple of questions there.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Could I please bring Katharine O'Donnell to the table.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Katharine.

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

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. I was asking these questions of the department, but perhaps they're better directed here. I'm just interested in the development of courses and the accreditation, and just how that's going from TASCs perspective, and how independence is maintained through that process.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - Minister, are you happy for me to -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Very happy for you to lead on.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - Excellent. Course accreditation has been going along really well this year and last year, and I have actually been told that while the enrolment statistics for each of those newly accredited courses are put out in the annual report each year, I know that you did ask how many students were enrolled in the most recently accredited courses. The office have kindly found that number for you and told me that 140 across all sectors enrolled in the five new courses that were accredited and have just started being taught this year. But at the moment, they have accredited, I think, as the minister may have said, 26 courses have been accredited and are being delivered this year in 2023. Accreditation work is continuing.

As you are aware, the TASC works with the 9 to 12 Project on the accreditation and receives the course information from the 9 to 12 Project group and then proceeds on the basis of its own accreditation policies to determine the accreditation of those courses, which is quite robust within TASC in terms of considering those courses and working with 9 to 12 Project group in a collaborative way to get the best outcomes in course accreditation.

**Mr WILLIE** - If we can, can we have the enrolment numbers for each subject? I'm happy for you to provide that.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - Yes. I can't give you that right now.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - But I can certainly get that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Take that on notice.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - It will be in the annual report too, if you're happy with that, minister.

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm happy for that to be taken on notice.

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

**Mr WILLIE** - What about the balance of the courses? Is that being considered as well in terms of how many courses there are in certain subject areas?

**Ms O'DONNELL** - Yes. As I understand, there's a number of courses which are split into either new, newly developed courses, and courses that are replacing and refreshing pre-existing courses. I can't give you the breakdown on those here at the moment. But there is always a work plan for the next couple of years in courses that are being worked on and that are flagged for potential accreditation, so that TASC have a bit of a heads up that they're coming. That can fluctuate a bit from time to time, depending now the work is going with preparing those courses. But there is standard information that flows through to TASC to say we're looking at these courses, and these courses are expiring, and these are the ones that we're working on to have reaccredited each year. And so TASC receives regular updates on that process and what 9 to 12 Project group are working on.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, is the TCE being reviewed at the moment?

**CHAIR** - It said in our notes it is.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - I don't know if I have the answer to that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Department question that one. Policy decision. If you're happy, if that's in the right part of the papers, I can defer to the department for that. Ms Burgess.

**Ms BURGESS** - The department, at the moment, is working with TASC around what senior secondary certification should look like from a futures oriented point of view. We know that the TCE has been in place for a fair while now and we've been working nationally also in collaboration with other states and territories to get a better sense of what contemporary recognition and attainment looks like. Certainly, there is some thinking there with regard to that.

Some of the team have met with South Australia recently to look at what's happening with regards to learner profiles and how that will look different for any certification that might occur at the completion of Year 12. So it is a work in progress. Later this month, TASC and education will come together to have a joint briefing around what that might look like and future steps that we need to take to ensure that we do have contemporary recognition and certification for Tasmanian exiting students.

**CHAIR** - So there's no timeframe around that then? It's in the note.

**Ms BURGESS** - There is no timeframe at this point in time but that work will happen over the next month or so and will give us a timeframe around both how we might do that, what the timeframe might look like. There will always be a delay through implementation given that you need to think about the flow on consequences backwards to students in Years 9 and 10 and what that means for their subject choices as they come into Years 11 and 12. But it's certainly something that we will jointly plan for.

## PUBLIC

**Mr BULLARD** - Can I just check, are you talking to the note that talks about TCE?

**CHAIR** - Yes. It says here they're currently working with the office to measure attainment.

**Mr BULLARD** - So is that note 3?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes. That's slightly different.

**CHAIR** - Apologies.

**Mr BULLARD** - So Mr Willie's asked around TCE and what might constitute that. That note refers to how we are going to report success for young people who are exiting senior secondary. You'll recall that, traditionally, we've only had TCE and then we had a count, a very odd count of actual FTE numbers of students who, I think, were engaged in a unit of vocational education. What we want to do is be able to report back through these papers on the success more comprehensively. The minister's already spoken about - or Ms Burgess has spoken about TCE, the minister's also spoken about apprenticeships.

We've also got traineeships; we've got school-based apprenticeships; we've got the TCEA, which is the certificate of achievement; and we've also got - we're certifying people under our Vocational Education and Training training packages. So it would be pertinent, I think, now to move to be fully capturing those numbers and then being able to report on the total student population who are doing something meaningful at the end of Year 12. I think that's going to be a more meaningful measure. So they're related but slightly similar.

**CHAIR** - Thank you for that clarification. Perhaps it's a bit clunky then.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Any other questions? No. Thank you very much and all the best with your recovery. Yes, the member has a question on home schooling. Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, minister. In regard to home schooling, have the numbers increased, stayed static, or? Obviously with COVID, a lot more people discovered home schooling and I wonder whether a lot stayed actually on home schooling, or were very pleased to get the students back to school. So how's it tracking?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for Katharine to respond.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - Sure. The answer is a little bit of both. The numbers did go up in the last 12 months but have come down again. So the number at 31 March 2023, of registered students, is 1397 as opposed to 1467 at the same time last year. However, there were 558 new applications approved in that time and 474 of those returned to school within less than 12 months. So there's been what we call a churn, a number apply and then, for whatever reason, discover it's not for them and go back into the system.

## PUBLIC

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'm just wondering what the number might have been pre-COVID. How it compares to the pre-COVID times.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - I can tell you that, on 31 March 2019, the number was 1094.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Right.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - So it has remained high. Higher.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It hasn't gone backwards.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - It hasn't gone backwards.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No. some people consider they liked it, yes. No, okay, that's fine, thanks very much, minister.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. And again, we thank you very much, Katharine. I'll move now to 4.1, which is services for children.

### Output Group 4

#### Children Services

**CHAIR** - I would like to acknowledge that the data in the budget papers is quite extensive and very useful, but I am going to hand over to Ms Webb, thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, Chair.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Could I please invite to the table the Executive Director, Services for Children and Families, Claire Lovell.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Claire.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, my apologies.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, minister. In the first instance, I just wanted to clarify and check that an assumption I'm making is correct in regard to this line item as it's presented in table 2.9 there, on page 38. The amount in this line item for 2022-23 is around the \$79.6 million and then it jumps up in 2023-24 to \$145 million. Now, I imagine that jump is reflective of the fact that the \$79 million, or thereabouts, in 2022-23 was a partial year because of the transfer between departments, potentially. Is that a correct interpretation of the difference there?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Mr Salter just confirm, please.

**Mr SALTER** - Yes, that's correct.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. It probably would have been helpful to put that as part of the footnote. You've got footnote 5, which explains some other things about the forward years and variations but didn't explain what - it looked quite surprising when you first read it. So thank you for that. I'll come back to some of those other matters that are represented there. Perhaps

## PUBLIC

you could provide us with a breakdown though of the amount that's there for 2023-24, which is the full amount, I guess, for a full year, the \$145.545 million. A breakdown of how that sits across the different things funded in that line item.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Who's best to provide that, Mr Bullard? Kane.

**Mr SALTER** - I haven't got that breakdown available with me in terms of dollars against all of the program areas. Ms Lovell might want to explain what's covered and then we can come back with the figures.

**CHAIR** - With some actual figures.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Would you be happy to do that? Thank you. Ms Lovell.

**Ms LOVELL** - What would you like me to cover specifically?

**CHAIR** - The programs.

**Ms WEBB** - I don't really need an explanation of each of them. There'll be some that I'll discuss with some questions, but I am interested to see the financial breakdown across the different program areas covered by this line item amount. I can move on to another question and we can come back to that financial breakdown.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy to take that on notice.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - So that's Strong Families Safe Kids advice and the referral line, and the Child Safety Service and the Out of Home care?

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, and anything else that might be covered in that total amount that's presented in that line item 4.1. To pick up on, though, the Strong Families Safe Kids reform, I just wanted to check in on that. Obviously, that began quite some time ago, around 2016, I think, with the Maria Harries report. I recall it in my past lives prior to this place as well. I know that back in 2020, there was a UTAS evaluation done around the reform at that point, four years in, and some matters have been highlighted in that evaluation in 2020 around confusion, potentially, or a lack of clarity around the new approach's role, and evidence of confusion and frustration at some of the concepts, and it sort of pointed to still being in the midst of the rollout, which I think was fair enough.

It did also talk about a lack of clarity about the constituent parts of the child safety system, and that culminated in a recommendation 5 from that evaluation, which was about completing a review of the services, and it spoke about that being urgently required. I just wondered whether that recommendation from the UTAS 2020 evaluation had been actioned in a formal way? Whether there was at some point after 2020 and after that review some review of services that then further informed going forward and where are we're up to. Would you say that we've arrived at the end of this reform or are we still mid-reform seven years down the track?

**Ms LOVELL** - This is specifically to do with the advice and referral line, so yes, there has been some -

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**CHAIR** - Would you like to move just a little bit closer to that microphone? Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just for the record, Ms Lovell responding to Ms Webb, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister.

**Ms LOVELL** - So I won't go into the Strong Family Safe Kids project more broadly, so we can focus on you're asking more about the advice and referral line and the review into that.

**Ms WEBB** - Well, I'm asking the Strong Family Safe Kids reform and whether we are still regarding ourselves as being in the midst of that reform process seven years down the track, or have we completed it? I'm looking to then ask about what elements we're still actioning from it.

**Ms LOVELL** - Okay, minister, that might be -

**Mr JAENSCH** - So can you clarify that the specific recommendation you're talking about was reviewing the family services component of the system?

**Ms WEBB** - I'll have to bring up that document on my computer again to take a look at it. I'm reading from that evaluation document from UTAS in 2020, and recommendation 5 from that, which is lengthy. It's about four paragraphs long, so I just paraphrased it rather than reading the whole thing. So that's the one that I'm talking about.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Do you want to go to the family services area?

**Ms LOVELL** - So I can clarify that the review that you're referring to was of the Strong Family Safe Kids project in its entirety, but at that point of review, it was quite early on, so only several parts of it had been operationalised at that point in time, so that was largely the focus area. So for those areas, such as the advice and referral line and the intensive family engagement service that had been rolled out, there has been subsequent reviews. So there has been a subsequent review of the advice and referral line by the auditor-general, and also ongoing review by the professor that assisted us in developing up that service delivery model.

**Ms WEBB** - Maria Harries?

**Ms LOVELL** - No, that was David Thorpe.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay, David Thorpe. Was that an internal review, minister? Or is that something that's being made public?

**Ms LOVELL** - Apologies. For the record, I think I should have said David Thorpe there rather than Ian. Ian Thorpe's a swimmer, isn't he? Professor David Thorpe.

**Mr JAENSCH** - From Leeds? Yes.

**Ms LOVELL** - University of Western Australia more recently.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - So in relation to that particular review, was that an internal review only, or was it a review that was made public, or the results of it in some sense made public? When was that completed?

**Ms LOVELL** - I'm not sure about the Auditor-General's. That would've been last -

**Ms WEBB** - The Auditor-General's certainly would've been made public. We would have that on the public record. I'm interested in the one by Professor Thorpe.

**Ms LOVELL** - No, they haven't been made public. That's ongoing research, really, but he's also giving us ongoing guidance based on that to make sure that we stay on track, apply fidelity to the model.

**Ms WEBB** - So from an external perspective and wanting to understand and scrutinise how we're doing in terms of the model and rolling it out, how would we have visibility of that in terms of a review?

**Ms LOVELL** - I think that's where we look to our performance data and the areas that relate to the advice and referral line, and whether or not it has been as successful as we hoped. So things like the number of children in and out of home care is relevant there, and also the number of families receiving support via the advice and referral line in comparison to those who were referred into the child safety service.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Ms LOVELL** - The substantiation rate in the child safety service, those sorts of indicators do give us a picture of advice and referral line and the success of that model.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I will come to some of those performance measures in a moment. But perhaps then back to, more broadly, the question I was asking, minister, in relation to the Strong Family Safe Kids reform process. Are we still regarding themselves as being within that process? Has it completed, or are there elements yet to roll out? Notwithstanding, of course, we're always looking to improve in a continuous way, but in terms of terming it a reform, has the reform completed?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The changes that it has made and required continue to be supported and resourced and added to. It's delivering the things that it was meant to. In regard to that continuous improvement that you refer to, we consider that the development of the new or the establishment of the new Department for Education, Children and Young People also does give us the opportunity to review and reset a little bit and to revisit some of those previous evaluations and recommendations for improvement of the service and take stock of what was recommended, what's been followed through, how effective those things have been and where we might have some outstanding obligations. We will also be taking note of things like the findings of the commission of inquiry, which may have recommendations that relate to how these services operate and how they communicate across services as well.

**Ms WEBB** - Can I just pick up on that then, minister, because given that the only then subsequent review after that 2020 UTAS one, which is in an earlier stage, putting the Auditor-General aside, who had a particular remit for his review, but the only review of the model as such has been an internal one and therefore not available for anyone other than

yourself and those in the department to be able to understand how we're tracking or measuring. We can look at performance data, but actually, there's a more meaningful way to scrutinise than just that. Is it the intention that there would be a more publicly visible review process and evaluation process for stakeholders to engage with, and then for stakeholders to be able to look to and understand afterwards?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I agree with Ms Lovell that, at the end of the day, the most important thing is that more families who are at risk are getting more support earlier, and they're being supported to be safe places for their children to remain, for their children not to be removed and go through the trauma for all of them of that event. We've got fewer young people entering our child safety and out of home care systems, and a lower number of young people in those systems. So that's what this process set out to achieve in this redesign.

Now, how that's achieved and how each of the component parts of that redesign are performing are subject to continuous improvement and review internally, as well as, from time to time, through external review, but with the resources that we have for things that are working, refining them is a priority. Identifying areas of the system that are not meeting their objectives and putting our resources into understanding why and how we can fix them is probably the next priority. So periodic full public independent review of things that are working may not be the best use of our resources when we have many challenges in our system as well. I understand your interest in having more insight into how these matters work, and that's partly what estimates is for and other reporting.

**Ms WEBB** - There's a lot of component parts in this reform and a lot of different aspects to it, and while raw numbers, at the end of the day, may point to some positive results.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Which is really all that matters. The kids, really. Their safety.

**Ms WEBB** - Well, let's be clear. There are also questions about could those results be better. There's questions about could we tweak the way we're investing the money to make improvements. There's questions about could stakeholders be engaged differently or more effectively in different aspects of this reform? So there's plenty of things to be potentially reviewed and improved. But I've heard you say -

**Mr JAENSCH** - We will to that extent we are still at this stage in the process of delivering what we call the Strong Family Safe Kids Next Steps Action Plan which spans 2021 to 2023, and there will be a report on the delivery of those latest series of initiatives once that's complete.

**Ms WEBB** - A public report on that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Can I ask then, more specifically, if I may, Chair, around the intensive family engagement service that's mentioned here as a feature and has got funding of \$4.175 million in 2023-24, and then again 2024-25, nothing beyond that? The explanation being that specific funding allocation will be based on demand and that there's an assessment process about an appropriate model underway seems to be the message from the budget papers. I'm just interested to understand what that assessment process is about this model, in regard to funding going forward. Even though there isn't funding in those out years of the forward



estimates, presumably the intention is something would be funded in this space in those years. It's just not represented in the budget. Is that a correct assumption?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. The intensive family engagement service is an approach designed to ensure that for families that may be on the cusp of what traditionally might've resulted in a removal of a child for their safety, that this is an opportunity for families where there is the possibility of them being able to provide safety in their home family environment for the child. We preserve that wherever possible. The intensive family engagement service is a wraparound of supports in the home included, with specialist providers who can assist families to demonstrate that they can meet the requirements, for us to be satisfied that - or for the service to be satisfied that they can safely look after their little people.

As I understand it, the service is deployed with a number of providers, engaging with a family for a discreet period of time, around possibly six months or so. We don't have families engaged with the intensive family engagement service over years, so it's an episodic service. There's a number of different providers. We fund this year-to-year in response to demand. We also have the ability during that time as well to look for where we might be able to support new providers or provision of different types of services as well, so an area of particular interest is a delivery of services for Aboriginal people by Aboriginal people, and growing the involvement of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, for example, as a provider of the IFSS services.

In 2021, we had 61 families which had engagement from the service. In 2021-22, 82 families. At December 2022, 50 families had engaged. It's an area of fluctuating demand, differing providers, and so our guarantee is that that service will be there. We've given it funding over the next two years. I fully expect that we will fund it in future budgets to continue beyond the next two years.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. There's data in relation to that service, and it being an as required, like an on-demand funding, does that mean you're fully meeting demand for the service at all times?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know anything to the contrary, but Ms Lovell, do you want to speak about how it's deployed and whether we've got the resources there to meet demand?

**Ms WEBB** - I don't particularly need a lengthy description. I'm mindful of time. I'm just looking for an answer. Are we fully meeting demand, then, at all times?

**Ms LOVELL** - I believe we are meeting demand through that service, and also another service that we have developed alongside that, Bringing Baby Home, which is a similar intensive family preservation service but for families with a new-born infant.

**Ms WEBB** - In terms of the data that relates to the IFSS and also that service you've just described, the Bringing Baby Home, do you present that data publicly in terms of the number of families assisted each year, and also what the outcomes are in terms of whether there's been family preservation through that, or potentially whether that's resulted in a situation of child removal, ultimately? Is that data presented somewhere publicly? Because I don't need to ask for it if it is. I can find it, but if it's not presented publicly, I'm interested to hear it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for you to provide the answer.

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**Ms LOVELL** - I believe that will be in our annual report.

**Ms WEBB** - Would it be in the annual report from the past couple of years?

**Ms LOVELL** - I think so.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. If it's not, I'll come back to it in Parliament. Can I ask you now about the Transition to Independence program, minister?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Again, what we see there, it's featured as a key deliverable. There's funding, though only described for 2024-25, \$2.97 million or thereabouts. There's nothing specified there in that specific line about that program in, say, 2023-24 that we're about to enter into. I'm presuming that doesn't mean it's not being funded in that year.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, it means it's been funded in previous budgets. So the budget papers are reflecting new funding in the out years.

**Ms WEBB** - The 2024-25 funding in this budget that's detailed is a new confirmation that there will be.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Then the assumption would be that on demand, similarly to IFSS, that there'd be funding further. There's no expectation that that's going to be a program where you walk away from.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, and this is a slightly different context to the IFSS one, because -

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, I'm familiar that it's not the same program whatsoever. It's about children leaving care.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I know it's different, but the point is we've got children in care now who know that their order's go out to their 18th birthday, and they will be considering what happens beyond that now. Us being able to show them with greater lead time the supports that may be available to them helps them to plan their lives and their steps, particularly their leaving care pathway. That's why the extra certainty of future funding is important there.

**Ms WEBB** - Although we only specify it through to 2024-25, which is only a couple of years from now. We don't give them too much certainty in that. If the assessment of an appropriate model for long term funding, is that something that you're expecting to complete assessing, and put forward a model for long term funding rather than this year-to-year, we'll know two or three years ahead?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, and the more we do it, the more we know what the requirements for longer term or recurrent funding might be. We just get to model a few more different years, see a few more recipients go through and understand the range of services and supports they might need. That helps to inform us - getting the numbers through helps us to inform what a recurrent allocation might look like in the future.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - Although for both those programs that we've just spoken about, the IFSS and the Transition to Independence, it says in the notes that you're currently assessing appropriate models for long term funding. We shouldn't expect that assessment to arrive at a conclusion, say, in this coming financial year? We're not going to get to the budget next year and have that model in place, or is it your expectation that we would?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll keep working on that, and we'll arrive at a longer term arrangement as soon as we can.

**Ms WEBB** - How many children, minister, under the care of the state - so on orders - are homeless or not connected with an out of home care placement?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Ms Lovell if she's able to provide some insight there.

**Ms LOVELL** - I can do, yes. Bear with me one moment. As at 31 March, there were 41 children on care and protection orders recorded as being in a self-selected placement, which includes shelter accommodation. Of those, we had nine in independent living and almost all of the others lived with parents or relatives. The number of children who are accessing shelter accommodation is so low that I'm not able to disclose because it's a number less than five.

**Ms WEBB** - That was going to be one of the other questions is - well, actually, the question's slightly different, and you may be able to provide, then, some more granularity to it. Although it might actually be the housing portfolio, I recognise, that could provide this information more specifically. I am interested in children who are on orders - so under the care of the state - under the age of 16 who presented to specialist homeless services in 2021-22. Granted that some of them ended up in a shelter, but I'm interested in the number that presented, because I'm interested to know, for example, how many were turned away.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know if we hold those figures.

**Ms LOVELL** - That's Homes Tas.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Even though that relates to children who are technically under the care of the state, under the care of you, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Data around who presented and who were turned away or whatever at homeless shelters and other forms of emergency housing response. I think that data should be kept, and the most accurate data would be from Homes Tas.

**Ms WEBB** - I would've thought potentially your department and you, as the person who's legally responsible for these children, would have been interested to know what that figure might have been and might have kept that figure, even within your department. Perhaps even historically, if not the current figure, but -

**Mr JAENSCH** - But we don't own that data, and we might access it from time to time and ask questions about it, like you are, but it doesn't make us the holder of the data.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. I'll pursue it elsewhere. Can I ask about reunification data for the 2021-22 year, and then any in the year to date this year?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for Ms Lovell to provide that if she has it.

**Ms LOVELL** - I don't know that I have that on hand.

**Ms WEBB** - Is it data that's presented in your annual report, also in public way? Would I be able to understand from the public data that's presented - understand how successful we're being with reunification? In regard to families that are on a reunification pathway, and then families that are successfully reunified.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. I take the opportunity now just to provide an update, and I did speak about this briefly yesterday. It relates to what we've previously published routinely on the Human Services dashboard in the area of our child safety system. In the interests of greater transparency, there's three indicators that are published regularly on the dashboard. In the interests of greater transparency and building public knowledge and confidence in the performance of the redesigned reform system, we're now proposing to provide a new range of data indicators to modify and supplement the data that's disclosed routinely on the dashboard.

So, in place of the three current indicators, we're proposing to introduce seven, which are: Contact with the Strong Family Safe Kids advice and referral line; contacts to the ARL that were resolved, including how they're resolved; (3), cases referred to the Child Safety Service for assessment; (4), average daily number of cases pending child safety assessment; (5), average daily number of children in out-of-home care; (6), children restored to families - Ms Webb, that's where you were going; and (7), number of children transferred to third party guardianship. So, these will be a range of figures that we will be updating on a regular basis publicly. It will allow all interested parties to track performance of the system with a bit more insight than they were previously able to.

**Ms WEBB** - Presenting more data in the public domain readily is always a good thing, minister, so that's positive to hear.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I thought you would like that. That's why I told you.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, thank you.

**CHAIR** - I have a question from Mr Willie. I'd like to have him next.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm okay, if the member wants to finish that.

**Ms WEBB** - I was going to move on to asking a question about the under-16 homelessness strategy. I'm happy if you want to jump in.

**Mr WILLIE** - Mine's about the care teams in 18-year orders.

**CHAIR** - I don't mind who asks the questions, just somebody ask.

**Ms WEBB** - You go ahead.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay, thank you. Minister, how many children and young people are on 18-year orders currently, and how many staff are in each care team allocated to the management of children on 18-year orders, and how many vacancies are within that unit of the department? It seems to me like a nice idea in theory, but what happens when there isn't a care team in place, in terms of decision-making for a young person? It seems like it can be quite convoluted to make decisions quickly on behalf of a young person that may need their needs met in a timely way.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for your question, Mr Willie. I'll ask Ms Lovell to have the numbers of 18-year orders. That's not all.

**Ms LOVELL** - Without giving the breakdown around the length of order, for children under custody and guardianship with a care and protection order, with the exception of those with third party guardianship, the current average is 1002 daily average for children with care and protection orders.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's as low as it's been though since 2016 or 17, isn't it?

**Ms LOVELL** - It's trending down, yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Trending down now. Yes. So, that in itself is an indicator of the performance of the redesign, which has changed a trend of increasing numbers year on year of kids in out-of-home care, to now a decline. A stabilisation and then a decline, which is what we want to see more of. Next steps with that to reduce those numbers, given that you're interested in them, is a renewed focus on permanency and stability of placements, including third party guardianship and adoption. As well, for young people where it's determined as early as possible that there are no reasonable prospects of reunification to a safe family environment.

So, making those decisions early wherever we can and providing stability so that, of those domains of wellbeing, we can ensure that as many of those children as possible are in a long-term family arrangement where they can be loved as well as looked after. That's our ambition for the next steps to bring that number down. Not just for who's coming in, but how long they're staying in and how they're moving them into permanency as soon as possible. You referred to -

**Mr WILLIE** - They're all noble goals, minister, but we just want to make sure that, if we're not bringing as many kids into the system, that they're being supported in their family environment that they're in, and we're not just lifting thresholds to make the figures better.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The reforms that we've undertaken have done what we intended: More families supported to be safe places for their kids and therefore, not having their kids removed; fewer kids entering the statutory system; more of those young people being the ones who need to be there, rather than those who have entered the system and then bounce back out of it; and then, our focus next needs to be on the stability and the quality of their care beyond that. Which means that maybe compared to some previous models where the focus has been on rescuing kids from risk of harm and putting them in out-of-home care, that's no longer a default destination.

We need to be looking at, of those who we have in that holding pattern, how do we move as many of them as possible into a permanent family arrangement, be it with kin, with members

## PUBLIC

of their community culturally as well, or into third party guardianship or adoption. Then there will still be a number of young people whose circumstances mean that we need to find other ways of supporting them the best we can in out-of-home care. So, that's a continuing process. What we've done so far has moved the dial significantly, and we need to keep doing that. Now, you asked some questions about whether we're starting -

**Mr WILLIE** - About the care teams and decision making and being able to do that in a responsive way. I'm aware that there'd be some kids that don't have care teams in place. So, what happens in that instance?

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes. So first, I'd just like to clarify that there's a difference between a child safety team and a care team.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Ms LOVELL** - So, a child safety team is a team of child safety officers within the service, so approximately five or six child safety officers reporting to their supervisor, which is our organisational structure. Whereas a care team is a group of people around the child or young person including themselves.

**Mr WILLIE** - Assigned a case, yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And family, and -

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes. So, including their informal networks, their family, their carer and any professionals who are supporting them.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Ms LOVELL** - So, care teams? There's a question on care teams or child safety teams?

**Mr WILLIE** - The child safety side of it, please. The vacancies, and also what happens when there isn't a care team in place, and how is decision-making responsive?

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes, so, will we go to vacancies again? Yes, okay. So, we provided those details this morning on an earlier -

**Mr WILLIE** - That was on a departmental level. The vacancies provided this morning were at a broader departmental level. They weren't -

**Ms LOVELL** - We'll go to the child safety officers level?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes, sure. So, currently we have a total of 154.5 child safety worker positions and 22.54 vacancies. So, 14.29 at the end of the last pay period.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Are they the same figures?

**Ms LOVELL** - This is child safety officers and this is current. So I think we may have previously provided figures for an average or for all child safety staff. So there are certainly shortages of child safety officers across the state and while we provide a state-wide figure, that can be quite different between regions. So for some time now we have been having difficulty

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**Mr WILLIE** - In the north-west still?

**Ms LOVELL** - It varies. So where one area achieves quite a high level of staffing another drops. So overall, we are seeing improvement but it has been a really difficult period for child safety officers.

**Mr WILLIE** - It's a challenging job.

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes, and it's a challenge which is experienced across the sector. It's not necessarily that all of the child safety officer vacancies are created by people leaving the service and the job but there have actually been a number of positions created within the service in recent years as well, which creates a lot of internal movement. So a number of resignations is actually quite low in terms of people who leave the service altogether but our internal movement levels are high. So what does tend to happen is that the child safety officer positions, the base level, are the ones where the vacancies are left as people are promoted or move into alternative positions such as the newly created liaison positions. So we are attending to that as best we can through workforce strategy.

**Mr WILLIE** - In terms of the care team decision making, when there isn't a care team in place for a young person, how does that work and do you have a different model for particularly challenging needs for a young person? I mean, it seems quite cumbersome to have a whole team of collective decision making to do that quickly.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Again, around that specific question, when there's not a team in place, I'll just ask - Ms Lovell asked about the difference between care team, which is about the family child safety workers, others in that group. It's not clear if that's what you mean, what happens when that team is absent.

**Mr WILLIE** - Well, it's my understanding, and it's been a while since I was the shadow minister, but it's gone from individual child safety officers being assigned a case to a collective.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Different. That's not the care team.

**Ms LOVELL** - So there are some children who have been allocated to a team rather than to an individual child safety officer. Yes. So those changes have occurred to make sure that, during periods of low staffing, that all children and young people under our responsibility, including those who are awaiting an assessment response for the first time, are safe. And that we're meeting their needs.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So that's different to a care team. That's about allocation to a team of workers rather than an individual. As Ms Lovell was saying, it was initiated principally at a time of acute staffing shortage and we needed to ensure that we were meeting our priorities. As I understand it, individual child safety officer one on one allocations were priorities for the very youngest children, those with high risk or complexity or instability in their placements,

## PUBLIC

whereas those who were in stable long-term placements required a different level of engagement with the service. A team approach could do that with the added advantage of there being more than one person with a working knowledge of the circumstances of an individual child or young person.

In some ways, more redundancy in that because if there were staff fluctuations, leave or redeployment, or people leaving the service, there was someone else who knew the child and their circumstances. More ability to cover short-term absences of staff as well, when someone's away on holidays or for illness. At the moment, the service is now reviewing, as we move out of that as an emergency response, what are the benefits of it that we need to capture longer term in reviewing our model of how we allocate cases.

**CHAIR** - Minister, can I just pause and negotiate an extension into the lunchbreak. We are nowhere near finished your area of responsibility for education, children and youth. So I'm looking at you to think that we might pull stumps about 20 past 1, and what we haven't got done, we haven't got done. That might hurry everyone up.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're in your hands, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR** - Members happy with that?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm happy with that.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, I'm fine.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Thank you. Let's keep ploughing on. Thank you. Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Just to quickly follow up on the area that the minister alluded to in regard to staffing and vacancies, there are challenges there. We all know that there are challenges there. In terms of the performance information in the table here on page 28, the average daily children pending Child Safety Service assessment. Obviously, the 2020-21 actual looks kind of high compared to, I think, what we might have expected it to be. It's certainly over the target that's there for 2022-23 and 2023-24. Is it primarily staffing challenges that have meant that that's higher, that we're not getting through assessments as quickly as we would like?

**Ms LOVELL** - It can be staffing challenges. There can be a range of issues that contribute to that figure and the number of children who are awaiting allocation. It can be the complexity of the matters that are already allocated in those child safety response teams. So the staff who are responsible for triaging are constantly evaluating what's already afoot and negotiating the transfer of those who need to transfer into the case management teams against those who are awaiting allocation. So there are a range of factors. It can certainly link to vacancies. It can link to staff leave. It can link to complexity. But overall, it tends to be caused by a blockage due to the case management teams and availability to accept new matters and response.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is there also though not a component of the process there where the child and their family circumstances are - there's other work and support going on. So in those periods, this is not a child in a risky situation waiting to be seen but there is engagement with



them with a range of other services, assessments, that can in some cases divert them proceeding into the statutory assessment process as well. Might you comment on that.

**Ms LOVELL** - Yes, that's correct. So our system captures any child who hasn't been allocated to a one to one child safety officer as awaiting allocation, but that also captures children who are there but their needs are being attended to by some other mechanism. For example, we might be involved in the Family Law Court proceedings and we have Family Law Court liaison officers who would be taking the lead in that but they're not allocated the child, so the child still shows that they're awaiting allocation. The same can apply if our service are working with the family around a potential intensive family engagement referral.

**Ms WEBB** - How would we understand that being done. What data or what public presentation of that is there which could be scrutinised so we would understand the degree to which that's being done effectively and well.

**Ms LOVELL** - The system doesn't differentiate currently. So without doing an individual case review of each of them, we couldn't really describe with any level of accuracy whether or not they really do need to be referred into the child safety team for one to one allocation or whether their needs are being met through some other means.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And in some ways this sort of thing has informed the new data that we're hoping to put out and the way we're recasting it a bit so that this figure might be presented now as cases pending child safety assessment but there might also be commentary with it that describes a bit more about what happens in the meantime. For some families and children, this period is taking longer and might mean the difference between the child being removed at all or the family being supported to be a safe place for their child, and it can be an indicator of a more positive outcome for that family. Whereas I think, traditionally, it's been looked at as a bottleneck in the system and children not receiving the service that they needed. It can, in some cases, be the opposite.

**Ms WEBB** - But it's difficult if we don't have visibility of that somehow to understand.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - In terms of which is one and which is the other.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, again the ability to break that down further is something we'll continue to look at. The overarching thing to bear in mind though is that, in any of those numbers which represent children, any of them that have been determined to be at immediate risk are seen and have protection immediately. There's no child at risk that is waiting to be protected from known risk.

**Ms WEBB** - That's a big claim, minister.

**CHAIR** - Question.

**Ms WEBB** - That's a big claim.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm very happy to unpack that, because it helps to understand the numbers that you're seeing.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - Perhaps you'd just like to clarify, just so people understand the extent of that claim, what you mean by immediate risk? Or did you use the word immediate or imminent risk? Perhaps you'd just like to clarify that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Hansard will tell.

**Ms LOVELL** - I can clarify if you like that the advice and referral line undertake an assessment and they take into account the severity of the risk and the immediacy of that risk to determine a priority classification. Our highest priority classification is priority one which needs to be dealt with on the same day. So that's immediately referred to the Child Safety Service and they attend immediately.

**Ms WEBB** - A very high bar for that. Which of course that's very positive but that is a high bar and just in lay people's terms I'd think that there'd be a lot of people out there in the community who might regard certain people of being at very imminent risk who wouldn't meet that bar and therefore aren't necessarily getting an immediate response, so I just wanted to - your priority one classified children are getting an immediate response which is good but - that would be children who we would understand to be at pretty serious risk who might not be.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. It does reflect something that we don't often get to unpack as well and people like Maria Harries and David Thorpe remind us that in the order of, you know the number of children that we're talking about in these situations who are where the cases have to do with risk of harm at the hands of members of their family of assault or damage or abuse is somewhere less than 10 per cent or a very small proportion.

The vast majority of cases that are dealt with are to do with incapacity of the parent, neglect, a parent's ability to provide a safe place including nutrition and shelter, proper clothing and care, sanitation, education, other things and a family that doesn't cope anymore for a whole range of reasons. They're the vast majority of cases. They've got very complex backgrounds and therefore an assessment to remove a child in the case of where there's an imminent or immediate risk, that category one, it's an emergency response. For the vast majority it's about understanding a complex situation and where a parent might need a support or be able to receive a new support to do their most important job safely.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. I have a question from Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, you certainly do. There's a couple of questions. Firstly, the Springvale Hostel has closed.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think that's - are we back in education now?

**CHAIR** - We haven't left it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's services for families, isn't it? I mean, it's about housing students.

**CHAIR** - Service for families and children.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's about housing students.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - But it is in education. I'm just sort of thinking of the team we have at the table. It's not child safety. It's about students from a school and their accommodation so.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry. Apologies. Okay it was a bit difficult to know exactly which line item it fell to.

**Mr WILLIE** - We could do it in capital investment when we talk about other schools.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well we could do that.

**CHAIR** - I'm not sure we're going to get to capital investment today.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm in your hands in that regard, minister, where you want to deal with it. If you can just give me a bit of an indication, I'll ask that question.

**CHAIR** - If we have some grumpy people at the table, it's not my fault.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy to talk about Springvale Hostel.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well my question is what options are going to be able to those students that now can't occupy Springvale Hostel?

**CHAIR** - Have they already been allocated elsewhere.

**Mr JAENSCH** - For 2023 this year the department is providing support to students and families and has negotiated for accommodation space at a TasTAFE accommodation facility and at Jane Franklin. There's sufficient space in these facilities to accommodate all students who had sought accommodation for 2023. The department is also supporting families with the costs of alternative boarding arrangements that ensures no family will be financially disadvantaged by the changes to availability of Springvale.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The scheme is offered to support existing residents who attend Tasmanian government schools to complete Year 12 education and the department's duty of care in accordance with the national principles for child safe organisations is being met by having students supported by supervision by the department's staff.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is there no other provision of accommodation that the department's putting in place? Or are you expecting that the numbers will drop off into the future?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, the department is also progressing other innovative solutions for future students from rural and remote areas, in particular the east coast, including links to the Newstead College accommodation and the Tasman Peninsula as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So someone who lives in Dunalley, like I used to, and I used to travel to town and board. What are they going to do in the future? Are they expected to go Sorell School for their high school years or what?

**Mr JAENSCH** - These future options are as I've mentioned -

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Coming to Jane Franklin Hall.

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER** - Not if you're that young.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Combined with increasingly our high schools and district schools around the state in rural areas offering more themselves as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I mean I was eleven-and-a-half when I did my stint, and as the member for Nelson points out, going to Jane Franklin's probably not an appropriate thing. But yes, it's important that they have services. That's why I asked the question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is there anything you'd like to add, Mr Bullard?

**CHAIR** - Is there another question?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, there are other questions.

**CHAIR** - Okay, thank you.

**Mr BULLARD** - We've got a two-year arrangement in place for current students, and we are looking at other options. I'll just point out with Jane Franklin it is a separate area of the residence that is accommodating the young people and also with the Warrane facility, which is a TasTAFE facility, again the young people are separated. I think we've moved two to ensure that -

**CHAIR** - Good luck with that, keeping them separated.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I was going to say, I would've thought the TasTAFE one was a more temporary arrangement.

**Mr BULLARD** - These are temporary options, but they are for two years to provide a level of certainty.

**Mr JAENSCH** - But they're a separate part and there's supervision there.

**Mr BULLARD** - That's right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So they're not going to fall of your radar, these people.

**Mr BULLARD** - No, this is about looking at alternative solutions, and also consistency across the state. We run a number of hostels, and currently they operate in slightly different ways.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, so my other question is in relation to - and you can tell me straight off if this is not in this area, but I think it probably should be - reducing the digital divide for learners. Was that a program that you used to have carriage of minister?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's back in ILbraries.

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - Well, I was going to ask it in Libraries, but I didn't think it was necessarily connected there, but if you're telling me it is.

**CHAIR** - Is it something that we can put on notice then, if we've already -

**Mr VALENTINE** - We can put it on notice if you like and if the staff aren't available.

**Mr BULLARD** - I think, if you're talking about school-aged learners.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's more across the board, for families and children. So the questions are these, and you tell me: it appears the Reducing the Digital Divide initiative no longer has specific funding, so what is the current digital divide in Tasmania in 2024? Do you have that information? Who would handle it?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think if this spans outside of education and learners this is an area that minister Ogilvie in her portfolio of Minister for Information and Communications Technology. She's quite passionate about this area of digital literacy as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I know, we asked some questions yesterday on that. But this was considered more about education but anyway.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I can tell you a little bit about digital inclusion. There's a couple of different initiatives I can refer to. So in the context of the library's discussion Libraries TAS continues to have a key role in helping Tasmanians to access and use digital technologies effectively. In the last financial year Libraries Tasmania supported 4800 individuals to improve their digital skills enabling them to participate and thrive in our increasingly connected world. People visiting Library Services also access free computers and devices with internet and Wi-Fi.

As part of the department's Digital Inclusion for the 21st Century Learner's Framework, Libraries Tasmania is leading a project to increase the digital capability of families to confidently support their child to navigate online environments for learning. \$5 million is invested across three years as part of the Digital Inclusion Framework, comprised of \$3 million to establish a take home borrowing system for devices and the internet to improve equity of access for students in Years 7 to 12, and \$2 million to provide support to families to increase connectivity and digital literacy in families with school aged children as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. On that score, can you answer this: how many Tasmanian households with children are without adequate internet access and technology for learning in 2023, and how many will still be in this situation in 2024?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know where we would get a definitive figure on that, because it extends beyond our schools.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Who do I ask?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think minister Ogilvie may have some insights on digital inclusion and literacy. I'll ask if there was any other sources.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm happy to put it on notice to whoever might be able to answer the question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. We're advised there is a national survey which could provide statistics, but it's probably not the granularity you're looking for.

**Mr BULLARD** - Certainly, there is a national survey. It's called the National Digital Inclusion Index. It wouldn't go down to families. Where you may be going, Mr Valentine, is access of students in government schools to devices. Certainly, the initiative for the additional purchases was absolutely focused at building up the float stock, if you like, in schools so that students could have easier access to borrowing those, but the other important part to that was a recognition that, in fact, even though students may have access to a device, their families may not have had the digital capacity or digital literacy to support them.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They mightn't have even had NBN access for them.

**Mr BULLARD** - That's right. We looked at the devices, we looked at dongles or ways for them to get online, but we also looked at supporting families so that they were more digitally literate to provide that support. Those devices and dongles are still available, and we continue with that. The engagement regarding the family side of the business has been with the Smith Family and TasCOSS so that we can ensure that we've got that community-side partnering as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With respect to those dongles, are they - does that cost the family anything, or do they have access via the 4G or 5G network? Is that what it's about? Without needing an NBN connection.

**Mr BULLARD** - That's right. That's a cost that's worn by the department as part of the education of the young people.

**Mr VALENTINE** - How many people have taken up that initiative?

**Mr BULLARD** - I don't know that we'd hold that. That's been done as a school level. What we've done is understand what stock schools hold, and you'd appreciate that's varied. Some schools have invested heavily in devices, others not so much. We've then gone out and looked at the gaps and we've provided the extra infrastructure. How that's being used at a school level, they would only hold that information.

**Mr JAENSCH** - They're devices that the school retains ownership of, but they're for kids to take home to use.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So you don't have any other data around that?

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's fine. Thank you. I appreciate the information you've provided.

#### **4.2 Services for Youth Justice**

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - 4.2 Services for Youth Justice. Ms Webb, thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I'm mindful that I had a good go at the children and family, so if others would like to jump in, Chair, I'm happy for others to go ahead.

**CHAIR** - Okay. I'll jump right in.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Could I just ask, also, Madam Chair, just to be aware in your timing, there has been a number of matters where there's been questions asked where the department has been able to secure information that we can provide at the table, take them off the notice list.

**CHAIR** - We'll take it after lunch.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You'll take it after lunch?

**CHAIR** - We'll take it after lunch. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - A question in regard to the Ashely Youth Detention Centre and the announcement that in 2024, that centre will close and there'll be three regional youth detention and rehabilitation centres. My question is that's 18 months away, so I'd like to know what the three locations are for those new centres, given that there seems to be an increase in numbers of those people currently using the Centre, and what is the number as of today? Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Chair. The Premier of the day made an announcement when it was decided that we were going to close Ashley to establish - at that stage, the announcement was to close Ashley in 2024 and to move to two smaller facilities, one in the north and one in the south. Since then, subsequently, we have updated the commitment because rather than produce two smaller Ashley's doing what Ashley does now, we have undertaken research and consultation and proposed a greater reform of our youth justice system. Not only the buildings, but what happens inside them as well.

We have published and announced a proposed new youth justice facilities model, which comprises five sites, not three or not two as initially announced. One of those would be a dedicated youth detention facility in the south of the state. There will also be two supported bail facilities, one in the north or north-west, and one in the south of the state. The proposal also includes two supported accommodation facilities, one in the north or north-west and one in the south.

**CHAIR** - So instead of having to build two, there'll be five that will be needed to be constructed. Five centres of some description.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Some of those will be quite specialised facilities, like the detention facility. It will be less than half the size of the Ashley we have now, and the bail and accommodation facilities can afford to be much smaller still, and more like residential developments than institutions, if you like. The first step, and the component of that facilities model which is most complex and specialised, is the detention facility. You'll be aware that we have run a process to identify suitable sites in the south of the state that took a potential first

## PUBLIC

cut of around 200 possible sites down to two shortlisted sites. We have conducted a consultation process on them, and my department is currently assessing the matters that have been raised through the consultation and the site suitability factors as well, and will brief me on next steps for firming a preferred site for the detention facility.

As soon as we have that confirmed, we'll be able to map out then the planning, design, and building programs, and I'll be able then to provide a firm updated on the delivery time for that component. In parallel, we're also running similar search for suitable sites for those other components of the new facilities model.

**CHAIR** - All right. So you intend to meet the end of 2024 timeframe.

**Mr JAENSCH** - My approach to this is that we're - what we committed to do in 2024 was close Ashley and move into two smaller facilities. We've now changed the model to something which will be superior, both for young people -

**CHAIR** - So that timeframe's no longer there.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Until I have a new timeframe, and until it's 2024, I'm not going to update the one we've got until I've got a new firm timeframe that I can explain to people.

**Ms WEBB** - Clearly, you can confirm that it's not possible that it's going to happen by the end of 2024. Surely you could confirm that right now.

**CHAIR** - It's not possible.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's very unlikely that we'll be able to deliver it in full by 2024. But it's important to understand why.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. The plan is to still do it, it's just not going to happen by 2024.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. There'll just be a new plan.

**CHAIR** - Supplementary.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Just on the detention centre, so there's only going to be one detention centre now in the south. Not one in the south and one in the north.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That will just be for high-risk offenders. Because there was going to be one in the north and one in the south. Wasn't it? Otherwise, it's almost like Risdon. You're having one up in the north so that now it is just enfranchised, and now all of sudden you're just having a detention centre in the south and not in the north.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The situation we have with the Ashley Youth Detention Centre at the moment is it's the only option.

**CHAIR** - Absolutely.



**Mr JAENSCH** - That's the only place for courts to send young people who haven't got somewhere more appropriate to be, particularly those who are awaiting their sentence. The majority of the young people in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre at any point in time, including today, are not sentenced to detention, but the courts have determined that they need to be in some form of supported or secure accommodation. Their home may not be a suitable environment for them to await their sentencing and the resolution of their court processes. They may have behaviours that need support, and to protect the community as well and to protect other young people. At the moment, therefore, in Ashley, we've got a mix of people who have been sentenced to be there and others who have been placed there on remand because it's the most suitable facility.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But that was my question to you. My question to you was, are we simply having a detention centre in the south for the more difficult or, I guess, the higher offenders? For the ones, of course - but then you're still not having anything -

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's the idea. The idea of this system is that there will be a detention facility for those who need to be in detention, have been sentenced there, or for those who are particularly high risk and severity who are on remand who need to be under that level of supervision.

**CHAIR** - So that's disenfranchising those in the north, because I think that was the whole idea before, as you say, with the Risdon Prison.

**Mr JAENSCH** - But the majority of the young people who are in the Ashley Youth Detention Centre at the moment may actually be better off in a supported bail facility. The intention is that we're going to have -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'm not saying that. I'm just simply asking about the detention centre.

**Mr JAENSCH** - one of those in the north and one of those in the south.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I understand that. I was simply asking about the detention centres. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - But it's really just disenfranchising those who are now going to be in the north that are on -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Northern offenders.

**CHAIR** - Northern offenders on detention.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Disenfranchised, you mean?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It's a long way for them to visit.

**CHAIR** - It's not close to their family either.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They'll be in the south as opposed to -

**CHAIR** - You're just moving one from one facility to another.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - But there would be a far smaller number of them, and what we can -

**CHAIR** - Does it matter how many it is? It's still someone disenfranchised.

**Mr JAENSCH** - A smaller number of young people in youth detention with a greater range of services available to them close by, by virtue of being closer to the home of those services in Hobart. In terms of the medical, the psychology, the other therapeutic support services needed to deal with those children with highly complex and dangerous behaviours, we'll be able to take better care of them and give them the best chance of being able to see out their sentence and not reoffend and have a constructive, positive life out in the community.

**CHAIR** - So the waiting lists are shorter in Hobart? I thought not.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's more services there. At the moment, if those in demand services need to spend a day getting to Deloraine and back again, when they could have been seeing other clients, it's an inefficient use of those resources. So close to Hobart was recommended to us through our review as a better way of providing more services to a smaller number of people who need them more.

**CHAIR** - Do you consider that the sites, the two sites that have been chosen, will have any more welcome than what other - than what there is for other places, whereas the Ashley Detention Centre is actually part of the community. Do you see that the welcome mat will be rolled out in those other two sites for that centre?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't expect a welcome mat, to be clear. That's why we've consulted with the communities, including the public, but also the neighbours, the councils, other service providers who may have an interest in these services, to understand what the community's needs or questions might be, the sorts of things that we may need to address at either of the sites for the detention facility if we're to make this successful, both in terms of delivering a good service, but also in terms of the community that we'd be joining.

**CHAIR** - Questions, members, in regard to this area, which is youth justice.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I've got one.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We could keep going.

**CHAIR** - We've got five more minutes and then that's it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, I'm okay?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - Including capital investment?

**CHAIR** - Including everything. I mean, I don't know where else you're going to get it.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can I ask some questions on capital investment?

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Yes. I'm sure that the minister will be prepared to take questions from the committee.

**Mr VALENTINE** - My question goes to the children and young people under 16 or alone and at risk of experiencing homelessness. That policy framework. So it's just a simple question, really.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - How much funding is in this budget in regard to providing for the implementation and an evaluation of that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The funding for the under 16 unaccompanied homelessness initiative, that comprises \$15.3 million was committed over four years from 2021-22 to provide \$10.1 million for a four-year Under 16 Lighthouse Pilot Project to assist people under 16 who are unable to live at home, as well as \$5.2 million for a new youth housing initiative to deliver more supported accommodation for vulnerable young people aged 16 to 24 who are experiencing or face homelessness, and that funding has been allocated across to Homes Tasmania.

**Ms WEBB** - Even though that's over - that was just over 16 that you just described then, that second one.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's under 16.

**Ms WEBB** - So I don't see how that's getting funded in relation to the under 16 homelessness strategy.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll get clarification on that.

**Ms WEBB** - Perhaps you can confirm that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And what the link is for that transition. So we can come back to that, if you'd like to have another question in between time.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm just interested to know what work has been undertaken so far towards the implementation towards the implementation of that, or is this base one?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, that's at quite an advanced stage, as I understand it, in terms of - and I think, and I'll have someone who updates me if I am incorrect - that we have reached a point of procuring an operator for that service.

**CHAIR** - While you're receiving -

**Ms WEBB** - That's for the Lighthouse model service?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - We're two years into a four year commitment. Will it be up and running for at least the second half of the four years? Sorry, member for Hobart, I jumped in on your -

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, I'm more than happy for you to chime in, as they say.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much. Our component of that \$15.3million was the \$10.1 million, as I mentioned for the Under 16 Lighthouse Pilot Project. I understand that the \$5.2 million component that's being managed by Homes Tasmania is for more supportive accommodation for vulnerable young people 16 to 24. But that was also a recommendation of the Under 16 Youth Homelessness Taskforce as well.

**Ms WEBB** - So they'd have somewhere to transition to, ones that had helped them when they're under 16. How appalling that we're funding something, but not that age group.

**Mr JAENSCH** - How appalling if there was a gap there.

**Ms WEBB** - My goodness me.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So let's just make sure that we're being clear that we're not supporting young people to 16 and then there being a gap in service to the -

**Mr VALENTINE** - So the transition to independence is obviously something that's running parallel with this?

**Ms WEBB** - No, that's for kids in out-of-home care.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's for young people leaving out-of-home care on child safety orders.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. How is that performing at the moment, and how many kids are in that area?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We touched on that in a previous answer regarding the T21.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You've given that answer. Okay, that's fine.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Minister, we have a number of questions around capital investment, and if it's through you, if we're able to provide those to the department, or to yourself.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can I ask what they are?

**CHAIR** - One of them is Montello Primary School, which I know you're well aware of.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. \$7.1 million.

**CHAIR** - Yes, which is a Band-Aid and will not address the issues related to accessibility, according to my information.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're finalising the master plan there.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Obviously, that's a question that we'd like an answer to. The member for Elwick has a number of questions.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Sorry, what is that question then?

**CHAIR** - It says that, 'I ask that the proposed, through the development of the master plan for the whole school site, and can you provide a copy of any design that can be undertaken within this budget, and why can't there be additional funds to do a full renovation of this very old school, especially if we can find funds for a stadium.' There you go.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There you go. So it's a political question, it sounds like, to some extent there.

**CHAIR** - No, it's not. It's a fair question. It's a fair question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Across our priorities and across the \$255 million capital program that we're rolling out right now, we have a lot of schools in need, many of which have not had sufficient investment over several decades, which we're now trying to meet a backlog of. Now, within that, we have to be able to allocate funds according to priorities, which includes also identifying the most important works within the range of possible ideal redevelopments for those sites.

We understand that the master planning process for Montello is not yet finalised, but there is a budget allocation which has been made, which I'm very glad we've got because there wasn't one before, and now we've got \$7.1 million allocated for Montello, and we look forward to being able to marry that with the priorities for the planning process.

**CHAIR** - I'll pass that on to the member for Murchison.

**Ms WEBB** - Quick supplementary. The \$7.1 million, does that include funding the master planning process? Or is it to use once the master plan is there to actually put something in place to actually make change?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for Mr Salter to provide details.

**Mr SALTER** - The \$7.1 million includes planning and construction.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. What part of the \$7.1 million is allocated for planning? What quantum?

**Mr SALTER** - I don't think I've got that figure with me, but it's a figure that we can advise, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - I'd like that figure.

**CHAIR** - Could we provide that? And the master plan obviously hasn't been completed. Mr Willie, I'm mindful you've got a couple of questions.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, and I can put some on notice, too. Some of these schools on the priority 1 list have been here for years. I went to East Derwent Primary School the other day,

that needs significant investment, not just contemporary classrooms as part of a broader pool. You've got Risdon Vale that's been on here, Clarence High School. Last time I went through that school, it had carpet that was donated out of Wrest Point. That's how old in need that school is of upgrades. In terms of the capacity of schools to develop master plans and things like that to become part of this list, that's an issue in itself. Especially when you've got leadership changes in schools, and the churn that we were talking about earlier today. What's being done to help schools with that capacity to be able to submit master plans and things to be part of the process?

**Mr JAENSCH** - How is that process supported? Yes, Mr Salter.

**Mr SALTER** - It isn't the expectation that schools on their own develop full master plans. We work with them to submit their priority works, and I think fair to say, for those priority 1 projects, ongoing work so that we can develop master plans, so governments can make future decisions on investing in those. But the school doesn't have to go and do a full master plan on its own.

**Mr WILLIE** - Is there some oversight from the department side of things to make sure all schools are being treated fairly, where maybe a school has had a lot of churn and they haven't submitted to be part of the process? Just by default, there are schools getting neglected.

**Mr BULLARD** - The move to the Asset Management System has brought about that change, so an evidence-based decision which is equitable because every school is assessed that looks different to how it may have looked in the past, where there would be schools that were highly active, or school associations that would tend to come up the list. There is a greater evidence space, and then there's a lot, as Mr Salter said, there is central support then in those top priority schools which is provided to the school to assist them to come up with a master plan for how to address the issues. I think what we've seen is that that works much better than having a piece meal approach to fixing up bits of the school. It's better to have an overarching plan that can be acquitted over a number of years.

**Mr WILLIE** - Just quickly, minister, the consultation on the North West Support School, the changes that were proposed, where's that consultation paper at? Is it going to be released by the end of this month or early next month?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I've asked the department to provide me with the breakdown of the issues raised in that consultation. We made commitments in 2021, which we still uphold regarding support for the North West Support School, at both the Devonport and Burnie campus ends. Those commitments haven't changed, but what has changed is that in the interim, other opportunities have become available to us, which do offer, on paper, some better outcomes and better servicing for the young people in the school. We decided - I decided - that we would take those options out to the school community and the users of our support school to get their views on those matters before setting them aside and progressing as we had previously promised.

We've sought the views of the school communities; we've heard a range of issues that had been raised. I've asked the department to work through those issues and work out are these things that are able to be resolved in such a way that we can offset some of those disadvantages that families have identified and capture the advantages of having a single site with a large cohort of students, and room to grow, and co-located with a K-12 school, and a sporting facility,

## PUBLIC

and a library, and an on-site full-time school nurse, for example. And where's the best mix in terms of what we can offer those families?

**Mr WILLIE** - I understand all of that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm glad you understand it because some of your colleagues appear not to.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm interested in the consultation outcomes report. Well, they're representing their constituents.

**Mr JAENSCH** - They need to understand as well. Thank you for understanding, I'll tell them to speak to you. I will receive some advice back shortly from my department which we'll then be able to share the next steps with the school community.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr WILLIE** - In terms of the outcomes of the consultation?

**Mr JAENSCH** - What we heard, and what we intend to do with that information, yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - When will it be released?

**Mr JAENSCH** - As soon as we can.

**CHAIR** - Time frame? Three weeks, four weeks, two months?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Coming weeks, I would say.

**CHAIR** - Coming weeks, there we are. Thank you very much. I apologise to those people who are not at the table who had to endure 35 extra minutes. We shall suspend the broadcast and resume at 2.20pm with Minister for Parks.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much. Thank you very much to my department representatives who have assisted.

**CHAIR** - Thank you all to those who have been here today.

**The Committee suspended from 1.36 p.m. to 2.21 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - Minister, welcome back to the table with your responsibility as Minister for Parks. Would you introduce your new team at the table for Hansard and anyone who comes during the course of the rest of the output groups and areas then please do the same, just introduce them thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Chair. I will commence by reading in the answers to the questions asked in the morning session and I'm happy to leave you with the copies of these as well.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - So these were to do with the examination of Education, Children and Young People Youth Justice and Child Safety portfolios. There was a question on what is the full-time equivalent staff number at the Professional Learning Institute. The answer to that is five.

There was a question in relation to the Employee Assistance Program usage and what is the breakdown by gender for education. The answer is for education 1834 sessions with an average of 1.4 sessions per client. Note the data is not provided on individual employee numbers accessing the services, only on the number of sessions and the average number of sessions per client. The gender breakdown is 291 males, 913 females and 630 undisclosed. We are still seeking equivalent data from Positive Solutions, the Youth Justice and Children and Families EAP provider.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There was a question, 'what are the whole cohort's suspension rates up until this point in the year-by-year level by first nations and by out of home care.'

**Mr WILLIE** - And disability which we got - it was the previous year though.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Which we did disability at the table. I've given you the answer we've got -

**Mr WILLIE** - We'll get the others in writing if it's not.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The year level data by proportion of cohort suspended at the end of term one I've got only one column of figures here and so I assume that they are - I think they've probably got a few fields combined. I'll give them to you and then we can add to this if we need to, okay. By proportion of cohorts suspended at the end of term 1, prep, 0.2 per cent; year 1, 0.2 per cent; year 2, 0.5 per cent; year 3, 0.9 per cent; year 4, 1.3 per cent.

**Mr WILLIE** - To save time, Chair, I ask for the number so this isn't relevant. It's a percentage.

**CHAIR** - Yes, we're happy for you to table that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can I table all of them?

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I think that'll probably be easier.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay, I'll do that, and then if there are supplementaries that the committee wants to bring to complete those answers, I will table that and give that to you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Provide that, and while I'm taking receipt of that, I'd just like to acknowledge we have a change of the secretary supporting. We have Julie Thompson with us for this afternoon, so, thank you.



## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you Julie. Chair, could I now introduce the officers at the table with me? I have to my left the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, Jason Jacobi.

**CHAIR** - Welcome back.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And to his left, Sophie Muller, who is the Deputy Secretary Environment Heritage and Land, and to my right, Stewart Fletcher, General Manager for Land Tasmania.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, all those three people, back to this committee from yesterday. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you Chair. I'm pleased to be here today in my role as Minister for Parks. Tasmania's parks and reserves cover more than 50 per cent of the state and are important not only to Tasmanians, but to the visitors who come from all over the world to experience them. I'm pleased to report an overall 18 per cent increase in visitation to parks and reserves across the state in the past calendar year compared to the year before. This is fantastic news for our economy, with this increased visitation to our parks and reserves supporting jobs in many regional towns and communities.

It is vital that we continue to maintain and upgrade our parks and reserves infrastructure and deliver on new projects so these treasured and iconic places can be enjoyed for generations to come. The 2023-24 budget invests \$163.7 million including Commonwealth government funding into our natural wonders. We have prioritised improving the visitor experience through investment in modern infrastructure at two of our most popular alpine destinations. In January 2023, we officially opened the Dove Lake viewing shelter, delivering on the second pillar of the Cradle Mountain master plan. This follows the completion of the Cradle Mountain Gateway Visitor Centre project in 2020.

We also unveiled two new huts at Windemere and at Kiora on the overland track in the Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair National Park and provided improved walking tracks, new toilets and upgraded campground facilities in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park. I was delighted to attend an event previewing the new Ben Lomond public shelter on 2 June this year. The structure provides warmth and shelter from the elements for the growing number of visitors frequenting the national park year-round. The new entry point into the Ben Lomond village, the shelter provides visitors with a heated enclosed space, public toilets and an outdoor deck and replaces the previous structure which was destroyed by fire in 2018. This was one of many projects we've delivered to improve the visitor experience at Ben Lomond National Park.

The Tasmanian government is committed to ensuring the next iconic walk proposal becomes a reality. We have doubled our investment in this project to \$40 million to enable us to deliver the preferred option identified in the feasibility study. It'll be a game changer for the region complimenting the growing suite of great tourism products and experiences available and under development including mountain bike riding in Queenstown.

Recognising the increased cost of delivering capital projects in the 2023-24 Budget, we've committed an additional \$4.375 million across 10 existing initiatives. This significant

investment ensures that Tasmania's reputation as a world-class nature-based ecotourism destination remains strong with the work being undertaken assisting to power regional economies and keep Tasmanians employed. This government remains committed to the sustainable management of Tasmania's parks and reserves balancing protection with sharing our unique places both with Tasmanians and the world now and into the future.

Finally, I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the commitment and passion and hard work of our Parks and Wildlife staff and other staff in NRA Tas who support the important work of managing our parks and reserves. Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. I'd like you to head to budget papers of 1.1, which is Land Titles, Survey and Mapping Services. Do you want to do the overview question? All right, thanks, Ms Webb.

## **Output Group 1 Land Tasmania**

### **1.1 Lands Titles, Survey and Mapping Services**

**Ms WEBB** - Just a quick one. We might have received it in the overall answer for the department possibly yesterday but in the areas of parks, use of consultants in the 2021-22 financial year, most recently this year-to-date and the projects and the costs for that. If you could provide that to us even just in writing that would be fine.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think it looks like Mr Jacobi may be able to answer.

**Ms WEBB** - He may have had the similar question yesterday

**Mr JAENSCH** - He may have.

**CHAIR** - And we did indicate that we did ask this in all output areas.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. Yes.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minster, thank you, member, for the question. Consultants, the total amount for consultancies awarded with a value greater than \$10 000 in the Parks and Wildlife Service as at 31 March is \$203 539, and this is represented by seven consultancies. Would you like me to read out the individual consultancies or are you happy with that?

**Ms WEBB** - No, I would like to know the individual but I'm happy for you to table the document.

**CHAIR** - Have it tabled.

**Ms WEBB** - Rather than read it out, if you'd like.

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes, so I'll read them out. The first was Alluvium Consulting Australia for professional services to develop a foreshore management plan for Sisters Beach. The cost of that consultancy was \$22 553. The second was to Jacobs Group Australia for engineering services and concept drawings to upgrade the larapuna Eddystone Point conservation area.

## PUBLIC

Consultancy costs was \$15 000. The third was Johnstone McGee & Gandy Pty Ltd with professional services to provide a condition and lifecycle report for facilities at the Elphin Sports Centre, Launceston. The cost of that consultancy was \$17 900.

PBA Transit Planning Pty Ltd provided consultancy services for transport planning at the Freycinet National Park visitor gateway. The cost of that consultancy was \$99 400. SGE Consulting provided engineering services for the Elphin Sports Centre, which was a disability access improvement project. The cost of that consultancy was \$18 353. Jennifer Whinam is a professional that was engaged to review the Macquarie Island management plan and provide an updated background and status report at a cost of \$20 000. And Wolferstan Verney & Partners Pty Ltd provided quantity surveying and construction cost estimation to the value of 10 333. The total of all those consultancies was \$203 539.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - So now we'll move straight into land titles.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do FTEs.

**CHAIR** - FTEs.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you have FTEs for parks. Similar question as yesterday. Head count on FTEs and vacancies.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just for Parks and Wildlife Service?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**Mr JACOBI** - Just for this financial year up to March 23, the parks FTE is 391.09. And Crown Land Services, otherwise known as Property Services, is 22.01. So the total FTE for that output group 4 is 413.10.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Vacancies.

**CHAIR** - Vacancies.

**Mr JACOBI** - Vacancies, yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is, not occupied at all. In other words, even if acting.

**Mr JACOBI** - This is vacant positions by business across and up until March 2023. There were 53 vacancies in total in the Parks and Wildlife Service which, it may be of interest to you, relates to an 11 per cent of the head count.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Good. And access to EAP and workers' comp.

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes, got it here.

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - If you've got the gender split, it'd help but it might be something you can't.

**Mr JACOBI** - I'll just do Employee Assistance Program first. From July 21 to March, must be, 22, there were 46 people access EAP. 46 employees. From July 22 to March, I think that should be March 23, there were 33 employees. Workers' compensation, I've got data on both the number of new claims lodged. Or were you after those that have lodged a compensation claim?

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, the ones that are actually on workers' comp I think, because claims don't necessarily mean that they're going to get it awarded.

**CHAIR** - Yes, let's not waste too much time on it.

**Mr JACOBI** - Well, the only data I can probably refer to is compensation claims, the number of new claims lodged and the cost. But I won't refer to the costs. This is between 2018 and 2023. In the 2022-23 year as at 31 March 2023, there were 48 new claims across quite a wide range of different types of risk and injury mechanisms.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is that unique to parks, or is that in there?

**Mr JACOBI** - That's a good point. That's whole of agency. Thank you, minister. So that's whole of NRE, we're just in parks.

**Ms WEBB** - I think you can come back to us after. Can we move on. Can we move on, time is passing.

**Mr JACOBI** - Sorry, just for the Parks and Wildlife Service, got a total of compensation claims by the Parks and Wildlife Service from 1 July 2022 to 31 March 23 is 26. It's 26 of those 48.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I'd like to invite Ms Armitage. 1.1 Land titles survey and mapping services. Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair. As you'll be aware, minister, recently the Land Titles Amendment Bill went through the upper house and I note that it was to facilitate the implementation of the national electronic conveyancing systems into Tasmania. So when can we actually expect it to become standard practice? I notice that the bill itself doesn't introduce electronic conveyancing.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No.

**CHAIR** - It facilitates.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It facilitates.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's part of the enabling process.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I realise that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So that we can help prepare for the role out of e-conveyancing in Tasmania.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - As most states already have it, I believe.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm just going to try and go straight to the likely timeframes. The implementation of the national electronic conveyancing project is a high priority for our department. The senior project manager and additional staff resources have been recruited to manage the implementation. The development team is working on the technical bill that will allow Tasmania's backend land title register to interact with the Electronic Lodgment Network operators, the ELNOs, thereby allowing the technical implementation of the national electronic conveyancing in Tasmania.

Tasmania was an early leader in the introduction of electronic lodgment of documents, firstly with priority notices followed by caveats, withdrawal of caveats and withdrawal of priority notices through the Tasmanian online land dealings system. It is well positioned to move into a full electronic environment. I'm coming to the timeframe that you were talking about and Stuart's going to help put his finger on it if I can't.

The introduction of national electronic conveyancing in Tasmania is not solely dependent on work in our Land Titles Office, it also relies on the readiness of the ELNOs and other stakeholders such as financial institutions and legal and conveyancing practitioners to be able to commence electronic conveyancing in Tasmania. There's a number of dependencies there, but all things taken into account, we are working towards full implementation in 2025, I'm advised.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. Okay. Is there much resistance talking about solicitors and conveyances and banks? Is there much resistance from property solicitors and conveyancers moving from the existing paper based system to a fully electronic system? Have you discovered much resistance from them?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Previous advice has been that they've been very supportive and keen, but I'll just ask Mr Fletcher if he wants to make some comment on that.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister. Thank you for the questions. As part of the proposed changes that we were putting through in relation to the Land Titles Amendment Bill, we'd start at consultation with the conveyancing and law industries around what this would look like. At this stage, we're still consulting with those organisations, but I suspect that this is something that they're going to benefit from, ultimately, because it results in settlement transactions where they don't have to move into a room together to hand over the titles, hand over the cheques, and those types of things. The other challenge here will be cheques. Recently, the Commonwealth government came out and said that they were looking at getting rid of cheques by 2030.

**CHAIR** - Very sad. I always use cheques. It's a paper trail.

**Mr FLETCHER** - It is something that we have to do, so we're going to be dealing with electronic transfers of significant sums of money, ultimately.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - And the cost of putting this in? Do we have any idea of the cost? Because I actually notice in 2025-26 that less money is actually going into land titles survey and mapping. There's no footnote there, but in 2026-27 there's probably - I don't know about any others - \$660 000, so -

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister. In last year's budget, the government allocated \$1 million over two years for the implementation of electronic conveyancing, so that's where we're funding the project teams to undertake this work.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Okay. What about cyber-hacking or alterations? What plans are in place to ensure the integrity and the safety of electronic documents and lodges? Obviously, they're very important documents.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Yes, they are.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - And we know that cyber hacking and or alteration could happen.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'd be happy for you to speak to that if you want.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister. Thank you for the question. I might just jump more broadly at what - into the cyber security arrangements within our agency and then I can probably talk to what it looks like from a national electronic conveyancing perspective. NRE Tas implements a number of strategies to protect our systems and data. Our infrastructure is predominantly managed in house by an internal IT team, and includes services hosted on premises and in the cloud. In many cases, we've got services duplicated between two data centres within the agency. Some services are provided by third parties, and others are overseen by business units within the department but supported by the IT team.

For internally managed services, the department employs a number of mitigation measures against cyber-attacks, including network firewalls, intrusion detection and prevention systems, antivirus and anti-malware software, multi-factor authentication for staff, software updates and patching, regular data and system backups, as well as training and communications to increase awareness amongst our staff.

For externally managed services, the department has implemented a formalised cyber risk assessment process where our internal cybersecurity experts will analyse any system design, the data captured, and the external providers cyber mitigation strategies and operation of risks. This process ensures that the risks are identified and the mitigations are in place to maintain confidentiality, integrity, and availability of the department systems and data.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. So you feel it will cover it, particularly - as you've mentioned, particularly with conveyances. There's a lot of money being transferred here. Obviously not in the title section.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Exactly. Stuart's covered a number of the controls there, but one of the things in my advice here is that the National Electronic Conveyancing System that has been in operation in other jurisdictions for longer also contains, by its design, a number of checks and controls that we just don't have in the paper-based system as well. Those sort of multi-factored authentication, digital certificates, those sort of things lower risks of things like fraud as well,

and then there is the safety and integrity of the data. There is some inbuilt security in working through these systems that we don't have with paper-based systems now. Stuart.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister. From an electronic conveyancing provider, so the current only operating electronic lodgement network operator is PEXA. They have a number of security frameworks that sit within their system as well. Any of their subscribers, subscribers would be basically the law firms and the conveyancers that are basically executing these transactions, all will have to sign in via multifactor authentication. They also have a USB encryption key, so if they're signing a document on behalf of somebody, changing bank account details, those types of things, they have to put their USB key in and authenticate it at the same time. There are a number of security measures in place. In terms of how we would integrate with that system, so if they're lodging documents with us, we'd be locking our systems down specifically to their IP addresses.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Because their systems might not be quite as robust as yours.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The other is that they, as I understand it, they attach the document to the holder as well in different ways. That's the identity of a document, and the identity of the person who is the owner of that document who's authorised to have it and transact it can be provided through these platforms in ways that it can't be, or isn't with paper-based systems.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Further, minister. To your point around their systems not being as robust as ours, they would have significantly robust systems. This has been a system that's been in place now, and adopted in some of the bigger jurisdictions for a long time. They do take cybersecurity extremely seriously. In terms of what the minister was talking to in relation to verifying - the solicitors verifying the identity of -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So the titles will be digital as well, or have we not gotten to that yet?

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister. One of the things we're contemplating, and we're still working through this at the moment, would be - because we already have a certificate of title which is a digital representation of the title in our land title system, so one of the things that we will be likely implementing as part of this in preparation for electronic conveyancing is removal of paper titles. When we remove paper titles, we do need to make sure that the conveyancer or solicitor is authenticating that you've got a right to deal with that property. There will be obligations and certifications that they'll be required to undertake.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Will this just be new titles, or will you go back over old titles as well? Because I know I've been dealing with this with a constituent previously about digital titles, and some states already have them.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister. Most states have basically gotten rid of paper titles.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Your title reference won't change. We're still working through how this would work.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The paper title that the bank or someone holds, there'll be actually a digital title replacing that. I'm talking about the old ones, the ones that are in existence already, as opposed to new titles coming up.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister. It's not being replaced by - there already is a digital title that basically -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It'd be as well as.

**Mr FLETCHER** - We will be removing the requirement for paper. That paper title will be no longer valid once the directions come in place to remove those.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, minister. Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Okay, thank you. Supplementary, Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just on storage saved in that regard. Physical storage of paper is obviously going to reduce over time. Isn't it? How significant is that.

**Mr FLETCHER** - Through you, minister. We don't store the paper titles. We actually store them electronically. It's more an issue for the law firms and the banks that would be storing the paper titles that they're holding at the moment.

**CHAIR** - Who often don't do that very well, I might add. They lose them.

**Mr FLETCHER** - It does happen occasionally, yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions around land titles survey mapping services? If not, we'll move into valuation services 1.2.

## **1.2 Valuation Services**

**CHAIR** - And I'll invite Ms Howlett to commence.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you provide an overview to the committee on performance measures for evaluation services, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Ms Howlett. The Valuer-General is responsible for the direction, control and management of the valuation of land in accordance with the Valuation of Land Act 2001. Fresh property valuations are undertaken on a six-yearly cycle for all municipal areas in Tasmania. Normally, approximately one-third of the state is valued every two years within this period. The Valuer-General must give an owner of land a notice of every valuation made as a result of either a fresh valuation or a supplementary valuation of that land. A landowner may, within 60 days from receipt of evaluation notice, lodge an objection with the Valuer-General if they believe their property details or values, as at the base date, are not correct.



Valid grounds on which an objection may be made are provided under section 29 of the Valuation of Land Act 2001. An objection may be made on any one or more of the following grounds, but on no other ground. The grounds are: that the land value, capital value or assessed annual value assigned to any land is too high or too low; that the interests of the several persons having an interest in any land have not been correctly apportioned; that the apportionment of any valuation is not correct; that the lands which should be included in the one valuation have been valued separately; that the lands which should be valued separately, have been included in the one valuation; that the person named in any notice under section 27 of the Valuation of Land Act 2001 is not an owner of the land to which the notice relates; and that the area, dimensions or particulars of any land are not correctly described.

Once the objection is reviewed, the objector is sent a notice of decision containing the outcome of the review. If the objector is satisfied with the outcome, then the objection process is completed. If a property owner is unsatisfied with the outcome, they can, within 30 days of receipt of the notice of decision, request the Valuer-General to refer the objection to the court for determination. For the period 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023, there were 14 objections received. Six objections to supplementaries were allowed, and one objection was disallowed. Two objections were withdrawn, and five objections are outstanding.

A performance target of 2 per cent or less have been set to measure the quality and consistency of completed total valuation notices issued in a financial year that are amended following the lodgement of an objection. The Office of the Valuer-General has completed 13 726 supplementary valuations in 2022-23, so the 2022-23 actual percentage was 0.0004 per cent against a performance target of 2 per cent or less. So, I think it's well and truly met.

**CHAIR** - You must've got it right most of the time.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I reckon. Yes. It's a great result. Thank you. Thank you for your question.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Any other questions, members? If there are no further questions, we'll move straight to 4.1, which is Parks.

## **Output Group 4**

### **Parks**

#### **4.1 Parks**

**CHAIR** - Minister, a couple of questions from me to start with. Obviously 19 national parks and reserves, and the responsibility of Parks is for 2.9 million hectares. Significant. So, I'm interested in how many - you're changing people?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. We're bringing to the table Will Joscelyne, Acting Deputy Secretary for Parks and Wildlife Service.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Will. Just interested in the number of applications for development in our parks and reserves across the state. How many have we - is that information that is available? Thank you, gentlemen.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much. We'll assume this would translate as reserve activity assessments sought and applied for?

**CHAIR** - Well, if somebody wants to do something and undertake an activity or put a structure into our parks and reserves, they have to go through an application process. So, I'm interested in how many are on foot.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for you to provide a response.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you. Through the minister, if it's for works that the Parks and Wildlife Service is undertaking on the reserved land or national parks and all the other tenures, there'll be quite a significant number of reserve activity assessments that are undertaken to inform that particular work. If, however, you're talking about specifically a commercial development -

**CHAIR** - I'm talking outside of the work that Parks undertakes itself.

**Mr JACOBI** - Okay. All right. So, thank you for that.

**CHAIR** - Apologies for not clarifying that.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister, I can get some information on the number of developments, if you would like?

**CHAIR** - And I'm also interested in what has been approved, if you can have it up to date. If not, to what's available.

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes. Just give us one minute, please.

**CHAIR** - From time to time, these sorts of developments can be somewhat controversial.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So, I think the process that you might be referring to, which is the pathway that this government has established for those really wishing to set up particularly tourism-based -

**CHAIR** - Adventure-based activities.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Businesses in our parks and national areas.

**CHAIR** - There could be a pod in a reserve.

**Mr JAENSCH** - They're the ones, yes. So, this has got two parts to it. I'm responsible for the second half of the process. The first half of the process operates under the Office of the Coordinator-General and that is the responsibility of Minister Barnett. But it works end to end. So, the EOI process - that it's known as, the Tourism Expressions of Interest process - provides an entry point and a first level filter of projects at a concept stage to identify any showstoppers, and also to interrogate whether it's the type of development or investment that might be beneficial and contribute to tourism in Tasmania. Any project that passes through that process as looking feasible and reasonable from a tourism and commercial perspective, then has the

opportunity of approaching Parks and Wildlife Service to seek assessment as to whether it is able to be permitted under reserves management plans.

**CHAIR** - I understand the process.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So I'm advised that of 71 proposals that have been submitted into the front end of the EOI process so far, 11 of those have current lease or licence agreements, which means that they've come through the first stage, they've been assessed, and they've been able to proceed to having agreements to operate from the Parks and Wildlife Service.

**CHAIR** - Right. How many are pending, and how many have been told, 'No, go away'?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well, we'll start with 71. We've got 11 through. 11 have survived through to operating.

**CHAIR** - Or more homework to do. Whatever the appropriate measure.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So I can run through those.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - In total. There are six that are in the assessment panel process. There are 22 that have not been approved to progress. 17 have been withdrawn. Two, the lease or licence has been surrendered. 13 have the approvals process underway. One has a lease or licence signed but subject to conditions. And 10 have a lease or licence signed and have commenced their commercial operations. Total is 71.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I'll have a supplementary. Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Just on the same topic, in a way. Minister, you'd be aware the Auditor-General's report into that EOI process, which included some examination of the Parks and Wildlife services with RAA process - Reserve Activity Assessment process - released 22 September 2020, criticised both the EOI and the RAA process to some extent. Notably, said that the RAA is not geared to deal with the more complex proposals received through the EOI.

So, my question, minister, is what progress has been made since that 2020 report on implementing the Auditor-General's recommendations, including the requirements to firstly increase the rigour of the public consultation as part of the RAA process to improve the level of transparency or objectivity, and secondly to review the composition of the EOI assessment panel specifically to obtain broader representation of community stakeholders. You might not have a role in that second one, but the first one around the RAA certainly applies. So what progress?

**Mr JAENSCH** - You're right, there have been some enhancements made to the EOI process, and certainly in the Office of Coordinator-General and State Growth component that's been underway.

**Ms WEBB** - We already examined that the other day.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - You've had a chat about those already. We've committed \$6.49 million over four years to deliver the RAA reform project. Now, this is to build on improvements that have already been made to the RAA process that are operating now by developing amendments to the National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002 to recognise the RAA process formally, and to improve transparency and opportunity for public comment and independent decision-making.

As has been referred previously, the intention is to have a series of reforms to the RAA process that create a statutory assessment process that provide a head of power for the development of statutory policies that create an independent panel that can assess proposals, and that provide for, critically, a removal of duplication and overlap in respect of development assessments under the Land Use Planning and Approvals Act as well.

So these are matters that the department has been working through, and I am engaged with them at the moment in finalising a consultation paper that we hope to release in coming months so that we can then progress to start drafting amendments to the legislation to enable a more comprehensive and robust RAA process.

**Ms WEBB** - I've got another question about the RAA process, if I could I ask it here?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, as you're likely aware with another hat on as well, in the most recent report of the Aboriginal Heritage Council, they wrote, 'One of the ongoing concerns for the council during the 2021-22 period has been the growing demand for tourism ventures in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, TWWHA. Council clearly voiced its opposition to development in wilderness areas that impact Aboriginal heritage, particularly in the TWWHA.'

So two years ago, when you tabled that - your tabling report into the review of the Aboriginal Heritage Act under the heading, 'What we will do as soon as possible, independent of developing new legislation', and under that heading, you said, 'We committed the Parks and Wildlife Service to this.', and I quote it. 'Review and amendment of the assessment procedures under two important non-statutory processes for public land, the reserve activity assessment, and expressions of interest for tourism opportunities in National Parks, Reserves and Crown Land, to improve transparency and ensure consideration of Aboriginal heritage, including cultural landscapes and appropriate consultation with Tasmania's Aboriginal community, a prominent requirement in the very early stages of development and assessment of proposals.'

So given that statement from you, minister, it's two years since that, and you committed that. Can you tell me what has occurred in the work you're progressing around this to include that consideration of cultural landscapes and appropriate consultation with the Aboriginal community as prominent requirements in the early stage of development and assessment proposals?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. I'll just provide perhaps the overarching comment that Aboriginal cultural heritage is protected wherever it is from - and any development or assessment approval process needs to include that consideration of the protection of Aboriginal heritage under existing legislation, which is also under review. We are preparing new legislation to provide greater protection for Aboriginal cultural heritage across the board.

## PUBLIC

Within the EOI and RAA processes, however, I understand that there have been some changes made to ensure earlier consideration of Aboriginal heritage values when it comes to EOI proposals.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm more interested in your area of responsibility there, minister, around the RAA process.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. And to that end, the assessment process undertaken by the assessment panel -

**Ms WEBB** - We spoke about this with Coordinator-General when he was before us, so I'm mostly interested in your response.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So he's talked about how Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and the Aboriginal Heritage Council provide input at very early stages of that assessment process. That early assessment would then carry through with anything that subsequently rolls into the RAA process.

**Ms WEBB** - In terms of reforms that you're bringing through, including with the legislation around that as well, can you say that that is bringing greater consideration to cultural landscapes and appropriate consultation with the Aboriginal community as prominent requirements in the early stages of development assessment?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The matter of cultural landscapes specifically is being dealt with in the process of consultation and drafting of amendments to the - or of a new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Protection Act. The answers you've obviously had from the Coordinator-General regarding the EOI process make sure that any proposals entering the EOI process have an earlier consideration of Aboriginal heritage matters before they're assessed.

**Ms WEBB** - So not the RAA process. That's not changing on this front then?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The RAA process happens afterwards.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - One leads into the other. Mr Jacobi might wish to speak to consideration of Aboriginal heritage matters in the RAA process.

**CHAIR** - Someone has joined us at the table. You might like to introduce them.

**Mr JAENSCH** - How are you, Jen? Thank you for coming to the table. Jen is acting director of policy and planning.

**CHAIR** - Jen who, please?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Parnell.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Do you want to lean right over into that microphone, Jen? That's what they're there for.

**Ms PARNELL** - Thanks. I'll do my best there. In answer to your question around how is Aboriginal values and that cultural landscape brought into the RAA process, so every application for use or development, and that includes what Parks does on land as well as from external proponents, has an first initial check where advice from Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania is sought. Through that then, in the scoping of what the terms are that we require of proponents, including Parks, to go out and get specialist reports, then depending on what they're planning to do, that may require them to get an Aboriginal cultural heritage survey completed. As part of that process, then the consultants that do that work do the consultation with the Aboriginal community.

So it's brought in through that way. It's included in any documentation that's provided for the reserve activity assessment, and also considered as part of the assessment process. And Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania provide advice and do that assessment for us on our behalf. They make a call on whether it has to go to the Aboriginal Heritage Council.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Minister, with an 18 per cent increase in visitation to those parks and reserves, I'm just interested in any issues that have arisen around access. I mean, obviously, a lot of access in the past has been through forestry activity, and that has, in some areas, pretty much dried up. And so there are areas that are not as accessible as they were in the past. So I'm interested in what you are doing as minister, and your department, around accessing those areas. You probably get a lot of issues raised with you through members' offices. I know mine would be one of them from time to time. So I'm just interested if you keep a log on that, any particular area that needs more access availability.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much for your question, Chair. Certainly, numbers are bouncing back, and in some areas to pre-COVID numbers, our major attractions, which is a very positive thing for our regional economies. In general, we are going to see continuing demand for our parks and reserves, visitors and locals alike, who don't like to be called visitors in their own backyard, obviously.

**CHAIR** - They've been going there for a long time, a lot of families.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. One of the things that we need to do is to be able to continue to develop new parks and attractions, like our next iconic walk in the Tyndall Range, which I'm very happy to talk a bit more about, but to spread the load a bit across our destination so that we're not crowding the ones that we've got. The issue that you'll probably go into more is -

**CHAIR** - Is more regional than those iconic walks or any new ones.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - This is around existing accesses.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. You may be referring, as well, to the networks of roads to access natural areas. In many areas of the state that were transferred to park's management as a result of the Tasmanian Forest Agreement process and ceased to be areas that were previously accessible, thanks to there being networks of roads that were used for the forestry industry, which have been handed over now to the responsibility of parks.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - I obviously didn't explain it. That's exactly what I mean.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. Lots of roads which people have come to rely on that used to be paid for with the revenue from their forest industries, which are no longer.

**CHAIR** - And now there's an expectation that parks will pick up the slack.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's an expectation that they will be picking up the slack. This is an ongoing challenge for us. Many of these areas no longer have an industry using those roads to share the costs of building and maintaining them. A lot of those roads have very complex arrangements whereby parks is responsible for part, but there's an adjoining -

**CHAIR** - Some have mining - the mines department are as well attached.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Some have local government roads leading to them and from them as well. This is a challenge around the state. One of the things that we've got in this current budget is some investment that can be used, because we keep an eye on the condition of all those assets. We have responsibility for the travelling public on them and for their safety and the upkeep, but we simply don't have the resources that the forest industry used to have to maintain them all, which means that we have to prioritise. There is some money in this year's budget - Jason can maybe speak to the detail of it - to ensure that where we've got critical roads and bridges, in particular, that are at risk of needing to be closed or becoming unsafe for public use, we've been able to put some additional money into maintenance of them.

This is an ongoing issue that we need to plan for and manage because we need to somehow generate a future recurrent revenue, the way that the forest industry used to, to be able to maintain these assets or decide which ones we're going to concentrate our resources on. It's a constant challenge for us. You might want to speak to - if there's any more detail you'd like to add, Mr Jacobi, I'd be happy for you to do so.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you. Through the minister, I thank you, member, for the question. Our capital works and maintenance program has been one of the most significant opportunities for the Parks and Wildlife Service to play catch-up in the past five years. The investment in our capital and maintenance program has been enormous. In fact, the largest in the history of the Park Service. The minister touched on the next iconic walk, which is meeting - will meet some of that incredible demand for multi-day walking, particularly on the west coasts, but there are a whole suite of other projects as you've probably realised in the budget papers around the Freycinet master plan development, which is a significant investment to address the future visitation pressures of that particular park.

It's important to note that Freycinet receives more visitation than Cradle Mountain, so this is one of our locations where we really do need to invest. There's other big-ticket items like Mount Field, the development of the Tamar boardwalk, and also the government's investment of \$10 million in the Department of Conservation area, which I know the minister would like to talk about in detail. All of those projects are addressing significant demand across the state.

The minister touched on the allocation of - or funding \$4 million over two years for roads. This is a really critical piece of asset replacement and upgrading that we've needed to do. It will go towards a whole suite of bridges, gravel roads that provide access not just for recreation,

but also for industries like the tourism industry. All of the road network across Tasmania we manage is in excess of 1152 kilometres. It's a huge road network, and as you can understand, even with storm events, the maintenance on those roads becomes quite significant. In addition to the roads, we also have 180 vehicle bridges and 377 carparks, so the investment in these assets is enormous, but the \$4 million announcement will go a long way towards addressing some of our critical -

**CHAIR** - Go some way, I expect. Some way.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Some way towards our critical asset replacement.

**CHAIR** - I don't think it's going to go a long way. It'll go some way. But thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We certainly acknowledge the issue.

**CHAIR** - While ever we continue to put a focus on these parks and reserves, then we've got to put the money to go with it. Would you agree, minister?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Absolutely.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Valentine has a question.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. Can you outline the outcomes that have been delivered for the three initiatives that were implemented during 2022-23, and that is the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area by a security strategy, cultural burning support, and Reserve Activity Assessment reforms project? Those three projects, if you can give us an understanding as to how they've gone, and basically the achievements there.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Valentine. I touched briefly on the RAA reform matter in a previous question, so I'll concentrate first on the TWWHA biosecurity strategy. Certainly, biosecurity is one of the most important aspects of managing the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area for the preservation of its outstanding universal value. The biosecurity strategy for the TWWHA was approved in 2021, and implementation of the strategy was funded in the 2022-23 budget over four years, totalling \$3.27 million. This year's allocation, \$870 000, has enabled the employment of dedicated Parks and Wildlife Service Biosecurity Officers to support regional implementation of the strategy with a focus on deer control within the Walls of Jerusalem National Park.

There are seven goals in the strategy, 2021-2031, to address biosecurity risks. The associated actions aim to minimise the threat of invasive organisms on TWWHA values by improving leadership and planning and communication and implementation of those responses. Our budget expenditure in the first year has been less than expected due to the Walls of Jerusalem deer control project being more complex than anticipated, consuming more time that would otherwise be dedicated to the recruitment of biosecurity officers and other strategic actions. With staffing now in place, the program implementation should accelerate in 2023-24. We would welcome the opportunity to talk a little bit more about the deer control program, which is central to that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I certainly want to know the complexities associated with it.



**Mr JAENSCH** - That's a fascinating -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Whether you're going to be expanding this elsewhere in the state.

**Mr JAENSCH** - This has been a bit of a proof of concept, this first transfer of the deer control program in the Walls of Jerusalem, in an area that's been designated where our target is to get rid of deer in that part of our Wilderness World Heritage Area entirely. But it's difficult to access country, and we're not - we haven't known in the past how prevalent the deer were in there, indicated by the estimates there were of 300 or so deer in the area in the 2 hours in the air. Our aerial control program destroyed 711 deer.

The technologies that are being used have worked with a combination of training, specialised staff, specialised firearms that they had permits to use, the use of thermal vision augmentation to be able to find animals that might've been hiding in foliage, et cetera. and also the follow-up on ground, as I understand it, from a veteran in the office said to also check that animals had been humanely destroyed. All the lessons from that are being processed at the moment. It appears to have been -

**Mr VALENTINE** - The removal of carcasses?

**Mr JAENSCH** - 20 days, 72 hours of flying time over the 21 days.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So what's happening with the carcasses?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand in some cases carcasses were removed. Where they were in remote areas and not in or putting water courses at risk, that the advice had been that the carcasses are best to remain where they were for the Devils and other natural processes to take care of them in time. If there's any detail you wanted to add to that one? That's okay. The other part of your question went to -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just have a little bit more information on the deer. So, as a result of this trial, are you looking at expanding that, and where to?

**Mr JAENSCH** - So, my understanding is that there'll be another season of this next year in around May as well, like this year, but there's also a program that happens in between and either side to monitor and to deal with re-infestation of those areas from adjacent areas. Is there any other detail you can offer there?

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes, I can. Through the minister, thank you, Member, for the question. The TWWHA Deer Control Program was an incredibly valuable opportunity to build skills and capability across not just the Parks and Wildlife service, but the whole of the department. And, in fact, the team of specialist shooters that we trained and equipped for this particular exercise are from different areas of NRE Tas, and they will be deployed on projects that we believe aerial control is suitable for. So, there is a significant peri-urban deer program underway in the department as part of our deer management plan, and where it is appropriate to apply aerial shooting, we will use the skills and capabilities developed to do that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Public feedback on that. Have you had any representations from groups or members of the public with respect to that particular trial, and any issues that have come out as a result of that trial?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's been consultation, there's been lots of feedback, and I've had a lot of contact as well, particularly from recreational shooters and hunters who saw themselves having a role in deer control in these areas and skills to be able to undertake it. The important thing here is, particularly for the World Heritage Area, where eradication of the deer is our goal, and ongoing control of deer numbers, we wanted to trial this approach to be able to get in and knock down serious numbers of animals in the window that was most appropriate to do so with the control that we had over that area of the parks where we could close it and ensure that we are managing all the risks properly.

Now, there may be a role in the future, as we continue to build our deer control program, for recreational shooters to play a role in assisting us to prevent a reinfestation of those areas and to mop up and assist. That's been the main feedback that I've had. Most people who I've been speaking with in the context of being people who love our parks, want the deer out of there. They don't want the damage that the deer can do to the cushion plants, to the water courses, to a lot of the other sensitive vegetation that they browse that the native animals don't, and I think they've been pleased to see the results that we've had, and a bit surprised at the numbers that they were able to achieve.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, and the cultural burning support?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, yes. Last year, our government allocated \$1.3 million in funding to support cultural burning in Tasmania. The commitment has assisted the government through Parks and Wildlife Service to work together with Tasmanian Aboriginal people to develop the policy and procedures for cultural burning on land managed by Parks, supported by Aboriginal fire officers. Yesterday, I released a new cultural burning policy and procedures that have been developed after extensive consultation with Aboriginal people and their organisations and stakeholders, including the Tasmanian Fire Service.

The objectives of the policy are to reinstate the cultural burning program, to protect and enhance our natural and cultural values, to enable and empower Aboriginal people in Tasmania and their organisations to undertake cultural burning, and through collaborative partnerships with them, share knowledge of culture and burning practices. So, there's work underway there, and the next steps is to employ an Aboriginal fire controller and two Aboriginal fire officers to work with Aboriginal people and organisations to facilitate these burning activities on Parks land.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'll probably deal with a bit more of that a bit further back.

**CHAIR** - Yes, thank you. Ms Webb, did you have another question in this area?

**Ms WEBB** - I have a lot. I'll have as many as I can take, but I'll start with a couple.

**CHAIR** - Well, a couple.

**Ms WEBB** - The answers can be probably fairly brief, hopefully. We'll see. Minister, I just have recently heard of an unfortunate story or anecdote about - and perhaps you can confirm it for me, whether it's, in fact, accurate - that wildlife have been found drowned in infrastructure attached to a private hut operated on the overland track in Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. Are you able to confirm that that's the case?

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't have any detail on that, but I will ask Mr Jacobi if he does.

**Mr JACOBI** - Yes, thank you. Through the minister, I am aware of correspondence to the department from a member of the public raising an allegation about a - I believe, from memory, it was a drowned possum in one of the rainwater tanks. At the time that we received that, I asked the Parks and Wildlife Service to make contact with TWC, and we provided a response to the person who raised the concern as a result of that inquiry.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, do we have any way that we're able to monitor or keep track of how many native animals may be drowned or maimed or killed as a result of interactions with built infrastructure in our national parks?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know if reporting of such incidents is a requirement of leases and licences that may be held, but I'll ask the Secretary if he could comment on that, please.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you. Through the minister, many of our leases and licences in our parks and reserves are quite historic, and they may not have always contemplated these sorts of issues at the time that they were drafted. Certainly, in the RAA assessment process that we conduct, we give careful consideration to those sorts of matters, making sure that animals can't drown or interact with built infrastructure, in particular glass windows. So, glass is often a reflective barrier and can be detrimental to -

**Ms WEBB** - Birds.

**Mr JACOBI** - To wildlife. In terms of the only way that a compliance program would be introduced is probably if the development was referred under - say, for example, through our environmental assessment process, we may apply conditions to the Reserve Activity Assessment, or through an EPBC-type process, where specific conditions might be applied to the development. But as I said, many of our leases, particularly in the World Heritage area, are historic leases. But I think it's an important point that we need to incorporate into our leases going forward.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, my understanding is that New South Wales has a legislative requirement that tour operators working in national parks must report any instance of injury to wildlife that the tour operator becomes aware of to Parks and Wildlife Service as soon as is reasonably practicable, and that's whether it was due to their operation or their infrastructure, or not. Just as a matter of measuring and monitoring. Can I invite you to commit to investigating something along those lines for our state or some form to fulfil the same function?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think that Mr Jacobi just indicated that they were open to that, and in the review of what's included in our leases and licences, which I think is probably the appropriate place - and interstate, I would suspect, it would need to be embedded in some sort of agreement or formal permissions process like that. So, I'm open to that entirely, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I'll move on to another question, what should be a short one I think too. Minister, as you would be aware, the 40th anniversary of the High Court decision on 1 July regarding the Gordon-below-Franklin Dam construction is coming up. PWS have been in discussion with tourism operator, RoamWild, to repaint the No Dam sign located on the Mount McCall Track, deep in the World Heritage Area, which has been extensively redeveloped in recent times and renamed the Franklin River Road. All plans are in place for

## PUBLIC

the event, with many original protesters who painted the sign travelling from around the country to attend the event, I believe. However, a recent landslide at Purgatory Gap has closed access to that historic site.

So, minister, my question is about with the plans for the event well underway, will PWS clear the landslip to allow RoamWild to travel to the site where the No Dams triangle was painted on the G-Day in 1983, to restore the triangle at that Mount McCutcheon HEC workshop place for the dams, and if so, when will that happen? And if not, why not when the previous interactions with senior Parks and Wildlife staff indicated full support for the event?

**CHAIR** - Will you be at the event?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm quite confident to say that I am not aware of this event. But I'd ask the department if they have any comment to make on the matter.

**Mr JACOBI** - No, I'm not aware of this event and nor are any of my staff, so very interested to get some more detail on the issue.

**Ms WEBB** - I can certainly then link you through to the person who's brought that to my attention and asked for the question.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through the minister, I will say, RoamWild are a very confident operator on the west coast. We actively support them in their business activities. If they had a proposal to run a particular event then we would consider that like we do for any other event on reserve land.

**Ms WEBB** - It sounds as if that consideration was already in train but perhaps it's not as well understood -

**CHAIR** - Hasn't got that high up the ladder yet.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. That's alright.

**CHAIR** - Secretary and the minister, not quite there yet. Thank you. One more.

**Ms WEBB** - Keep going.

**CHAIR** - You might not get all of those pages asked.

**Ms WEBB** - No, it's okay, I've got my priority ones ticked. Okay, we'll just go to this one. Minister, this is in relation to - I'll just read it out actually. After the tax payer essentially has paid tens of millions of dollars to build the Three Capes Track, the Tasmanian Walking Company was awarded that exclusive commercial arrangement on the Three Capes Track, effectively a monopoly arrangement there. The question that I'm putting to you is, are Parks and Wildlife seeking to make similar arrangements after we've now also spent tens of millions of public money on the Tyndall Range Walk? Should we expect a similar outcome there around an exclusive commercial arrangement?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Ms Webb, for your question. We've made an allocation of \$40 million to the next iconic walk in the Tyndall Ranges. That's not all been spent yet

## PUBLIC

obviously, but we're hoping that that can proceed to be spent and that dream realised over the next couple of years. At this stage, I'm advised we are not anticipating this being a commercially operated walk but one operated by Parks and Wildlife Service.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Is there a final decision time when that would be confirmed for sure?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's a range of matters still in play in terms of design and theming, and how the operation of the walk would be working but, at this stage, that's our intention. I'd probably not rule things out at this stage while we're still working through that but, at this stage, it's not our intention.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. One more.

**Ms WEBB** - I can do one more.

**CHAIR** - One more.

**Ms WEBB** - In relation to Halls Island. Minister, as you're aware, the controversy over the helicopter development at Halls Island at Lake Malbena has created quite a deal of anxiety amongst trout fishers and bushwalkers for quite a number of years now.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is it a helicopter development?

**Ms WEBB** - Helicopter. What did I say?

**Mr JAENSCH** - You said it's a helicopter development. We're not developing a helicopter there, I can relieve you of that.

**Ms WEBB** - Helicopter-connected development. Yes, there's helicopters involved, minister. I think if there wasn't we wouldn't be having such a long-protracted conversation about it, perhaps.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The standing camp development.

**Ms WEBB** - Involving helicopters. By necessity apparently.

**CHAIR** - A good way to get them in and out. Without touching the -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Without messing the place up. Anyway.

**Ms WEBB** - So the question is, in relation to that development which we know has been a longstanding source of consternation for many, if federal environment minister, Tania Plibersek, rejects this proposal at the EPBC assessment level - and which is a decision we're expecting quite imminently one way or another. If that's rejected at that EPBC assessment, will you then rescind the exclusive possession lease over Halls Island and allow the public to freely return to that place?

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. Any proposal for any sort of development or use of our world heritage area, our parks and reserves, needs to go through all of the normal assessments and approvals. And the Halls Island project is still in that pipeline and we're waiting, like everybody else, to see what emerges out the other end. In terms of the separate arrangements that the proponent has with Parks and Wildlife Service for the same area, I believe that they're separate and I don't think one is contingent on the other, other than for the development to proceed, it needs all of the approvals. I'll just ask Mr Jacobi if he wants to add any detail there.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you. Through the minister, we'll just be waiting on the EPBC decision by Minister Plibersek and considering both the decision or any conditions that she may wish to apply to that development. It will either be, you know, not a controlled action, which is essentially given the green light, or it'll be a controlled action in a particular manner, which is, it's allowed to go ahead but subject to a number of conditions, or it will be a controlled action and not given approval to go ahead. And I look forward to awaiting her advice. Once we receive that decision, if it's a not a controlled action in a particular manner and it has conditions attached, we will consider that as part of the reserve activity assessment.

**Ms WEBB** - So I guess my question goes to, minister, that scenario where essentially there's a red light given to the development in that federal process and yet the lease over Halls Island, as you said, is separate to that arrangement, and is existing currently. Is there an assumption then that that lease just continues even if the development itself, as planned at the moment, can't continue? Or would it be that that lease then would be reconsidered?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Any of these leases and licences that exist are for a purpose and for a time. I understand that the lease arrangements are pending future development which needs to go through other approvals. If the proponent or the lessee was unable to proceed, it doesn't immediately cancel this lease but it removes the purpose of it. The other matter that I just want to clarify in relation to the previous description is that, if the project is given approval or conditional approval under the EPBC, it's not a green light to proceed yet in that all relevant local government, Parks and Wildlife planning approvals, including a final reserve activity assessment, needs to be satisfied before it can proceed. The stop or go, the green light in this case from an EPBC approval, is the next step but it's not the last step in the process.

**Ms WEBB** - Indeed. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - All right. Thank you. Mr Valentine, a last question in this area and then we're going to Crown land services.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's just about the budget itself. Can you outline why the appropriation for this output group has received a significant increase in the appropriation over the years 2023-24 to 2025-26? What outcomes are expected to be delivered from this increase in the appropriation?

**CHAIR** - 18 per cent increase in visitor activity.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It goes down in 2026-27. It's probably 27 pages or something.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Parks. Which -

**Mr VALENTINE** - 2023-24 to 2025-26.

**CHAIR** - Page 175 of the budget paper.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The increase in revenue from appropriation - that's the appropriate line - of \$2.52 million in 2023-24 mainly reflects additional funding received for the Crown land transaction turnaround time initiative, \$950 000; additional funding received as part of the wage agreement, \$610 000; and indexation of \$1.2 million.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Crown land transaction turnaround.

**CHAIR** - It's 90.5 on our list, yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - \$950 000.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you, you've explained it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So it's a matter that we can explore in the next section.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. 4.2 Crown Lands Services. Thank you, Mr Willie, question.

#### **4.2 Crown Land Services**

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Joscelyne.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, I was out there the other day so it's good to see construction finally start on the Brighton High School project.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's bolting along.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It'd want to.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, after the time. But my question concerns the land acquisition of that site. It was my understanding that the Crown had to acquire half of that site. Has that been resolved? And if so, what was the total cost?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay, thank you. I'll ask my department if there is anyone who can speak to that process. Can we bring Stuart Fletcher to the -

**CHAIR** - He's flown. He saw his time and went out the door.

**Mr WILLIE** - Probably knew his question was coming.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy to hold that question and see if we can get Stuart back.

**CHAIR** - Take that on notice.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - Stuart Fletcher back to provide an answer; if he's unable to take it notice.

**Mr WILLIE** - Last time I heard it was unresolved. I'm not sure if there's an update on that.

**UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER** - It was what?

**CHAIR** - Unresolved.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, there was a provision for it in the project overall budget.

**Mr WILLIE** - I understand that, but in terms of finalising the land acquisition process.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There was a process underway that hadn't been finalised at the time that we commenced the work.

**Mr WILLIE** - So, yes, an update on that would be appreciated. My question is, what Crown land was sold in the financial year just gone? If we could have that listed. I'm happy for you to take that on notice. What parcels of Crown land are being considered for sale in the next budgeted year, as in the one we're in and how many of those sites will be affordable and social housing?

**CHAIR** - Pieces of paper, minister, flying your way.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would be happy for Mr Joscelyne to report directly Crown land sold.

**CHAIR** - If you just pull that microphone down, Will. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm unsure if we can give a definitive list of Crown land anticipated to be sold in the coming year and -

**CHAIR** - What has been sold.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Also, in regard to social and affordable housing where it's been government projects driving that, in most cases it has been on land owned by the Crown, and it hasn't always been transferred by way of sale.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you. Let's say disposed of then, or transferred.

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - Thank you, minister. Through you, in relation to the last part, I might have to seek some more clarity and advice in relation to social housing as to whether we have that specific detail. Overall, I can provide figures as at 31 March 2023, and we've settled 19 Crown land properties with revenue of \$3.5 million.

**CHAIR** - Is a list able to be provided at a later time?

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - In relation to the individual properties themselves, I would -

**CHAIR** - Yes, it's always of interest.



## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - Maybe the purpose of why they were sold or transferred or disposed of.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for the department to provide further advice on that if they have it.

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - We do have that information so I can.

**CHAIR** - No we don't need to -

**Mr WILLIE** - We don't need 19. We can table it.

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - We'll seek to get that for the table.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - I do actually have information also in relation to transfer of land to Housing Tasmania.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you.

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - Since 1 July 2021 property services has identified six parcels of land as suitable for transfer to Housing Tasmania. These are located in Newtown, Beaconsfield and Lady Barron.

**Mr WILLIE** - Newtown being Springvale?

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - I'd need to check on the title of the property. So that's the information I have available.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Whatever we can have in written form at a later time.

**Mr WILLIE** - That would be appreciated. And yes, the Brighton High School I'm very interested in.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Thank you, Ms Webb.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. We have more detail on land sold to date here at the table with us that we can provide, I understand.

**CHAIR** - Can that be tabled?

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - I'll need to verify that it's complete just before I'd seek to table it, so we'll do that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Leave it where it is.

**CHAIR** - All right. That's fine. We'll leave it with you. Thank you. Ms Webb has a question.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, and I hope it's relevant here. It might actually be relevant to more than one of the areas, in a way. Minister a perennial issue as we're all aware that arises especially at this time of year is illegal firewood stealing from Crown land and reserves and so I'm just interested in what measures are in place to educate and prevent in the first place that kind of damaging activity as well as any measure to identify culprits after the fact.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much. Mr Jacobi has some answers for you on this.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you. Through the minister, we regularly in the lead-up to winter do quite a broad social media program about where to obtain appropriate timber for burning from and where not to obtain it from and we also conduct quite an extensive covert and overt compliance program using our park rangers, our compliance rangers actively patrol, we get intelligence from the community very often about where wood-hooking may be occurring and we've had quite a number of very successful prosecutions in the past which has sent a loud message to people about the land tenures that they should not be securing wood from.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I'm just interested then too in that data in terms of incidents of illegal firewood extraction that have been reported in the last two financial years and any prosecutions that have occurred across that same period.

**Mr JACOBI** - Through you, Minister, I'd be happy to provide the successful prosecutions, but I would prefer not to provide any information in relation to reporting because that would be being used actively for the purposes of covert investigation work.

**Ms WEBB** - So just you're not happy to provide the number of reported.

**Mr JACOBI** - I wouldn't even hazard a guess as to the number of reported and I don't know how I would go about doing that because -

**Ms WEBB** - Okay.

**Mr JACOBI** - I could try but I don't know that there's any merit in that. I'd rather just provide active prosecutions that have been successful.

**Ms WEBB** - That's fine. I'm happy to accept that, thank you.

## **Output Group 90**

### **COVID-19 Response and Recovery**

#### **90.5 Improving Crown Lands Transaction Turnaround Time**

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Moving on now to 90.5 Improving Crown Land Transaction Turnaround time. We know there's a significant budget allocation for that, but I'll ask Ms Webb. Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - This is a COVID line item. It's a 90.5 COVID one and I'm just - it's finishing in this financial year that we're in, so I guess that really the most straight-forward question is was all of the allocation expended in full in this 2022-23 financial year?

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much. Well, the story I'm advised here is that additional funding of \$1.9 million over two years has been provided in the 2023-24 budget to extend the transaction turnaround time initiative.

**Ms WEBB** - Which line item would we find that in then minister?

**CHAIR** - It's in the 4.1.

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is addition to the \$1.9 million that was provided in the 2021 Budget.

**CHAIR** - So we'll expect that this output group will leave the budget papers next year and it'll be included in 4.1.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is that correct?

**Mr JACOBI** - That is correct. Through you minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's correct, yes. So the funding will support the continued improvement in the resourcing capacity of parks to address the need to meet the demand and provide for appropriate time frames for assessment and processing of lease license and permit applications, planning permit applications, as well as land transfers and sales across the state.

**Ms WEBB** - Good example of a good initiative to carry forward then out of COVID wasn't it?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, absolutely.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We'll move now to grants and subsidies. Mr Valentine - unless you had something else honourable member?

**Ms WEBB** - No, I didn't.

**CHAIR** - Mr Valentine, you had a question in grants.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, it's something I asked yesterday, but I was told that it probably lives here. So just with respect to - you would've received, minister, a request for a maintenance package for a set of government buildings in Salamanca. Salamanca Arts Centre buildings, and that's a maintenance package of \$275 000 plus GST. Has any funding for that government-owned facility been included in this year's Budget? If not, considering they are government heritage buildings, will the matter be given further consideration with a view to providing it in following budgets?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Valentine. I'm just going to ask Mr Joscelyne if he is able to help me with this one.

**CHAIR** - Have you see the letter, Mr Joscelyne? That's the question. And has the minister seen it?

## PUBLIC

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - I don't want to say yes, just in case I haven't. I think I have. I've seen many letters. Through you, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr JOSCELYNE** - If you're happy, I can confirm that it would be - there's not a specific line item for that particular site in the Budget. It is actually funded as part of our Crown land services structural asset upgrade. So there is access to funding from that, which is a line item on page 166 of the Budget chapter. There is no set amount that is necessarily allocated each year. However, in recent years, there's been around about a \$50 000 component which is taken from that fund specifically to support that centre.

I'm also, through you, minister, advised that there are plans next week to actually meet with the Salamanca Arts Centre. Officers from property services will be meeting with Salamanca Arts Centre to discuss the strategic asset management plan. That will then lead into a prioritisation of future works and discussions on funding.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, thank you for that.

**CHAIR** - I think the member should be very happy with that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I know. I think that's a good outcome.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Profitable answer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I mean, I declare I -

**CHAIR** - No, it's 100 years ago you were a member.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It was 100 years ago. I wasn't a member.

**CHAIR** - If there are no other questions in Grants and Subsidies, we'll move to Capital Investment program.

### Capital Investment Program

**CHAIR** - Mr Willie. Thank you.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. I've got a bunch of projects here, but perhaps I'll just ask one and we can put the rest on notice to save time. But how about I pick one that my family enjoys, which is the Hastings Caves Thermal Pool. It's a year delayed and 13 per cent over budget. What's caused the year delay there, minister? Is it a profiling issue, or?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Danielle Poirier. Could I please invite Danielle Poirier to the table?

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, and welcome.

**Ms POIRIER** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thanks, Danielle. Hastings Caves.

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - The thermal pool.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Willie was seeking an update on the delay in that project and what matters have arisen.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms POIRIER** - Thank you. Through you, minister. Hastings Thermal Pool revitalisation. We've been doing, I suppose, a series of work looking at what the current site situation is, so what are the current considerations that we need to understand. So we initiated some of our planning work in this financial year. We have been starting that work in anticipation of being able to then move into some of the broader work of what we're doing at that site, and planning the design and other direction for what we're doing in terms of reprioritisation.

In regard to the way that we have allocated our resources, we've commenced the planning work of what the project looks like, but it has been delayed in the timing of that start. The original start year was 2021, as you said, Mr Willie, and then the current start year was 2022. We did move those cash flows and that work to meet the resourcing that we had, but also trying to understand some of those site conditions.

**Mr WILLIE** - I've got a heap of others here, Chair, but I'll -

**CHAIR** - I've got one more up the other end.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm just putting all of these to the secretary.

**CHAIR** - Right. So there's a couple of other areas of interest in capital investment program, and there is a significant list on page 166-67, 68 and 69, if anyone -

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's a lot of work underway.

**CHAIR** - wants to have a look at those at a later time. Thank you very much for that. If there are no other questions around capital investment, I'll move to the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, and as long as this takes, it will be cup of tea.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You said that there are other questions in the capital items.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Specific questions.

**Mr WILLIE** - Just on timeframes and costs.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just in terms of your process, Chair, should we have those questions asked here for me to then agree to take them on notice? Or what were you planning to do with them?

**CHAIR** - I thought you'd agreed that you'd take our questions on notice.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Not an unspecified list of anything that Mr Willie might ask me. Call me a stickler for convention, but just at least to know what's coming so that I can -

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Each committee has its own way of functioning.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - If you're in a committee elsewhere, you would have three minutes to answer a question. So I think you're pretty lucky, really.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I've been very generous with my answers.

**CHAIR** - Mr Willie, can you quickly ask your questions?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. I've got one on the Cockle Creek campground upgrades, 10 per cent over budget. Flinders Island and RV upgrades are more than 20 per cent over budget; why? The timeframe for the \$10 million Arthur-Pieman Conservation Area upgrades are being pushed out two years; why? Cradle Mountain experiences is three years beyond its original timeframe. What's been the hold-up? Mount Field National Park new arrival concourse is nearly 20 per cent over its original budget; why? Tasman Arch and Devils Kitchen a year beyond its original timeframe and 13 per cent over budget. What's caused that? Recreational fishing and improved boat and trailer parking is three years overdue and five per cent over budget. That's only a small program, but why is that being delayed?

The Freycinet tourism icon projects is now scheduled for completion three years after its original date. What caused those delays? And the Tamar Island Wetlands boardwalk replacement is more than 20 per cent over budget. What's gone wrong there? I remember being a kid when that was first implemented, and that was great.

**CHAIR** - Are those genuine questions fair and reasonable to have put forward at the end of this session?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think it's good to know what they are. Just considering the timeframe we have to respond to it, and the expectation that the department will provide a full written response.

**CHAIR** - And just for a suggested input to next year's budget paper, they all have some notes to them in the budget paper. That information could be provided in the budget paper and then we wouldn't have to ask through this process.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Noted, thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Chair, could I put in mine there?

**CHAIR** - You could add yours too, Ms Webb, seeing we're doing it this way.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just for completeness on those capital items, Danielle has just noted that there are a number that have also been moved forward through the program as well. So just for the purpose of the discussion, Mr Willie has identified a number of projects that have been put back and that have changed. There's some other projects in the same table that have been brought forward as well. So the overall program of work continues. We sometimes have to manage our timeframes for reasons outside our control.

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - You can talk about the ones coming forward. It's my job to talk about the ones that are going -

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Ms Webb. Your question.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. If I can put this through as well for you take, because it's a pretty straightforward one, and I'm not sure if it fits in this. But it's about maintenance budget allocations for particular tracks, and I just have a list of tracks I'm interested just to get the maintenance allocation for in this next year we're coming to, 2023-24. So the list of tracks - you'll get this in writing, but is the South Coast Track, the Port Davey Track, the South West Cape circuit, the Southern Range/Moonlight Ridge track, Penguin Cradle Trail labyrinth track, Western Arthur Track, Huon Track, and Eastern Arthur Track.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Are they assets that we can put a maintenance budget allocation against?

**CHAIR** - A maintenance budget allocated to each of those?

**Ms WEBB** - Can I take that you'll provide an answer back if you can't, to that effect?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We can provide a response to the question. Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Happy to take those on notice, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - The Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens. No output line.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No.

**CHAIR** - And the questions and responses will determine when we go for afternoon tea break.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It got a sort of a chapter in volume 2, page 112, if anyone has not looked it up. Sorry, page 109 to 113. With this particular item, it's interesting there's a - with regard to the interest payments on page 111, it shows interest payments last year, 2022-23, as \$20 000. But in 2023-24, it's \$230 000. What's gone on there to make that huge -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Come again?

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The interest payments as part of the revenue. It's got a 2022-23 is \$20 000. And in 2023-24, there's \$230 000.

**CHAIR** - A significant increase in the loan, I'd suggest.

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's a revenue.

**CHAIR** - It's a revenue?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - It's an in.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's an income.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Interest payments incoming revenue.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Income.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much. Madam Chair, can I please bring Yann Gagnon, the Director of the Royal Tasmanian Botanic Gardens, to the table?

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, Yann. Thank you for your time.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yann's been waiting patiently. He didn't get a question yesterday, so I'm very glad we've got him today.

**CHAIR** - It's good to get people at the table who have been waiting.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I've given him a reason for being.

**Mr JAENSCH** - He was heartbroken yesterday when we didn't ask him any questions.

**CHAIR** - No, we don't get out of the overview.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - The question is the increase.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. On page 111 of the budget papers volume 2, and budget paper 2, it's got the interest payments of \$20 000 in 2022-23 as part of its revenue. In 2023-24, it's \$230 000. What's provided such a lovely bit of interest for you?

**CHAIR** - Explanation, thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Difference between the two years.

**Mr GAGNON** - We have lots of funds in the capital budget which was placed into a fixed term deposit, so there was a hike in interest rates or for external deposit for nine months. The balance has been placed there in anticipation of the project to proceed in approximately early 2024, so the money is there in anticipation of the project and is making some interest.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Then it goes down to 100 and then 50, and then 35 following. Is that simply because you're expending it on the irrigation repairs and heritage wall repairs?



## PUBLIC

**Mr GAGNON** - Through you, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr GAGNON** - It is for the visitor experience project. There are some new amenities that are planned to be constructed at the gardens, so the project is well on the way in the planning phase, and we're anticipating construction in early 2024, so the funds to be withdrawn.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What sort of amenities are we talking about there?

**Mr GAGNON** - Yes, so we're planning a new welcome point to the garden. A new kiosk and visitors centre and access ramp, as well as refurbishment to the existing visitor centre. It's described as a welcome point and access improvement, and various amenities such as refurbishment to the washrooms, to the dining area, as well as a new café, gift store, and a new drop-off bus area.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. The irrigation repairs, pretty extensive by the sound of it.

**Mr GAGNON** - Through you, minister. The irrigation repairs are extensive. It is half of the hydraulic system of the irrigation of the Botanical Gardens. This system was put in during the 1980s using hydraulic pressure technology. I'm not going to go too much in details, but the technology does not exist anymore, and these replacement parts are not, so following their failure, we have to modernise them.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And that wonderful, heated wall, that heritage wall, I presume. Is that the heated wall? Is that the early Wilmot Hall? I can imagine he had a deer stalker hat and a pipe probably, this guy.

**Mr GAGNON** - Through you, minister. No, it is not the heated wall. It is the wall separating Government House property to - and these are buttressed - they were constructed under concrete in the 1970s, and some of the concrete is corroded.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Bit of concrete cancer.

**Mr GAGNON** - Now, we're replacing them with bricks.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You just don't want the governor to come wandering in through your garden at any time. You've got to keep the wall.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. Can you - minister, through you - advise the outcomes delivered from the review of the strategic master plan for the Botanical Gardens?

**Mr GAGNON** - Through you, minister. The strategic master plan has been initiated a few months ago, and we're at the state folio engagement phase now. We had a survey done with some staff or volunteers or friends, and now we're in the phase of reaching to Aboriginal communities as well as the Heritage Council and the Hobart City Council.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. Any funding or staffing issues at the moment? A reduction in anticipated donations as well? Can you give us a bit of an idea as to the staffing levels, and whether there are any issues with finding appropriate staff for such a wonderful place?

## PUBLIC

**Mr GAGNON** - Through you, minister. Staffing level at the Botanical Gardens is not an issue. We only have currently one vacancy, and when a vacancy comes up there are lots of applications.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, how many vacancies?

**Mr GAGNON** - One.

**Mr JAENSCH** - One.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I thought you said 21 there for a minute.

**Mr GAGNON** - No, one.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's pretty. Okay. Funding is appropriate at the moment?

**CHAIR** - Feel free to answer that, even though the minister's sitting here.

**Mr VALENTINE** - If you don't answer that, then the minister will never know.

**Mr GAGNON** - Through you, minister. The funding is appropriate, and we're grateful for the funding that's received to maintain the property.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you still have a relationship with the Hobart City Council? Just a member on the board?

**Mr GAGNON** - Through you, minister. There is no member of the City Council on the Tasmanian Botanical Garden board. However, I have a relationship with the administration.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Are you looking for anyone to come onto the board?

**Mr GAGNON** - I think I'll refer this one to the minister.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions, members, in regard to this really important icon in Tasmania, and we do appreciate, and nothing frivolous about that. That is absolutely the case. Thank you very much, Yann, for your time today.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, one really quick. The root rot you had, the problem was very extensive over the - is that gone now, totally?

**Mr GAGNON** - Through you, minister. No, it's not gone, and it's unlikely to ever go away. Those types of - that's pathogen -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, but you're controlling it?

**Mr GAGNON** - Yes, through plant healthcare, so selecting the right species that are resistant to that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Anyone with that sort of knowledge should be on a board, I'd suggest. We will break. Thanks, Gay.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Madam Chair, just very briefly. In relation to the question we undertook to find more information on the Brighton High School land acquisition, I'd be happy to take that question on notice, for clarification.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. We will break, and we will return at 20 past 4, and we will head straight into - I'll just remind myself where we are. It gets a bit unwieldy on the Thursday. For your area of Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And thank you to Secretary Jacobi and everyone who's assisted from the department.

**CHAIR** - Yes, thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**The Committee suspended from 4.07 p.m. to 4.20 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - Minister welcome back.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - As we say in this place, we're on the very home straight. I'll invite you, as your ministerial responsibility for Environment and Climate Change, to make an overarching comment if you wish to do so.

## **DIVISION 8**

(Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania)

### **Output Group 7**

#### **Environment**

##### **7.1 Environmental Management**

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Chair. I'd like to introduce at the table again Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, Jason Jacobi; Deputy Secretary Environment Heritage and Land, Sophie Muller; and General Manager Environment, Jo Crisp.

**CHAIR** - Welcome Jo. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you all. Thank you and welcome.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - We've already welcomed the other two already earlier today.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I have a brief overview statement if I may.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm very pleased to be here today to talk about the work that the government is doing to protect Tasmania's environment and threatened species and reduce emissions as we respond to a changing climate. The Tasmanian government has delivered historic reforms in the waste and resource recovery area and has been active in recent years helping to establish a solid framework through key investments in the waste and resource recovery sector to the tune of over \$20 million.

We've made significant investments in the state's capacity to re-process organic, plastic and tyre waste and are working towards our 2025 phase-out of single use plastics. We have introduced the state's first landfill levy, established the Waste and Resource Recovery Board and we are in the process of establishing Tasmania's container refund scheme called Recycle Rewards. With regard to Recycle Rewards detailed tender assessments for the scheme coordinator and network operator are currently underway. The timeline for rollout of the scheme is still being finalised and we'll have more to say on this once the tender assessment is completed and contracts are signed which is expected by the end of this year.

The government is working hard to ensure Tasmanians get the best possible scheme for our state. The scheme will be with us for a long time so it's worth putting in the work to get it right from the outset. Our government also remains committed to the introduction of contemporary environmental standards for marine fin-fish farming that will further strengthen the current environmental regulatory system. All submissions received during public consultation are being carefully considered by the department and I look forward to finalising the standards in the coming months.

Protecting our threatened species is also something this government takes very seriously. In the coming months we will be releasing a discussion paper starting with the process to develop an updated Threatened Species Strategy for Tasmania. We are committed to doing this properly and have provided \$300 000 over two years to ensure the review is comprehensive and informed by contemporary science. It will reflect current bio-diversity management principles and provide the opportunity to cast a forward-thinking climate-ready perspective to threatened species management.

In my climate change portfolio, last week I had the pleasure of releasing Tasmania's Climate Change Action Plan for 2023 to 2025. The action plan outlines our plan to meet our legislated target of net zero emissions or lower from 2030 and to deliver on the key requirements in the Climate Change State Action Act including the development of sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plans and Tasmania's first statewide Climate Change Risk Assessment. The plan outlines over \$250 million in climate change related initiatives that are currently planned or underway across government as well as \$10 million of investment in new initiatives informed by the independent review of our emission's pathways and extensive community and industry consultation.

Since the Act passed the parliament last year, I have also convened the Climate Change Reference Group as a forum to share information and feedback between government,

community and industry priorities. The reference group comprises members of relevant peak industry business and community groups, state and local government, youth representatives and researchers with expertise in climate change mitigation and adaptation. We've commenced work on the first sector-based emissions reduction and resilience plan for the transport sector which will be completed by the end of the year. Workshops and targeted one-on-one consultation was held in May and I was pleased to attend the first transport sector workshop just a few weeks ago.

It's clear our government is committed to working with businesses, industries and the community to strengthen our world-leading emissions profile and make Tasmania a successful, clever, low-emissions economy while protecting our environment and jobs for future generations. I welcome questions on these and other environment, threatened species and climate change matters. Thank you, chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Any overarching questions, members, before I ask Ms Howlett to?

**Ms WEBB** - Certainly. I'll just ask the one I've been asking at each overview the use of consultants in these particular areas and if you could provide us with a list of those. Any projects or programs and their costs.

**CHAIR** - And pleasing to see that the secretary has the paperwork at hand. Thank you.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you, through the minister. The total amount for consultancies awarded in environment with a value greater than \$10 000 as at 31 March is \$352 500 and this is represented by three consultancies. The Landscape Recovery Foundation, Professional Scientific Services for the Swift Parrot Conservancy Program the value of that consultancy was \$22 500.

The Nous Group Consultancy Service commercial advice for the container refunds scheme \$300 000 and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy Professional Scientific Services for Swift Parrot Conservancy Program \$30 000.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - And now I'll ask Ms Howlett.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I know you recently announced the successful applicants of the Keep Australia Beautiful Tasmanian school grants program. Can you please provide some more details and an update.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. Thank you very much Ms Howlett. Very happy to do that. As Minister for the Environment as well as Minister for Education and our Children and Young People. Keep Australia Beautiful currently receives \$45 000 per year from the Tasmanian government to deliver programs including the Sustainable Communities Awards Program and to promote waste management and resource recovery, recycling and litter awareness in our community. In addition this funding supports the Sustainable Schools program, and I was pleased this week, on Monday, on World Environment Day to announce the successful applicants of the Keep Australia Beautiful Tasmania School Grants program.

## PUBLIC

This involves my other portfolio as I've mentioned, and I was very pleased to learn about the successful grant recipients from the Sustainable Schools Grant program and what they have achieved from their funding. In previous years the grants enabled lots of gardening and composting and recycling in schools across the state. When sustainability is part of their school and learning especially if it's in a hands-on way the children feel that they can make a real change and gain real life skills even at a very young age and I really congratulate our teachers who've helped to facilitate hands-on sustainability initiatives in schools among their many other teaching responsibilities and I thank also the TA's and the volunteers and the parents who get involved wherever these projects turn up in the schools.

This year, 12 Tasmanian schools will receive up to \$2000 each towards projects that are improving sustainability at their school. Recipients of this year's Sustainable Schools Grants program are Table Cape Primary School, John Paul II Catholic School, Tasman District School, Risdon Vale - cheer for your own school everybody when they come up.

**CHAIR** - I'm hoping to. I haven't heard mine yet.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Risdon Vale Primary School, Fairview Primary School, South Arm Primary School, the Channel Christian School.

**CHAIR** - You'll need to get out of the south.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Smithton High School. Yes. West Launceston Primary, Corpus Christi Catholic School, Invermay Primary and Gagebrook Primary School. Please promote the program to schools in your area. That's the message for members here today. Most of the 2023 Sustainable Schools Grants programs winning projects are focussed on growing food, composting and habitat regeneration. The successful schools have demonstrated important innovation and benefit to the school community into the future.

Some of the schools intend to work with local groups to further extend the program and enhance student learning outcomes. For example Risdon Vale Primary is looking to offer their kitchen garden produce to families in its local area addressing food insecurity in the community.

Other successful project ideas are focused on improving healthy eating through the implementation of lunch programs and eating more fruit. Smithton High School wants to incorporate a bee garden, and to repurpose existing materials to create an outdoor learning space, and Gagebrook Primary will be starting a Bush Foods Garden, converting an unused part of their school grounds for that purpose. I know from talking to young people that they love doing this. They love practical action to improve their local environment and doing something related to sustainability. I want to thank Keep Australia Beautiful Tasmania for assisting our Tasmanian schools to deliver this for our students. Thanks.

**CHAIR** - How many applications were there to deliver the 12 successful grants?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't have that number, but I can get it for you, Madam Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Maybe there's somebody in the room who can find that for us.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Which school got \$3000, and which one -

**Mr JAENSCH** - You were counting, weren't you?

**CHAIR** - I was.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - So, somebody got \$3000 or there's still \$1000 left over.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We'll get the answer to that too for you.

**CHAIR** - All right. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. Questions, members? Thank you, Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, Chair. To start with, I'm looking at something from a couple of years back, but I'm just interested in an update around the PESRAC group that we had in their final report, which was made in March 2021. In that, the Tasmanian government said it would prepare a whole of state sustainability, vision and strategy for Tasmania. Well, that was the recommendation in the PESRAC report, and the government committed to progressing those recommendations. So, the whole of state, sustainability, vision and strategy for Tasmania.

So, in the latest Climate Change Action Plan, 2023-25, there's another commitment to develop this strategy and include the social, environmental and economic objectives of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals SDG's, which is great. But no time frame has been given for the delivery of the strategy. So, my question is about whether you can please advise what work, if any, has commenced on the sustainability strategy since 2021, and who has been tasked with this work to date, and when the strategy will be finally delivered? I guess if there's budget allocation towards that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Ms Webb. My advice is that DPAC is the lead agency on the strategy, given it has a whole of government reach as well. I understand that they have, or are in the process of finalising, a discussion paper and I don't have a time frame for when that will be released.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. Thank you. Chair, I'm happy to keep going or we can go to someone else.

**CHAIR** - I will let you do another one because the member for Hobart is writing, and then we go back to him.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. That's fine. So, minister, World Environment Day was Monday this week, and the theme this year was 'beatplasticpollution'. We've also seen businesses across Australia transitioning away from the use of single use plastics, very pleasingly. In some mainland states, the Plastic Free Places program is run by Boomerang Alliance, and it's removed over a million pieces of problematic single use plastic from the environment through their program. To do that effectively, a legislative incentive, such as a ban, arguably provides

effective stimulus for change. So, given that that model is there, what's Tasmania's progress towards bringing forward legislation to look at a ban similarly in Tasmania that we've seen elsewhere for problematic single use plastics?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much. I'm just going to just check with my office for a moment. Thank you very much, Ms Webb. Just confirming on the Boomerang Alliance Plastic Free Places initiative, I understand that there have been some cities or towns in Tasmania who have participated in that with the support from our government as well. I think Burnie was one of them. That that's an initiative which has provided a lot of insight locally into their processes for living without problematic single use plastics. So, we've -

**Ms WEBB** - I was interested to hear about any funding or support we provided at a state level for that program.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I think we've promoted it locally and we've provided some support for that, but it may be that the department can provide us a little bit more detail. In terms of our commitments regarding problematic single use plastics, it is still our commitment to phase out problematic single use plastics across the state by 2025, consistent with the national decision made at the Environment Ministers meeting in April 2021, and reaffirmed in October last year. Our department is collaborating with stakeholders to lead a phase out, first in government facilities and events on public land, by the end of this year. Our agencies are working together to identify challenges and opportunities of implementing the phase out as we build towards our legislative ban, because that's part of the solution, as you mentioned.

Guidelines have been developed to support government agencies and event organisers on a path to plastic free operations. A series of events and event organisers have been supported in endeavours to be plastic free, and educational resources are being developed for schools. Engagement has been ongoing with the Local Government Association of Tasmania and some councils on actions that they are taking to support the phase out and eventual ban. The program of work was allocated \$1 million in funding over four years, which includes development of a comprehensive implementation plan, drafting of legislation, and funding to support businesses in the transition process as well. A research consultancy is well progressed, exploring the capacity within Tasmania for recovery of compostable alternatives to plastic items.

This is pretty important stuff because the ban itself is relatively easy to prescribe. You can ban stuff easily. The issue we need to take some more responsibility for is what replaces the items that we ban. So, if we've got problematic cups and plates and straws and utensils, for example, and they're no longer able to be used, what is it that is brought in to replace them in daily use, and what are the disposal options for them? So, for example, if you have a compostable item which is half full of food, you don't want to put it in the landfill bin because we don't want organics in landfill. But you can't put it in the recycling bin.

We need to be considering what the life cycle is of those products. That requires some work, and I know that Hobart and Launceston in particular are leading the way on that thinking. The other issue we're running into here, as in other states where some of these bans are already in place, is that we're finding that a lot of the items that are used to replace plastics contain other compounds that we don't want to continue into our food production systems.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Like the lining of that cup you're holding.



**Mr JAENSCH** - PFAS, yes. Some of the chemical treatments that make paper and fibre-based products waterproof and heat resistant have been turning up in the organic compost created from them, which in some cases is used to grow food again and put those sorts of compounds back into our food chain. That's a big problem. In New South Wales and South Australia we've spoken to about this, and federally, at the Environment Ministers round tables, this is an issue that I've put on the table and that Minister Plibersek is progressing to try and establish a national standard for recyclable, compostable, disposable food containers that don't contain harmful compounds, and that can be commercially composted.

So, they're the sort of matters we're grappling with right now. We're maintaining our commitment to 2025 as a phase out, but everything we phase out, we have to phase something else in to replace it, and we have to phase in the mechanism for disposing of it at the end of its life.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, minister. It's wonderful to have a lecture about the topic, but I'd rather an answer to the question. So, to phase out by 2025 also means ban legislated by 2025?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's our intention, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. In regard to the funding being provided already to the Boomerang Alliance initiatives in Tasmania?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't have detail on funding to Boomerang Alliance. But Sophie Muller is able to give us a little bit more detail on that.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you.

**Ms MULLER** - Thanks. Through you, minister. So, the work has been largely funded by the Australian Government, but the Tasmanian Government has provided a small amount of top up funding to the tune of \$13 000. As we look to build up this work leading towards the ban, we'll be looking at what business support we can provide, and that's potentially through organisations such as Boomerang Alliance. But that's that work to do.

**Ms WEBB** - There may be more funding towards similar programs as that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you for that.

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

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. I'm just interested in getting a little more detail on the circular economy program.

**CHAIR** - A specific question?

**Mr VALENTINE** - In particular, the delivering of organics waste processing. Can you just give us an understanding as to how broad that is now in Tasmania, and how many councils

are participating in it, and indeed the issues that it's creating in some instances in regard to locations of where the organics waste is being deposited, as to whether or not there are issues that are arising, and what is the public feedback on that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Mr Valentine. In regard to our circular economy investments in organics processing under our circular economy fund allocation, the two major projects that we put resources into have been the Dulverton Waste Management in-vessel composting facility being built up near Railton on the Dulverton site where they have previously been doing windrow composting very successfully for a number of years. So they're now well into the process of constructing this fully enclosed composting system there which gives them greater control over emissions to air, but also leachate into the environment, and they can manage temperature and moisture far better. So there was a \$3 million investment there.

A further \$3 million of state government investment ended up with Barwicks to develop a regional organic based processing facility along similar lines at Boyer to complement their other facilities. So that work is underway as well, and that will contribute towards more capacity to process organic waste from things like FOGO collections in the south, as well as industrial food processing and primary industries waste.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And issues that are coming out of both of those installations, implementations?

**Mr JAENSCH** - To my knowledge, I haven't been made aware of considerable concerns associated with the Dulverton or the Barwicks proposed facility at Boyer. The Dulverton operation has been operating for some time. They're turning it into an enclosed system, it is a new development there. With Barwicks at Boyer, I don't think that that has commenced construction yet, and I haven't heard of concerns about those two specific projects.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The last thing, on crumb tyres recycling, exactly how far has that project gone, and is it delivering?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We've run a request for proposals process, which has closed. That's been assessed. There have been some promising projects identified from that and my department is about to engage with the preferred proponents to see if they're able to proceed with those investments.

**CHAIR** - There's multiple proponents?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There were multiple proponents for that one, yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What use is government making of these projects, I suppose, now they're coming to fruition; the organics waste, is there any way that the government themselves are actually gaining from this in terms of usage of the product, and starting with the crumb tyres.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No. With the organics projects, they'll be commercial operations producing a commercial product at the end. The government may be able to purchase and use that, like anybody else, for landscaping purposes or other matters.

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you doing any research in that regard?

**Mr JAENSCH** - In terms of the government's use of compost?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Government. Yes, government's use.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Not of the compost, but it will make a valuable product more available in Tasmania, and so I'm sure it will come into government use at some stages. With the tyre crumbing plant, what we're looking for there is a commercial partner who can co-invest in creating the capability to process end of life tyres into a form that can be used and that there's a market for. Now, one possible market for that may be in our road resurfacing program, and I know that minister Ferguson's department has been increasingly trialling the use of crumb rubber in road building, and there is a certain volume that that could account for each year, but it would be again, the government in those projects and contracts specifying the inclusion of that material and paying for it through its contracts.

But there are also other uses, and potential uses for that rubber once it has been processed into a bulk material form, as opposed to being piles of tyres. In the process that we've just run, the expressions of interest process or the request for proposals, we're expecting there that there are businesses who are prepared to co-invest in processing the tyres who know that they've got a market for them as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Now, this one is about roadkill, but would this be in this area?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Not ours.

**CHAIR** - No?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Who is it?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That would be minister Palmer. Wildlife. Or transport, roads, I would've thought.

**Ms MULLER** - I'm sorry, I missed the question.

**CHAIR** - Roadkill.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, we'll save it for the chamber. And the duck shooting.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Same.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Same. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Wildlife.

**CHAIR** - So, two questions for this minister when we get back.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's all right. I can put that on notice. That's fine.

**CHAIR** - No, you don't have to. You can ask directly.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Valentine, on that circular economy stuff, both the organics and the tyres, we put, a couple of years ago, \$3 million, or \$10 million forward to start investing in these sorts of projects. In the future, these are the sorts of projects that we expect would be supported from the proceeds of the landfill levy.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I hope nobody from any of the departments are offended, but I'm skipping over 7.2 and going to 7.4, which is Threatened Species, and invite Mr Valentine.

#### **7.4 Threatened Species**

**Mr JAENSCH** - Chair, could I invite Dr Shannon Troy to the table, please. She can assist us on threatened species matters.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Welcome.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thanks, Shannon.

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

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. First and foremost, I'm interested in - can you provide detail on the work of the Scientific Advisory Committee on those species for which a final recommendation has been made during this year?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Are you able to assist us with that one, Shannon?

**Mr VALENTINE** - There's six species I'm interested in the detail.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Which species in particular?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Page 176.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And the performance indicators are at page 164.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The assessment of threatened species status.

**CHAIR** - Threatened species status.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Right.

**Mr VALENTINE** - If you go down, you'll find for 2021-22 and 2022-23, there's seven that have been mentioned there, and I'm interested in a little bit of detail on those and what they are. They've obviously threatened.

**Mr JAENSCH** - One moment.

**CHAIR** - Page 164.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The suggestion from the secretary is that we go to Jo Crisp first on this one. Sorry, Shannon. False pretences.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Jo.

**Ms CRISP** - Through you, minister. So nominations for listing, recent nominations for listing at the Scientific Advisory Committee that were held on 28 March were yellow rice flower, the pretty heath, and swamp everlasting. I'm not going to give you their scientific name unless you would really -

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, please don't. Hansard won't be able to spell it probably.

**Ms CRISP** - I'm sure they could.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Or I won't be able to spell it either. It's not a reflection on Hansard. It's just difficult.

**Ms CRISP** - Now, as at 31 March, the target was seven. The actual was not seven.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, six.

**Ms CRISP** - Six.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Six in 2021-22. Sorry, I said seven, you're right. I said six to start and then corrected it to seven, but that is a target. You're right. The half a dozen.

**Ms CRISP** - I can also give further information about some of our other species if required.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'd be very much interested in the Maugean skate because, quite clearly, that has a high degree of interest from a lot out there in the community, and not all aligned in their views, I imagine. But what is actually happening with the Maugean skate? As far as the department's concerned, what action's being taken to make sure that it does not become extinct?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's a range of initiatives underway in regard to the Maugean skate, and I know that Dr Troy is very keen to speak on it, but I'm going to give you a little quick background to it in that we've been investing in research with IMAS and other partners over the last 10 years or so. Over the last year in particular, there has been a range of actions taken as a result of their latest updates on what - the apparent lack of recruitment in the harbour,

breeding and new generations of the skate coming through, and the IMAS estimates of declining population to critical levels.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Bearing in mind, it is part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Isn't it?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Part of the harbour is, yes. Part of the harbour is. What they've also done is undertaken research in Bathurst Harbour where the skate's previously been recorded, and advised that they believe it's unlikely to have persisted there either, which is really interesting because some of the threatening processes that we associate with the Macquarie Harbour aren't present in Bathurst Harbour.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It doesn't change the fact that we're dealing with a very significant threatened species. In that case, even more so.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. A part of its threatened-ness is the severely limited range that it has, known only to be now in Macquarie Harbour. Over the last year, there's been a range of actions taken, which I might ask Dr Troy to take us through.

**Ms TROY** - Thank you, minister, and through you, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you.

**Ms TROY** - Since last year, there's been a project officer appointed to work solely on Maugean skate. He's been working really hard with stakeholders to bring everyone to the table to discuss the range of threats. In the last few months, there's been a series of workshops and environment remediation, predation, and also ex situ conservation measures. At the end of the month, there's a structured decision-making workshop that will bring all of those workshop outcomes together and come up with a list of priorities. Within the next six months, there'll be a Conservation Action Plan and also the start of ex situ breeding options.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There have been calls, certainly through correspondence to us and publicly, to prioritise the Maugean skate to ensure its immediate up-listing from endangered to critically endangered under the EPBC Act. Obviously, the EPBC Act is a significant act. Are you inclined to support that, minister? It's getting less, you know it's not in Port Davie. You know it's only in one spot in the state.

**Mr JAENSCH** - EPBC is Commonwealth legislation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I understand that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand that the skate's got highest threatened species status possible under our own legislation here in Tasmania, and there's been some other actions that you may or may not be aware of that have been taken recently as well, apart from the development of the listing statement and the work that's underway to build the Conservation Action Plan. But the EPA, in receipt of advice regarding the status of the skate has taken that into account in last year, reducing the total permissible dissolved nitrogen output for the agricultural industry in Macquarie Harbour, which will effectively reduce the amount of feed they're able to use and the amount of biomass able to be produced in the harbour.

There's also been introduction of interim restrictions on recreational gill netting in the Macquarie Harbour as well, as of late last year, to protect the skate in the shallower margins of the harbour as well. There are discussions underway with Hydro Tasmania regarding its role in the changing dynamics of the harbour by altering its inflow from its releases from its dams that end up in the harbour and change the balance of fresh water coming in, with the intent of maximising opportunities for oceanic water to enter the harbour and replenish the oxygen levels in the harbour as well. There's a lot of work being done on a number of fronts.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There's also calls to actually stop all trout and the salmon farming in Macquarie Harbour.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We're very aware of those calls. What has happened progressively over time, including this latest limitation on nitrogen inputs, is that the allowable biomass and agricultural activity in the harbour has nearly halved within the last eight or 10 years. You can ask Mr Ford about that a little bit later on because he's the regulator there. I understand -

**Mr VALENTINE** - And yet, the biological oxygen demand is still pretty low, apparently.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand we're starting to see, from a range of factors coming together, some recovery of the oxygen levels in lower levels of the harbour.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, but are they quick enough? This is the point.

**Mr JAENSCH** - These are matters that maybe you can discuss with Mr Ford later on.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you of a mind to develop a comprehensive recovery plan to give the Maugean skate the best choice of long-term survival?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll be guided by the department and the other scientific advisors in terms of what the most appropriate instrument is. We've got a listing statement. The next stage is the development of a Conservation Action Plan for the species. I understand that the Commonwealth department is, these days, not producing recovery plans for everything. Particularly, it's reserving the recovery plan approach for species that have got more complexity to them because they say it migrate across states, state boundaries, like the orange-bellied parrot. Whereas something like the Maugean skate, which is a very limited and known area, may be best served by having a Conservation Action Plan, which does the same job, effectively, but doesn't involve as much red tape and paperwork that a full-blown recovery plan might take, and the time involved with formalising a recovery plan. Again, Dr Troy might be the best person to speak to about this. I could be making all of this up.

**Ms TROY** - Through you, minister. You're absolutely correct.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There you go.

**Ms TROY** - There's one other piece of information. The Commonwealth government puts in conservation advice as well, which is under the EPBC. That goes alongside our listing statement at a state level, and also with the Conservation Action Plan. Those three things will work together with species.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you for that. Are you in communication with the honourable Tanya Plibersek, the Minister for the Environment, on this particular issue?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am, and I have written to her as recently as this week inviting her to come to Tasmania and to engage with some of the people who've got together in these workshops later this month, and in July as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Supplementary, Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, just a few on that. It's good to hear that the Conservation Action Plan is in process, and I think I heard you say due within the next six months. When did that work on that begin?

**Ms TROY** - Through you, minister. The work on the Conservation Action Plan began this year.

**Ms WEBB** - This year. What was the time, then, prior to that that it was listed but we were neglecting to produce a Conversation Action Plan?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I do want to just check you on neglecting to produce. There was a listing statement produced in October last year. There's a recovery team that's together now, which is working on the - to prepare the Conservation Action Plan. I think this work has been building in stages over time, as the evidence of the - scientific evidence of the threatened species, the threatened status of the skate has escalated. I'm very confident that there has been a proportionate response across many parts of government, regulators, threatened species units, those working with fisheries in the harbour, in a very coordinated way to be having an appropriate response and we'll continue to do so.

**Ms WEBB** - It's interesting. I mean, proportionate and appropriate are interesting descriptions when you consider just how urgently at risk it now sounds like the skate is. I'll move to some other more particular questions about it. In terms of the discussions with Hydro about the inflow change options, is there an expect decision time about when that may or may not be given effect to?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand that Hydro is a participant in some of these workshops that are coming up on planning these matters. I've also been told that the sort of changes that Hydro may be able to contribute may be the sorts of things they need to be prepared to do under certain weather conditions to maximise the effect of them. So it may not be something that there can be a scheduled commencement of but, rather, an agreement and planning with them that under certain conditions where it can assist the recharge of the harbour's oxygen levels, that they take certain actions. But I'd ask, perhaps, again -

**Ms WEBB** - Mainly what I'm interested to hear about is when a decision will be made about beginning that potential action, not a schedule of when it may happen intermittently then under the appropriate circumstances. But at the moment it sounds like we're still discussing with Hydro about the possibility of it, or has it been decided that that will be a measure we start to embark on at the appropriate point?



**Mr JAENSCH** - Do you want to talk to the conservation action plan process that they're involved with?

**Ms TROY** - Yes, so we have been talking to Hydro and, through the conservation action plan process, all of the threats will be identified, and the priority order that they need to be addressed in will be identified at that stage. I'm not aware of further conversations with Hydro though.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. In regard to interactions with minister Plibersek at the federal level can you give us the detail of what measures minister Plibersek has requested regarding protecting the Maugean skate at this point?

**Mr JAENSCH** - In my correspondence with minister Plibersek, she's pointed mainly to things that are currently underway, the engagement of our department with hers through the conservation action plan process, and we've also been able to relay to her the number of actions that are being taken here. We do want the commonwealth to be closely involved in this because they do hold, also, some resources that they typically apply to assist in the recovery efforts for threatened species. We've foreshadowed that we see this is an area where she could usefully invest to help us achieve our objectives under the conservation action plan.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you for that. Have you given me the details of all the measures that minister Plibersek has requested to date regarding the Maugean skate?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. In her letter, minister Plibersek suggests that we both share a sense of urgency about the need to do what we can to prevent this species from becoming extinct, including referring to regulation and management of aquaculture, the hydro involvement with the harbour, and to work with industry on interventions to address nitrogen outputs and improve oxygen levels. So, amongst the matters that I've just relayed that have been undertaken over recent months, we cover many of those items. The minister's department and our department are working together in a series of workshops and groups to identify next step actions and, in her letter and my response, we agree that we will both support those processes.

**Ms WEBB** - Are you able to table the two letters, minister, so we can have them as part of the record?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll take some advice on that.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Then I just have one other query relating to the Maugean skate in terms of the IMAS netting and catch composition data which I believe isn't publicly made available or hasn't been since 2019. There's a query around what's the reason that public access to that data has been withdrawn given the interests that there would be in public accessibility of that data? Would you like me just to repeat the thing? I was interested in the IMAS netting and catch composition data which, from what I gather from information provided to me, used to be publicly available prior to 2019, but hasn't been since. Thus there's a query around why that data is no longer publicly available and whether it can be made publicly available.

## PUBLIC

**Ms CRISP** - Through you, minister. Why it's not publicly available, I imagine, is a question for IMAS and certainly not something that we can really answer.

**Ms WEBB** - So it's not a requirement from the government that that's kept not publicly visible. Minister, just to check.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm sorry, I can't feed your conspiracy there that we're hiding things.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, please, I'm certainly not coming to this with that attitude. I'm trying to understand and I'm sure the people who've asked me to ask the questions also wouldn't appreciate being characterised that way.

**Mr JAENSCH** - IMAS is an independent scientific research organisation. We provide funding to them. They write reports and they publish them. They go on the radio and talk about what they're finding and what they think it means. I think it's a matter for them whether they're publishing raw data or just here's what our science found. What we do know is that I've been briefed through the department and directly from IMAS a number of times about what they're observing, in what they've found with their sampling. We know that they're also looking at, and we're looking with them, at new ways of measuring the population in the harbour that maybe doesn't involve in itself putting the creatures at risk. Because some of their netting in the past has unfortunately resulted in casualties amongst the skate and so there's some new technologies that are being looked at that might enable that to be done without having to touch the creatures themselves. So there's things like that that we've got close working relationships with them on and they're an independent scientific organisation and it's good to see them out sharing what they've found with the public.

**Ms WEBB** - Fine, thank you for that. I just needed to establish that there wasn't a reason from the government's point of view that that wasn't in the public domain. Appreciate the clarification.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. We'll move now to capital investment program. Any questions?

**Ms WEBB** - Sorry, I had another threatened species matter that was separate to the Maugean skate.

**CHAIR** - Is it something that you can't put on -

**Ms WEBB** - No, I can follow it up after.

**CHAIR** - Yes, thank you. So capital investment program. Any questions, members? If not, we'll move directly to climate change. So thank you very much.

**DIVISION 11**  
**(Department of State Growth)**

**Output Group 7**  
**Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (bold)**

**7.2 Climate Change**

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have an item for tabling here if it's of use.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Jo. Thank you, Sophie. I've received a tabling, Crown land services properties sold and settled. Mr Willie, I think this is your request.

**CHAIR** - Yes. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So there's a list of properties there.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Could I thank Mr Jacobi as well, and all of the staff that have supported us here today and the leadup to it.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much and we certainly appreciate the time and effort that goes into preparing for not only our scrutiny but from the other place.

**Mr JACOBI** - Thank you, Chair. Thank you, members.

**CHAIR** - We might just stop for a couple of minutes, thanks, Gay while we do some changes at the table.

**The Committee suspended from 5.10 p.m. to 5.12 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - Please introduce your support at the table, thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Chair. I'd like to introduce Anton Voss, who is the CE of ReCFIT, and Dr Sarah Russell, who is the head of our Climate Change team.

**CHAIR** - Welcome to you both. Welcome back, Anton. We've already seen Mr Voss this week. Do you have a response from a previous question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I do. In regard to the question I responded to regarding Ms Howlett's question about Keep Australia Beautiful. I think it was you, Chair, who asked how many applicants there were. There were 32 schools who submitted applications. 12 were successful.

**CHAIR** - 20 missed out. Oh my goodness.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So we look forward to future rounds and coverage of more parts of our beautiful state, so thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Thanks, minister, we're ready to go, then.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Webb, climate change.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, Chair. So, a question relating to the Climate Change Action plan. Page 13 of the action plan talks about where Tas emissions data comes from, where we get that. It's an Australian Government Greenhouse Gas Inventory, which we know runs about two years behind current time in terms of data. Now, given that this plan only covers a couple of years, how are we going to evaluate progress when the data we're using is over two years old? How do we see what change is occurring with that data that's contemporary to the efforts we're making under the plan, or do we have an alternative way of getting data or doing that sort of tracking?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's an awkward thing to have that lag in the data, and I'll ask Dr Russell to provide a more fulsome response, but we're confident enough in the patterns of emissions data that we do hold and the analysis that was done in our Emissions Pathway report to know where our emissions are coming from and where we need to be putting our efforts, and the types of changes which are possible now, or could be in the future, to address those emissions. We can only work with the information that we've got.

With things like emissions data, because there are lots of different ways of potentially calculating it, it's very important that we stick with what are accepted methods and models and units so that our emissions data reports that we get back from the Australian government are comparable over time, and to other places as well. This way everybody's using the same language. This is why we opt to use those standard emissions data, like those in the report I released yesterday. Dealing with the lag in data, we will only know the full impact of the action that we take a couple of years later, but that shouldn't stop us from doing everything we can where we know that there are emissions for us to reduce now. Is there anything else you could add on the use of that data?

**Dr RUSSELL** - Through you, minister. I'm not sure I have much more to add, other than just sort of pointing out the foundational piece of work we've done in the last couple of years, which is the Emissions Pathway review, which had estimates of where we can reduce our emissions, and we will use some of that, which you would've seen in the action plan, to guide our work through that.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Another short question is can you provide a list of the top 10 diesel users in Tasmania?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know if we can do that.

**CHAIR** - Is that available to be taken on notice or is it something not available?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't think we routinely - we don't hold that information.

**CHAIR** - Fine, that's all we need to know. Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I've got a big chunk here about RV vehicles and government fleet, but I think the member for Hobart might like to quarantine those ones. I'll do my others and then we can come back to that for you. Yes, sorry EV. Did I say RV?

**CHAIR** - RVs are recreational vehicles.

**Ms WEBB** - It's the end of the day. It's the end of four days.

**CHAIR** - I don't mind talking about those.

**Ms WEBB** - Can I ask a question? Thank you. From some of the comments you made in your opening overview around sector emissions reductions resilience plans, and you covered off on some questions I had there already with your comments on some progress commenced on that effort in the transport sector, and we're expecting that by the end of the year. That's what I believe you had mentioned.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Correct. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I just wanted to check in, then, in terms of that plan that's under development. Is it going to include emissions reduction targets as well as the policies to achieve them?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for your question, Ms Webb. As you know through the debate on the amendments to the bill and setting our statewide whole of Tasmania target, we've opted not to set emissions targets for individual sectors, but what we have identified is the profile of emissions for each sector, and through the emissions, reductions and resilience plans we'll be developing with industry, with the community and interested parties on our plan to reduce emissions in those sectors. What we will be able to do for some of those initiatives is to identify the emissions which we're trying to reduce or that may be able to be reduced by taking certain actions. So where the actions themselves are built-around reducing a certain amount of emissions by taking certain steps, then we can document that, but we won't be legislating the emissions reductions from those sources.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Just thought you might have changed your mind, so I've given you a chance to indicate that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, I'm being consistent.

**Ms WEBB** - Another question around the Climate Change Action Plan. Of course, there's a reiteration of the commitment to develop a whole-of-government policy framework to embed climate change consideration into government decision-making by late 2024, as it's stated in that plan, and we know that the need to do that, to embed climate change in relevant government decision-making or in all government decision-making was recommended from that 2016 independent review of that Climate Change Act. It was further contemplated in the 2021 review. We've been thinking about this for a long time, minister, seven years, and 2024 is still some way out, so I'm interested to hear about progress on that and why that progress

can't be made more quickly, given that we've had a long lead-in time to put this in place, and it's going to be fairly essential in making meaningful change across government.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. No, the whole-of-government policy framework is a piece of work that's identified in the action plan for the next two years. I'd ask Dr Russell if she could provide some comment on the process for that and the expected time frame.

**Dr RUSSELL** - Through you, minister, we have commenced work on three really key linked projects to this. So, we've got the whole of government policy framework, which we've commenced scoping and developing a discussion paper to liaise with our government colleagues on. Linked to that piece of work is an emissions reduction resilience plans for government operations, in addition to the state-wide climate change risk assessment. We're integrating and concurrently progressing all of those pieces of work. We are looking forward to convening and liaising with our government colleagues across government on both a corporate approach to emissions reduction resilience, but also a service delivery approach as well.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. With late 2024 being the identified delivery timeframe, what would we expect to see then in place in late 2024 as the culmination of this work? What would we expect to notice in terms of government policy consideration and development from that point?

**Dr RUSSELL** - I can give you some high-level outputs which I think will be available as part of that, so I'm hoping there will be guidelines for government agencies to follow in their decision making, and some resources and some decision support tools, and hopefully some training, which will help. We'll take a capability-building approach to some of this as we do this work. In terms of monitoring and reporting back on that, that will be yet to be decided, I think, at this stage.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, in terms of the implications that flow from that, particularly say, for example, around training that was just mentioned in that answer, is it fair to assume that there will be funding available across government departments in regard to implementing this framework? For example, taking up training opportunities that are available and assisting the embedding of that framework?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. There are new resources in the action plan and the associated money that we've announced to fund the building of the framework. I believe the intention would then be that the framework, and once the initial training, et cetera, has been undertaken, that it would be embedded in the business-as-usual operations of government.

**Ms WEBB** - So, just to clarify though, the action plan, does that have funding involved in it to do the training across the different government departments once that framework is available?

**Mr JAENSCH** - So, there'd be some training development there initially, but the idea would be that this is then operationalised as part of normal government operations beyond that.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you for that. I've got one other area, if that's okay, Chair.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - I've got one up here, so I might do that one and then come back to the Member. The member for Launceston.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think Mr Valentine wanted to go first.

**CHAIR** - Please, somebody take the call.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'll take the call.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'll follow up.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. So, the government is not prepared to take Sectoral Emissions Reduction plan for transport. Is that correct?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No. We're building a plan for transport, absolutely. What we're not doing is legislating a target for that sector, or any other.

**Ms WEBB** - Not just not legislating, but also not putting one in the plan, because it wouldn't necessarily have to be legislated.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well, the plan might include things like further development of our charging network, against which it's very hard to put a specific emissions reduction target, but it assists the development of our EV fleet within the state, and therefore, it has an indirect effect. We need to be able to cater for those matters that have got accountable emissions outcome and those which are enablers.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. Well, let's stick with things that you can do. So, what you could do has been put to us by request to put the questions. Set targets for vehicle electrification to be 100 per cent of all light vehicle sales to be electric by 2030. Are you prepared to commit to that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Why not?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Because committing to electric vehicle sales in Tasmania is something that I think is outside of the normal operations of government. What we have committed to was, as 100 per cent of our government fleet being electric vehicles by 2030.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Good. And you're going to stick to that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. 100 per cent of new bus purchases to be electric by 2025?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have invested in trials of zero emissions buses, including hydrogen and electric buses with a \$6 million investment with Metro to trial them and, subject to them proving and working out how to make that work and how to have the enabling infrastructure in place for recharging, et cetera, we would see, hopefully, electric vehicles deployed in our public transport fleet. But first, we have to work out -

**Mr WILLIE** - Why do you have to trial how to make it work? Why do you have to trial a technology that's used in other states in Australia and around the world. I'm not sure why you have to trial a technology that's widely used.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Because you have to work out how not only to drive the bus, but how to make it work with battery life load, charging times and those sorts of things, so that the business can operate without only having half as many buses because they're that much more expensive, or needing twice as many buses because half of them are offline being recharged half the time. So, they're the sorts of things that the business model needs to be able to absorb and make work in a fleet like Metro's. And for us also to be able to continue to run a public transport system at the lowest possible cost for the users, which is very much part of the idea of public transport in the first place.

So it's, again, a little bit like with our road freight systems which work on very small margins, which are measured in minutes and kilograms in terms of what makes them profitable and effective, the alternative technology may be there, but if you have to carry around a three tonne battery and that eats into your pay load, it might not work for your business. They're the sorts of things that we need to work with Industry, including businesses that we already own, like Metro, to get to the bottom of, and to get the business model working, not just the technology. That's what we're doing. We're working with Industry to find these solutions, not just setting targets and threatening to penalise them.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. Can I go to something that you might be able to say you can do, and that is to provide purchase price incentives, such as a registration waiver to all drivers on an ongoing basis? Introducing a subsidy or rebate of \$3000 or loan scheme of \$15 000.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We currently have, Mr Valentine, a stamp duty waiver for the purchase of new electric vehicles.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Registration waivers?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's been a registration waiver in place for hire and fleet businesses purchasing them.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So why not for the general public?

**Mr JAENSCH** - What we're proposing under our new action plan is a grant program to assist and support people purchasing electric vehicles. We're also considering electric bikes and scooters within a grant program there, and also provision to support people to install charging infrastructure in their homes, which is another cost that people face when they buy their first electric vehicle.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What about raising consumer awareness about buying EVs. Are you looking at a program to go out and spruik this?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Valentine, Dr Russell will talk to us briefly about the Electric Vehicle Working Group and their roles.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is this in conjunction with the AEVA?



**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Dr RUSSELL** - Through you, minister. The Electric Vehicle Working Group has been established since around 2017.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, I realise that.

**Dr RUSSELL** - It has both departmental and external people on it. It's been a really productive working group. We've got kind of four key things that we work through within that group. One of those things is charging infrastructure, one is advocacy at a national level, and one is raising education and awareness. So, over time we've supported E-bike shows, Try and Drive days, and try to support their provision of information around electric vehicles in terms of their benefits and also answering any questions in relation to the barriers, for example range anxiety which has been an ongoing issue.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, well obviously that is an issue for some and it's improving as battery technology becomes better. What about ensuring resources spent on de-carbonisation of heavy vehicles like trucks and buses given their carbonisation potential. Have you looked at that and would you commit to looking at that more precisely or more particularly.

**Mr JAENSCH** - A couple of examples and I know that Mr Voss is busting to talk to you about this as well because it links across to another area of his responsibilities as well. But as we mentioned before we've got a \$6 million investment in trialling of electric buses with metro but also an allocation of \$11 million to evaluate hydrogen buses in Tasmania as well. We've referred to the development of the Emissions Reduction and Resilience plan for the transport sector.

As part of our action plan we have set aside \$2.3 million so that at the end of this year when the Transport Emissions Reduction plan is fully developed with the transport sector. We fully expect that that will include initiatives that are about trialling zero or lower emissions technologies for heavy freight in the state by partnering with a freight operator to purchase and demonstrate a hydrogen or electric vehicle for example and get it on the road on the run. We've put aside \$2.3 million to implement priorities from that Transport Emissions Reduction plan around the end of the year when it's completed.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you aware there is a truck company that's actually looking at electric trucks and the changeover of batteries.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Janus company? Yes, we've met with them and they're an exciting technology. There's also an organisation that is hoping to provide re-fuelling stations for hydrogen powered heavy freight vehicles in Tasmania and they're working on their hydrogen production facility as part of that and every week we hear about new types of opportunities so what we want to be able to do is to hear from the industry about what are the critical issues it needs to solve and then as we have with the waste tyre re-processing and the organics processing, put a proposition together that we can go to market and look for a commercial partner to co-invest with us to get something to happen here that the industry can use to drive change.

## PUBLIC

**Mr VALENTINE** - So how many applications have you received under the Emissions Reduction Loan Scheme?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Emissions Reduction Loan Scheme. That's the one that they re-purposed. We had this discussion yesterday. I'd like Dr Russell to talk about that one because that was announced some time ago.

**CHAIR** - I think it's just a question and answer, thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It didn't commence for a range of reasons. It's now being reviewed and will be re-launched is the answer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So, the answer to that is no.

**Mr JAENSCH** - But the scheme and its capacity is still preserved and will be under way again soon.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - My questions are related to electric vehicles. I have a constituent that comes to me quite regularly with questions about electric vehicles and brings me lots of issues.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'd be happy for you to write them through to us.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well you might want them, or you might not. He sends me pictures of the buses in Paris that catch on fire because of the batteries and a few other issues. But one of the issues - the latest one he's raised with me with regard to and I know the TT-Line's not, you know - but that we charge electric vehicles, and my understanding is that we do charge electric vehicles on the TT-Line. I know I've asked the question in the past about the firefighting capacity particularly with electric vehicles. It's just that Tesla is now sending their EVs at 50 per cent charge because of the danger of charging their cars on ferries. I was wondering and as I said I appreciate you know we're crossing two lines, but they are electric vehicles. The charging capacity or the charging of these vehicles on particularly ferries. What do you consider about it, the issues that are being raised.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm not well-briefed on those matters. They might be matters for products and safety standards in transport. Particularly for TT-Line, which would have done their risk assessments on these matters.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Sure. But even the charging. The ones in Paris - the Paris buses they were saying they were being charged at the time when in the street they caught on fire. Are we looking at with electric vehicles the incidents of fires with - well, they've got the lithium batteries and we know that they can just explode.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Any technology that we seek to introduce we need to rely on and understand the safety and the standards that they need to be produced for to operate -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Particularly though when we're looking at by 2030 of going all electric.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - But what we also have to realise as well is that we've been quite happy for a very long time driving around with you know 10 gallons of explosive fuel in our fuel tank.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Probably not quite the same but.

**Mr JAENSCH** - But it could explode and so there are risks and there need to be standards and safety precautions with all of these technologies.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Hydrogen's certainly high pressure.

**CHAIR** - We'll be happy to forward that constituent on to the minister's office.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, please refer them through.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'll refer their issues through.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I don't like fobbing people off.

**CHAIR** - No, I don't mean that. Their issues straight to the minister's office.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay I gave you a chance, but we won't accept it now if you don't want to.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, I'm going to give you the issues.

**Mr VOSS** - Obviously as the minister said there's safety issues which do fall outside of climate change portfolio's direct responsibility.

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

**Mr VOSS** - But we have an Electric Vehicle Steering Committee that's between ourselves at ReCFIT and Treasury and Finance. Treasury and Finance obviously hold the - Treasury are responsible for the state fleet so with regard to all of the electric vehicle issues there's a range of working through how that might work in practice. So we have this steering committee which works through various issues, and we had the Tasmanian Fire Service to come and speak to the steering committee at our last meeting around the issues that you're raising and again it's outside our responsibility. I just want to alert you to the fact that they're very aware of it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I realise that. I know they're aware of even batteries. That they have concerns about batteries being loosely I draws and all sorts of things.

**Mr VOSS** - So there are a range of things to consider in that and we didn't specifically raise the ferry matter but part of the charging infrastructure work that we're doing for government, which is some work that we're doing in ReCFIT, doing a sort of a survey as to what might be required, those things will be taken into account when we go forward on -

## PUBLIC

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, I appreciate that. Because the ferry matter's one that I will be asking on the floor.

**CHAIR** - Three questions left in this area and then we are going to invite Mr Ford to come to the table, so would the member for Hobart.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Being the Minister for Climate Change, given the focus on green energy and its direct relationship with climate change does this line item provide an opportunity for you, minister, to work collaboratively with the Minister for Energy and Renewables to provide an avenue for local energy consumers to only purchase 100 per cent green energy should they choose to do so?

**Mr JAENSCH** - To start off with I work very closely and in collaboration with all my cabinet colleagues in their portfolios on a whole range of matters. So I work alongside and in conjunction with Minister Barnett and our ReCFIT business unit has been expressly built to ensure that we've got people working across these issues. So Anton's unit ensures that there is complimentary with the work programs from climate change and in our energy and renewables area as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So will you take that up as an item that would please a lot of Tasmanians, knowing that they're using 100 per cent green renewables, not coal-fired renewables, and however that may be able to be achieved?

**Mr JAENSCH** - How the products that are developed by Aurora - that's slightly outside my purview, but again, Mr Voss is well-positioned to give you a fulsome response.

**Mr VOSS** - Thank you, minister. Through you, just briefly. Obviously, one of the benefits of the state with the two windfarms that went in relatively recently, Cattle Hill and Granville Harbour, were 100 per cent net renewable, so I think the point you're trying to make; Mr Valentine, is it is on a net basis. We do trade across Basslink on that basis. So with regard to the purchase of green energy, ultimately, that'll come down to the electricity retailer. People will obviously go through Aurora or the other retailers that are in the state. There was a point where you could purchase green-specific energy, I'm pretty sure, through Aurora.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, there was.

**Mr VOSS** - They'd deal through various products you can buy on the market, but I'd have to get an update as to where that's at. That's a product that retailers could offer, and Aurora did offer. I just don't know whether they still do. There was a period there where I believe it wasn't that popular because it costs a little bit more to deal with the green certificates, but that's something I can certainly have a look at and get an update on.

**Mr VALENTINE** - A lot of Tasmanians wonder why we can't buy it without cost because we generate it, but anyway that's - thank you for that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Nothing is without cost.

**Ms WEBB** - Someone always has to pay.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. The member for Nelson, two short, sharp questions with short, sharp answers.

**Ms WEBB** - We'll see how we go. That sounds good. Happily, it crosses two of your areas, so I think it's particularly pertinent. In the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25, there's a commitment to - and I'll just quote this - 'Explore options for incorporating Aboriginal knowledge into action on climate change', which is excellent to see in the plan. Then you had a media release yesterday which was relating, with your other cap on, to re-establishing cultural burning practices in Tasmania.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - That was in your capacity as Minister for Parks and also Aboriginal Affairs. There was no mention made in that around a connection with that cultural burning initiative to linking into the climate change commitment that's in the action plan. I just wondered, in relation to those announced Aboriginal Fire Coordinator role and the two Aboriginal Fire Officers role that you announced yesterday, will there be a climate change lens applied to their cultural burning expertise and practices in terms of tying them into the Climate Change Action Plan and the statement in that about incorporating Aboriginal knowledge?

I guess what I'm interested to know, too, is will the new Aboriginal fire professionals be involved in the planned burning in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area? Because that is listed as an adaptation action in the Climate Change Action Plan at page 25. Currently, the Action Plan is silent on whether there will be any Tasmanian Aboriginal control over that or input into that in terms of a program of cultural burning practices. I just wondered if there's a connection there that you can draw for us.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. There are a range of connections there. The cultural burning program is, in large part, to facilitate the ability for Aboriginal people and organisations to have access to parks-managed land, and assistance to be involved with cultural burning, and to inform parks other land management which involve burning in fire-dependent vegetation types to preserve it, and to preserve those cultural landscapes. There's an angle there which is about cultural practice and maintenance of cultural landscapes. It has crossover with fire management and maintenance of fuel reduction management, because a lot of the cultural burning is cool burning undertaken, which has the effect, also, of reducing some fuel loads in those areas as well.

So there's a high degree of crossover, and it will involve a lot of the same people, and a lot of those activities also involve, particularly in the TWWHA, all of those activities will need to be informed by protection and preservation of the outstanding universal value of the TWWHA which includes Aboriginal cultural heritage as well, and Aboriginal people will be involved in that.

**Ms WEBB** - That action under the Climate Change Action Plan relating to planned burning in the TWWHA it is expected that it would cross into and align with cultural burning under the other program.

**Mr JAENSCH** - If not directly, those two initiatives informing each other, I'm confident to say, that there's Aboriginal involvement in the planning for the TWWHA fire initiatives.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Was that it? That was the two questions together?

**Ms WEBB** - The only one that I'm not sure that we covered in relation to the EVs was the government's commitment to have the government fleet by 2030, 100 per cent EV. What proportion are we at currently, and how will the proportion be increased each year across to 2030?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think I can relay the answers from our previous hearings on this.

**Ms WEBB** - We've probably gone and done asked that before.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The percentage is 1.6 per cent currently of the vehicle fleet, noting that we only count vehicles that we own, not those that are on order. There's a healthy number on order.

**Ms WEBB** - Mine's one of them.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There you go. Fantastic, and thank you.

**CHAIR** - Mine won't be.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The aim there is the Treasury will show us by 2030, there will be a lot of electric vehicles for sale at very competitive rates, and that by natural replacement and attrition will be increasingly seeing electric vehicles part of the private fleet in the state, as well as the government's fleet. Our initiative is in terms of how we accelerate that beyond what the natural curve might be, and a large part of the investment that we're making to achieve that acceleration is audits of government facilities where our fleet vehicles are parked and where they might be charged, to work out which parts of government have got the greatest scope to take up electric vehicles, and what they need to be equipped or what they need to install to enable them to provide recharging facilities for them. We're also providing incentives to government departments to offset the additional costs involved in replacing conventional internal combustion engine vehicles with electric vehicles as well, to help get those numbers up earlier.

**Ms WEBB** - Great, so we're up to 1.6. The expectation then, presumably - and it's excellent that we're on the path towards this, but presumably, we're going to do it in a big rush towards the end of the intervening years between now and 2030.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Again, the modelling - and Treasury's very good at this - we will accelerate naturally towards our target, but we just want to try and get there earlier.

**Ms WEBB** - Can you provide me numbers across the years or something, some sort of indication of that so I can understand the expected progression? Just data.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't have that. You might be able to comment, Mr Voss.

**CHAIR** - Treasury might predict, but they're not the ones that are building them.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. Supply is an issue, particularly right now.

**CHAIR** - Absolutely. We'll ask the member for Nelson. Supply is an issue.

**Mr VOSS** - I was just going to say, that's a genuine thing.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It certainly is.

**Mr VOSS** - One of the things that the Treasurer has done was there was a - there's the motor vehicle list, the V672 contract, which is the manufacturers that the fleet can be bought through.

**CHAIR** - Have you seen the list lately?

**Mr VOSS** - Don't like the list?

**CHAIR** - There's not much on it.

**Mr VOSS** - That's the issue. That list is going to be renewed, but in the process of doing it, it's quite a large procurement, the Treasurer has allowed some exemptions from the list to try and get some additional manufacturers on which do electric vehicles. Tesla would be an example, Polestar would be another example, to try and give some more flexibility around that because there is a genuine supply issue.

**CHAIR** - I think the member for Hobart just decided not to retire.

**Mr VOSS** - I know, for example, a Toyota RAV4, which is a very popular vehicle, there's a very, very long wait time. I understand some of those other ones I mentioned have a much shorter wait time. Part of that is a supply issue, and as I say, the government is trying to do things to increase flexibility, to increase the availability of supply for electric vehicles. We can't control the global supply chains, unfortunately.

**Ms WEBB** - My question wasn't meant to be a criticism.

**Mr VOSS** - No, no.

**Ms WEBB** - It was really just trying to understand what this trajectory would be between now and 2030, just so we understand what to expect.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Will you ease in with hybrids as well, or it has to be wholly electric?

**Ms WEBB** - If you can't supply wholly electrics -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I was just thinking if you could put some hybrids on the list as well.

**Ms WEBB** - The hybrids are taking forever as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They are on the list.

**Mr JAENSCH** - A proportion of the vehicles that we're counting as electric vehicles are plugin hybrid electric vehicles.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - When you say 2030, all of the vehicles won't have to be completely electric? Some can be hybrid, which obviously makes it a little easier.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's what we're counting at the moment. Increasingly in the future, fully electric vehicles will become more the thing.

**Mr WILLIE** - Some manufacturers have committed to only producing electric vehicles from 2025.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can I say, minister, are you prepared to work with your Federal Environment Minister to make sure that there are incentives for electric vehicles to be bought here by having the emissions arrangement changed? Because we get dumped with internal combustion engines here because our restrictions aren't tight enough.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand the Federal Australian Government has electric vehicle strategy that involves lower emission standards for vehicles, with a view to addressing the issue that you're talking about. So we have greater availability -

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's half the problem, and that's why it takes 18 months.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Consultation is closed on their proposed approach to that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay, thanks.

**CHAIR** - I expect that this committee will talk about this for many years to come, so thank you. We're going to now move to the EPA and we're going to invite Mr Wes Ford to come forward and for the minister to just sit back.

## **DIVISION 13**

**(Department of Treasury and Finance)**

### **Output Group 5**

**Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania (bold)**

#### **5.1 Climate Change**

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. Thank you, Anton. We don't very often get to actually put questions directly. We usually have to go through the minister but, as we've been informed, that you can just sit. Thank you. Thank you and we welcome the Director of the EPA, Environment Protection Authority, Mr Wes Ford, and I'll invite the member for Launceston to commence on 1.1, which is Environmental regulation. Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair. Just looking at last year's Hansard and noticed the \$2 million that was for more staff, more employees. At that time, you didn't have a full list of the recruitment. I'm just wondering how it's actually going now. I think it was 16 staff that were being recruited. Have you now got a list of the 16 staff and where they're located? Or have you got some positions still vacant?



**Mr FORD** - So yes and yes. As at 1 December 2021, we had 102 staff. As at 31 March, we had 116 staff. And by the end of the financial year, we'll be close to about 122 staff.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can you tell me, with the additional staff, where they are all located because, I think, the last time we weren't really sure where they were going to be. I'm happy to take it on notice if it's easier as well.

**Mr FORD** - No, I can rush through it fairly quickly.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes. No, that's good, thank you.

**Mr FORD** - So in terms of the compliance area, we've gone from two compliance officers to seven. So that's five additional compliance positions. They are based regionally in Devonport, Launceston and Hobart. Two in each and a third one in Launceston. We have additional assessment staff. Four additional assessment staff have gone into Hobart. We have an additional air quality scientist and noise quality scientist and water quality scientist. Those three additional people are in Hobart. We have put additional regulatory staff into Launceston and now into Devonport. We've moved from Ulverstone to Devonport.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I note the employment of the manager of environmental management position who engages with the community and acts as a conduit back into the community and local government. Can you tell me a little bit more about what sort of activities this position has participated in over the last year, so exactly?

**Mr FORD** - So the manager of environmental engagement is a band-aid position held by a female staff member. One of her key roles is to support the board, the EPA board, in their processes. She's been at the centre of the process for the release of the environment information project. She sits on a number of committees that EPA needs to be on but, from a point of view of a potential conflict, doesn't have regulatory staff on. She sits on stakeholder engagement with TasPorts, sits on the State Emergency Management Recovery Committee. A number of things like that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. Last year at estimates we were advised that there were no committed benchmarks for circular economy initiatives but they would be reported on. Are you able to provide me with a summary of the reporting which has been done on the circular economy initiatives? Without benchmarks, I'm wondering how do we know what's working and what's not?

**Mr FORD** - The circular economy initiatives are a matter for the department, not for the EPA.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Okay, well, I'll relieve you of that one then. That was an easy one. I'll give you another one. Can you provide information on how we're meeting our targets to phase out single use plastics across the state? Is that one for you?

**Mr FORD** - No, that's one for the department as well.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I reported on that in the last part.

## PUBLIC

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, I probably must have missed that but I will ask you one more question and I'm sure this one's for you. Wood smoke particulates.

**Mr FORD** - Yes.

**Ms ARTIMAGE** - How are we actually going with the wood smoke particulate, particularly in the Tamar Valley? Is that still the issue that it was? Has it increased? Decreased?

**Mr FORD** - It is still the issue it was. We're just about to go into winter. EPA has just launched its Burn Brighter campaign to encourage people to do the right thing. But we still have hotspots in a number of places in the Tamar Valley, Longford, Launceston, in New Norfolk, down at Geeveston, where, as we enter into winter, people's wood heaters do cause wood smoke and it is an ongoing problem.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The last one, Chair. I just couldn't finish without asking about the Tamar River.

**Mr FORD** - What about the Tamar River? Because the answer depends on what the question is as to whether it's me or the minister.

**CHAIR** - Who's going to clean it up?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, well, I think that's not one for Wes but I think I've asked you in the past regarding how many issues that we've actually had raised with regard to contamination and how many times the EPAs been involved or, I think, it's how many spills have we actually had that you've had to investigate, that have been reported to you. Sewage spills.

**Mr FORD** - Specifically on the Tamar River and specifically for wastewater treatment.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Particularly, yes.

**Mr FORD** - Because I'd have to take that on notice.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think generally I do ask you that one.

**Mr FORD** - Just in terms of wastewater treatment plants, we've had more than 600 notifications in the last 12 months by TasWater. They're not all for the Tamar, but if you wanted specific notifications for the Tamar then we'll take that on notice.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, mine's particularly for the Tamar River. I think that's normally where we have them with the - was it 9260-odd houses with the joint sewer and water, and the issues they've still got.

**Mr FORD** - So we have a new notification management system which has been now operating for about 18 months. We can report on regions. We can report by types. It's now very easy to get the notification information back out of the system.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, that'd be great, thank you. Thank you, Chair.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - Just a quick one following on. Thank you for the staffing numbers you provided. I've just been checking with departments, and I'll check also with the EPA, in terms of use of consultants. You've got a wonderful staffing compliment now. Are there any circumstances in which you also use consultants and, if so, can you provide us with the details of any of those projects and the costs against them? Just for probably the last financial year and any in this financial year that we're in currently.

**Mr FORD** - Yes, Ms Webb, we have used a number of consultants. They have all actually been associated with our - or primarily with our building operations. We made use of De Jong & Sons Construction in Ulverstone - or at Devonport, for refitting the office in Devonport as our lease expired in Ulverstone and it was too small. Do you want prices on those?

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. The project and the price.

**Mr FORD** - Okay, so in relation to De Jong in Hobart. They also supplied all the office fit out for the Hobart facility.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So these are consultancies.

**Ms WEBB** - Consultancies.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Or are these contracts to provide services.

**Mr FORD** - So I can do both.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Supplying furniture and fit out.

**Mr FORD** - If you just want to do consultancies, I can just do consultancies.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, sure.

**Mr FORD** - Sorry, thank you, minister.

**Ms WEBB** - And depending on how long the list is, you're welcome to table.

**Mr FORD** - We have three consultancies. Shane Mann & Associates for two positions, work doing the fit out in Hobart, Elizabeth Street, at \$37 555, and Shane Mann & Associates for the services associated with Devonport at \$86 620. And KPMG for services to develop a business case for the revamp of the Tasmanian air quality monitor system and that's \$42 757.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. So just a quick question. What arrangements have been implemented, with the department and the environment management group within Natural Resources and Environment, to make sure the legislative framework within which this output group here operates is maintained at the highest contemporary standard?

**Mr FORD** - I'm not sure I understand the question but I think I would respond in several ways. Firstly, the minister has already announced a review of the legislation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Understand that.

**Mr FORD** - So that's a matter for the department and we will participate in that process. The minister has also announced an intent to make some amendments to EMPCA. We're involved in that process. It's a matter for the minister and we will have input into that process. As far as the regulations are concerned, at this point in time, none of the regulations are immediately up for review, and I would expect when they are up for review we'll be consulted on those reviews.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So there are formal avenues for you to raise concerns about legislation not being capable of being able to properly address some of the concerns that you have out there in the environment?

**Mr FORD** - Yes, and I meet with deputy secretary, Sophie Moore, and general manager, Jo Crisp, generally on a fortnightly basis, and we're generally discussing a range of things in terms of a legislative area.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Any other questions in this regulation area? If not, I'll move to Environmental Assessment.

## **1.2 Environmental Assessment**

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. I'm just interested in the performance information wares. Just the percentage of assessments undertaken within the statutory timeframe, and there was quite a drop from 2020-21 to 2021-22, and there's a note there saying there was a greater workload on the assessment branch. If there's some more information available.

**Mr FORD** - So our assessment workload has gone up from having, on average, around about 50 to 60 assessments on the books to somewhere over 100 at this point in time. So our resources have gone up, the workload has gone up more. A number of large projects has gone up significantly. So, for example, our involvement in Bridgewater Bridge, Robbins Island, North East Wind; there's significant agenda for the hydrogen area. So that's having some impact.

Most of the slowdown from the point of view of the statutory process is actually tied back to COVID processes as well, because there are statutory steps we have to go through and there's actually only a relatively short time at the completion of the representations process to get matters to the board. Increasingly, those matters are being delayed, not just by COVID impact on our staff, but by COVID impact on the consultants. So that's something we expect to turn around in the next year or so.

**Mr WILLIE** - And that's the same for the percentage of planned audits of premises undertaken within scheduled timeframes as well, is it?

**Mr FORD** - One of the things you'll note, Mr Willie, is that we've actually got a couple of new performance managers we've added, because one of the things that our performance managers haven't really done - they've only in the past measured things we've planned. They

haven't actually measured what we don't plan. As you will probably see in the coming years, most of what we do is actually unplanned. We respond to incidents.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. There is unplanned in here.

**CHAIR** - And members of parliament.

**Mr FORD** - And very well as well.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We'll now move to 1.3, which is Finfish Regulation.

### **1.3 Finfish Regulation**

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you, Chair. I'll just start off by asking for, in terms of the line item here in the budget papers in the allocation against it. So for 2023-24 it's \$835 000 there allocated. Can you give us a breakdown of what that covers?

**Mr FORD** - You actually need to look. There's also another allocation for finfish. So there's the consolidated allocation and then there's the allocation that's available through the finfish levy.

**Ms WEBB** - As an income?

**Mr FORD** - As an income.

**Ms WEBB** - Perhaps then if you could give us those two totals and then how that breaks down in terms of how you use it. Fees and fines. Is that the line item?

**Mr FORD** - In the expenses by output. Which I actually don't have a table number on this printout from the website.

**Ms WEBB** - It's 13.2. Table 13.2. So it brings it up for 2022-23.

**Mr FORD** - I'll read out the figures. It's \$835 000 from revenue appropriation and \$814 000 from the special purposes account.

**Ms WEBB** - \$1.649.

**Mr FORD** - \$1.649.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**Mr FORD** - So that is the money that sits within the operation of the salmon regulation section. That, by and large, covers staff. So at the point in time, the budget point, we had 12 staff funded out of that. From that, we contribute to the service level agreement for those 12 staff with NRE, which provides for computers and computer licencing. There's contribution to use of vehicles. There're opportunistic times to invest in some projects through IMAS with FRDC. There's a little bit of money that's gone into that. We can provide a full breakdown of that budget from an expenditure point of view.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. That would be useful.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**Ms WEBB** - Can you explain then, too, in terms of the anticipated fees there that we have? And also then an appropriation to give that total cost, there was that understanding that we would be fully funding regulation of the finfish industry from the fees and levies. But it looks like we're half-funding it, in that sense. Can you explain how that commitment to fully fund sits alongside the figures?

**Mr FORD** - I think the key point is if you go back to the budget output summary itself, in relation to finfish regulation, there's comment in the budget papers around having an increase that reflects the impact - it reflects the changes the government is going to make. So at the moment, the government has indicated that their intent is to move to full cost recovery commencing on 1 July.

**Ms WEBB** - Right. In the future. Sure. 2023-24.

**CHAIR** - 1 July?

**Mr FORD** - 1 July. So the department has been running a process to identify what those full costs are, and minister Palmer has said, both in this place and other places, that she expects that cost to the industry in terms of that fee to about double. So at the moment, what I can say is that our full costs as they stood about now were about \$2.4 million for salmon. With the discussions that I've been having with the minister about increased work for the salmon industry to deliver on the new environmental standard, our costs will rise to about \$3.3 million, and I would expect that that will be recovered through the process.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. Is it possible to get a breakdown then of what you expect to be in that full profile once we've implemented the standards and are in that sort of new phase of things?

**Mr FORD** - I would imagine minister Palmer will probably be releasing that.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**Mr FORD** - So the department is in discussions -

**Ms WEBB** - Sits with the department.

**Mr FORD** - with industry about what that is. So I would imagine minister Palmer would want to be fully transparent about what that is.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. If I can also then ask about the salmon portal. Is that still a responsibility of the EPA?

**Mr FORD** - The salmon portal was never the responsibility of the EPA. It's a matter for the department. We contribute information to it on a quarterly basis.

**Ms WEBB** - Now, there's observations made about less information being available on that portal now. Have you had discussions around the content of the portal? Does EPA have input into what will be represented on the portal?

**Mr FORD** - Yes, we've been involved in discussions, given that the government has committed to revamp that as part of its 10-year plan. Yes, we were involved in those discussions.

**Ms WEBB** - Do you have any concerns about the fact we've now got the three main companies here being foreign owned and ASIC reporting is no longer then required for those companies. So we've immediately lost a source of information and transparency around the operations of the companies here in this state. Do you have a concern about that loss of information and transparency and how we might need to find that disclosure of information through another source?

**Mr FORD** - From an environmental point of view, the operations of those companies, they're required to produce annual environmental reviews for their operations, both their hatcheries and their marine operations. Those annual environmental reviews are required to be publicly available, and with the changes to the legislation that went through last year, we will be making those reviews publicly available. So we will be putting more information into the public, even if the companies are not.

**Ms WEBB** - Or help plug that gap to some extent.

**Mr FORD** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - From what I gather, later this year, around November this year, many environmental licences relating to this area will expire, and I'm just interested to hear about your approach to dealing with that. It seems like it will be a bit of a rush of activity, potentially. What's your intention in terms of the review and reconsideration of those licences, and then potential to be amending or changing or fully reconsidering them? How's that going to work with your staffing and resources?

**Mr FORD** - Firstly, I will caveat my response by saying that I have yet to make statutory decisions, so I can't prejudice those statutory decisions. However, I can tell you from an intent point of view, in relation to rolling out the environmental standard, there will be a number of licence changes that will have to be made across the board to the marine licences. Under the Act, I'm required to make those changes using s42(P) of EMPCA, so that has a statutory process which I must go through. And that process requires notification to industry of changes and explanations as to why those changes are going to occur.

The licence renewal process is a separate process under the Act, and then the licence renewal process does not have a component associated with environmental performance. So, if I'm going to change the licences, I need to use the 42(P) process. Given the licences are all going to expire this year, what in all likelihood I'll end up doing, is renewing them all for one year so that we can then go through all the licence changes during 2024 on the expectation the environmental standard will be made later this year, and by the time we get to September or October, we'll be able to actually start implementing the changes.

**Ms WEBB** - Right. A year down the track. Okay. Is that across the board. Is that the approach you've taken with the recent renewal of licences flow-through hatcheries as well? Because my understanding is that we've recently rolled over a range of sites, or range of licences relating to flow-through hatcheries, and they haven't been given updated conditions or changes to those licences. Is that because you took the same approach there?

**Mr FORD** - When the hatcheries came under our control, they all had very different licence conditions, so there was a suite of them. They were a combination of predominantly permits issued by councils and their conditions were very variable. So, initially some of those facilities have had very limited conditions, others have had more substantive conditions. So, as we're moving through to developing an environmental standard for freshwater hatcheries, those conditions will be standardised over time. What we have been doing is working with the priority hatcheries, the ones that we believe are of a greater environmental risk, and we've been progressively changing some of those. So, we've changed and imposed additional conditions on some licences, but not other licences. We've been taking the industry through an intended program of change over the last couple of years.

**Ms WEBB** - And that set of standards you mentioned that will come into play in relation to the freshwater hatcheries, what's the timeline on the implementation of those standards?

**Mr FORD** - That's a matter for the minister, because the minister makes the standards.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**Mr FORD** - But my understanding is we'll be working through that during 2024.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - There's going to be a few questions for the minister when we get back in the house in a couple of weeks.

**Ms WEBB** - Won't there be. Indeed. I just want to move to another area now that we spoke with the minister earlier around the Maugean skate in Macquarie Harbour, and the minister mentioned - and I don't want to verbal the minister, so please jump in, minister, if I've misconstrued the comment you made. But the minister did say that in terms of the EPA and the Maugean skate, that the status of the skate and the risk there has been taken into account by the EPA in relation to setting total dissolved nitrogen levels in Macquarie Harbour. I hope that was an accurate description.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think that sounds about what I said, yes.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm interested to hear about when that has occurred most recently, and, given the current situation around the state and the information that's come to light in fairly recent times, what the EPA is undertaking in that space at this moment?

**Mr FORD** - Happy to respond to that, and no, you didn't verbal the minister. I think in order to provide an understanding in terms of a fuller response, I need to take you back to 18 months ago. I had a biomass limit in the harbour and under the marine farm development plan controls, and over about 18 months ago, I became concerned that the industry was starting to increase its utilisation of the harbour within the biomass limit. The biomass limit is a very



broad-brush approach, and what was apparent was that over the course of two years, industry had increased their feed input by about 13 per cent. So, increased feed, increased production, increased nutrient loading, reduced oxygen.

**Ms WEBB** - Presumably bigger fish being put in.

**Mr FORD** - Yes. Growing bigger fish.

**Ms WEBB** - And needing more food.

**Mr FORD** - Really trying to flatten the curve out. I advised industry that it was going to be my intent to introduce a nitrogen cap. A nitrogen cap is a far more precise control because it limits the nitrogen in the feed. In entering into that discussion, I advised the industry it was my intent to bring them back to a slightly lower level. In the same time, we were getting advice from IMAS about concerns about the skate, in terms of the work that was ultimately led to the report that was presented a couple of weeks ago. As a consequence of that report, Jason Jacobi, in his capacity as the Acting Secretary, wrote to me late last year expressing some concerns about skate and taking skate into account.

I accounted for that in my reduction, and I reduced the nitrogen limit and brought it back, so it was basically a 10 per cent reduction on what they were doing last year. That operates the way nitrogen works. It's allocated for 12 months. So, it commenced on 1 September, and we are tracking it, and we'll look at where we are now, and then we'll obviously have a further consideration when the - well, it's set for two years. If things are not looking particularly good, then I would, of course, review those.

**Ms WEBB** - And presumably, that information about those levels and where you've set them is available on the EPA website so people can encounter that?

**Mr FORD** - Yes. All those management decisions are documented on the EPA website.

**Ms WEBB** - And did this trigger any additional monitoring in the Macquarie Harbour in relation to the regulation of finfish farming there?

**Mr FORD** - One of the things we have done is had an independent review of the monitoring program undertaken in Macquarie Harbour.

**Ms WEBB** - Is this the Scottish Association of Marine Science review?

**Mr FORD** - Yes. So, we're in the process of now looking at implementing some of those recommendations.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. And that may include modifying the BEMP that's relevant in the harbour?

**Mr FORD** - Yes. That's correct.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. What's the timeline on that then?

**Mr FORD** - That's work which will be inevitably into 2024 now. We've been involved in the day-to-day regulatory work. We're also having to spend a fair amount of time working with the department on the environmental standard and the supporting technical standard. So, those two things have taken priority at this point in time, rather than redesigning the BEMP for not only Macquarie Harbour, but for the D'Entrecasteaux Channel as well. So, this work will come back to next year.

**Ms WEBB** - In regard to replacing the biomass limit with the total dissolved nitrogen measure instead, which is, I understand that that's a more nuanced way to ensure what the impact is, how regular is the monitoring of that? I'm just wondering about how much leeway there is for that to veer into unacceptable levels before it's picked up.

**Mr FORD** - So, the companies are monitoring it on a daily basis.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**Mr FORD** - Because it's a calculated tool. It's a computer-based model that models what is happening. So, that happens on a daily basis. The companies give us information on a monthly basis, and as we get closer to the end of the year, we'll increase that to getting information on a weekly basis. So, with the biomass limit, in the last couple of years, we went to weekly reporting as we were approaching the summer peak to ensure that they were staying under the limit. We'll be doing that again once we get in to July, and that last couple of months to make sure the industry looks like tracking, so they are under.

**Ms WEBB** - Is that monitoring data then available publicly through your website or a portal of some sort so that it can - as well as you, the EPA, being able to keep an eye on that and be assured of where it's sitting, that it's publicly visible too? Knowing the interest that's out there in this sort of matter.

**Mr FORD** - So, that form of public data is currently not available, and that'll be one of the things we'll be working out with the environmental standard as how we make that sort of data available. It's a challenge because one of the problems with providing such fine scale information on a very short period of time, is then each company then know where each other stand, and we actually have to be mindful of the requirements of the ACCC. So, releasing information a little bit further down the track, once the fish have already been sold, in my view, it's less likely to be anti-competitive, trying to release information while they're getting fish to the market. There's those competition issues that are -

**Ms WEBB** - It's an interesting balance. Isn't it?

**Mr FORD** - It is.

**Ms WEBB** - Between protecting commercial interest versus demonstrating public confidence in environmental protection, which is presumably the EPA's primary focus, and certainly the interest of the community. One final quick one, if I may, Chair. You would understand, following on from the inquiry we conducted in recent years around finfish farming, and the issue of noise coming up quite a lot in that inquiry. I'm interested to know, since we discussed during the inquiry the lack of capacity for EPA at that time to engage in potentially regular noise monitoring, or even be able to respond to noise complaints relating to the industry. Is

this an area that you've got more capacity in now under the new model of the EPA and under the new staffing structure?

**Mr FORD** - Yes, and yes. As part of the additional resources, noise is just not a problem in this industry. We've been under capacity in noise for some time, so we have appointed an additional noise scientist. But that won't cover the issues in terms of salmon, so we will be recruiting an additional person which is factored into the full cost recovery process. We expect within a few months, we'll have three noise scientists rather than the one that we had 18 months ago.

**Ms WEBB** - One of those three will be allocated towards this industry, potentially?

**Mr FORD** - The industry will be paying for one of those positions, but in practical terms, the workload will be distributed across three. I don't believe it's appropriate to have one person solely dependent on one industry. They need to work as a team.

**Ms WEBB** - Equivalent of one person's capacity to the industry.

**Mr FORD** - Yes, and we'll need to be able to, of course, demonstrate that we are doing work in the space.

**Ms WEBB** - What difference do you expect that to make in terms of the responsiveness to complaints? Given that it's been such a sticking point in difficulty in recent years.

**Mr FORD** - To start with, we've already purchased some equipment, but not enough, and with additional capacity, we've been able to get some independent monitoring. One of our challenges in the noise space is just lack of data. People assert noise impact, but aren't able to demonstrate it with data.

**Ms WEBB** - Because they don't have the equipment in their backyard.

**Mr FORD** - They don't have the equipment in their backyard, and when we go out and measure noise, people's perception of impact versus statutory limits don't necessarily align. In the process, we're just doing some noise - kicking off a noise monitoring piece of work in Bell Bay. Bell Bay is, in fact, the area that gets the most noise complaints in the state for obvious reasons, in terms of the industrial area there.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Supplementary, and then we've still got some output to go.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With respect to the taking of those noise measurements, they can be unannounced? You don't have to communicate with a company to arrange that?

**Mr FORD** - I would say that's not how it works in practice. The companies may now know. We've undertaken a number of investigations across the state where the companies don't know that we're monitoring the noise, but the landowners, the complainants do because typically, to get any value out of the noise equipment, you need to run it for at least two to three weeks. We need to put expensive equipment in a secure location, and we obviously need people's permission to do that. Does that mean we tell the companies? No.

We did an investigation in relation to a salmon complaint with one of our land-based facilities where we went in, put equipment in without telling the company the equipment was there, collected the information, presented the company with the findings, and told them to fix the problem, and then went back and monitored it afterwards. We will do more of that as we have more equipment, more capacity.

**Ms WEBB** - Can I double-check about what you report on in terms of breaches or any notices you issue, or any penalties that you issue? Is that all reported? Is it just an annual report or is it something that's ongoing?

**Mr FORD** - In our annual report, we will be reporting more than we have in the past. We will be reporting on the number of infringement notices we've issued, and I can say at this point in time that this financial year, we're up to 33 to date.

**Ms WEBB** - In the finfish area.

**Mr FORD** - No, just in total.

**Ms WEBB** - Right.

**Mr FORD** - Across the entire area. At the moment, we're still trying to work out the details of how we're going to report at a level. Court prosecutions are relatively straightforward because you report on court prosecutions, they're in the public arena. Naming and shaming people in court has not been something people are concerned about. Publishing information about infringement notices is problematic, I think, across all walks of government. People don't necessarily get named and shamed if they've picked up infringement notices, so that's something we've got to look at and probably take some further advice, particularly maybe from the attorney, around how -

**CHAIR** - MPES have stopped doing that.

**Ms WEBB** - Certainly, you could report in terms of finfish as a category.

**Mr FORD** - Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Finfish regulation as a category and the notices issued under that so that we could at least have that granularity.

**Mr FORD** - Yes, and that's what we're looking at at the moment. Also reporting to the level of things like warning notices we issue as well, because not all of it's just about infringement notices. Yes.

**Ms WEBB** - Thank you. I appreciate that.

**CHAIR** - Working with the community, and not against them. Sensible approach. Very much appreciate your time, and we'll be looking for the annual report for some more detailed information, but certainly what we received today was very useful for members. We very much thank you, Mr Ford. We will suspend the broadcast and have some changes, because we'll now move to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Chair, and thank you very much, Mr Ford.

**The Committee suspended from 6.26 p.m. to 6.29 p.m.**

**DIVISION 10**

(Department of Premier and Cabinet)

**Output Group 7**

**Community Partnerships and Priorities**

**CHAIR** - I thank the minister again for returning to the table in his capacity as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. And I would invite you to introduce your support team at the table, and provide a brief overview of some key points that you would like to share with the committee. The committee will have a number of questions.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Madam Chair, and thank you, committee members. I also thank colleagues that are joining me at the table. To my right, Jenny Gale, the secretary of DEPAC. To my left, Steve Gall from the Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, and Caroline Spotswood further to my right there, who is our Aboriginal Partnerships and Programs.

**CHAIR** - So welcome, everyone, all new to Estimates for this year. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I reckon Steve and Jenny have seen a few in their time.

**CHAIR** - Yes, they have, but this year, I said.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much. Indeed, and I start by acknowledging Tasmania's Aboriginal people as the original owners and continuing custodians of the land that we are meeting on today and pay my respects to elders and ancestors. I am very proud to be here today in my capacity as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, and I will just provide a quick update on some matters that we have been progressing over the last 12 months.

Over August and September last year, Aboriginal Partnerships, formerly the Office of Aboriginal Affairs, and Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, originally from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, moved to Community Partnerships and Priorities within the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The newly-established division has the responsibility for overseeing and coordinating government's significant Aboriginal affairs agenda, informed by the views and priorities of Tasmanian Aboriginal people and organisations.

Also last year, the Premier and I met with Aboriginal representatives from across the state in Launceston to commence discussions on how truth-telling and treaty should proceed in Tasmania. Based on these discussions and a subsequent nomination process, the government announced the membership of an advisory group comprised of Tasmanian Aboriginal people who can work together with the government to design a process for truth-telling and treaty that is led by Aboriginal people.

The advisory group has been meeting regularly over the past few months and is being supported to undertake whatever work it feels is needed to deliver its role, and I thank them for their

commitment to that work. Importantly, the government is not setting a timeframe or predetermined outcomes for this work: These matters will be determined by the group to ensure this process is truly Aboriginal-led, and I look forward to seeing what they bring us.

We have also had two rounds of consultation to inform amendments to the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995 that we will be legislating later this year, and have continued to consult with and receive feedback from Aboriginal people. That is informing the drafting of a new, stronger Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act. We intend to release a draft exposure bill for further consultation later this year ahead of its introduction to Parliament.

We will continue to listen carefully to all views and to introduce legislation that is effective and balanced, and that provides for the contemporary management and conservation of Tasmania's unique Aboriginal heritage by Tasmania's Aboriginal people. We have also continued to work with and support Tasmanian Aboriginal community control organisations to build their capacity to deliver services with funding provided directly to Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to deliver key programs and services in their local areas through the Closing the Gap capacity building funding program.

The Tasmanian government remains committed to our obligations under the national agreement for Closing the Gap, and delivering better outcomes for Tasmanian Aboriginal people, more opportunity for them and for their families. Thank you very much, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I'd like to open up the first line of questioning to Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you very much.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just on your indulgence, Chair, I have a matter here that was raised in a previous session that we had today which referred to some Aboriginal Heritage processes linked with the EOI process for parks.

I just wanted to provide an addition to my answer regarding the early consideration of Aboriginal Heritage matters, if I could, for clarity. Yes? The addition that I would like to make is to confirm that the Office of the Coordinator General provides the EOI, the Expression of Interest from the proponent, to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania at the same time as it is provided to the Parks and Wildlife Service and these are treated by Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania in a confidential manner.

AHT provides high-level advice only to inform the EOI assessment panel as to whether there are potentially significant Aboriginal Heritage issues or not, if those are known. Once an EOI proposal has progressed and takes more shape the proponent may seek to brief the Aboriginal Heritage Council, but this is not a mandatory part of the process at that stage. And so the Aboriginal Heritage Council usually gets visibility of the proposal once the need for permits has been identified, which is further down the track.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, I appreciate that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much.

**CHAIR** - Mr Valentine, and then I'm going to Mr Willie.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. I'm interested, minister, first and foremost - and I, too, pay my respects to the Aboriginal people who have lived through Tasmania. They have been here a lot longer than we have, and they demand - not demand, they are due that respect. I certainly pay my respect to their traditions and customs, and their elders.

I want to go to the Pathway to Truth-telling and Treaty, which was indeed provided to Premier Gutmann from our previous government by Professor Kate Warner and Professor Tim McCormack and Ms Fauve Kurnadi, and I hope I have got that pronunciation correct, and in particular each of the recommendations made. I want to know what the government has done with this particular document and what it intends to do with all of the recommendations which are provided within it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, thank you very much. The Pathway to Truth telling and Treaty Report was a really significant piece of work, and we are very grateful for the work that they did. There was a range of views - when the report was presented it was important that we made it available to everyone to look at to read and absorb the matters that were raised in it by Aboriginal people, through Professors Warner and McCormack. It wasn't a report to government on what government should do for government to respond to with an action plan.

It was one that we wanted to put on the table, to share with the Tasmanian public, and in particular with Aboriginal people in Tasmania to get their feedback and views on the range of matters raised. There are differing views on various parts of that report. One of the central themes that there was strong support for was for us to progress into a truth telling treaty process, and for that process to be led by Aboriginal people. As a starting point, that's the work that we have sought to put into play.

There are other matters in it that refer to the Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation, to the process and the model for returning land, to aspects that relate to what's happening in the Closing the Gap work and addressing generational trauma and disadvantage amongst Aboriginal people as well. There is a range of actions that are linked back to matters that are raised in that report, but in terms of the broader issue of truth telling and treaty, that is one where we have dedicated some special resources and effort.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So what commitment do you have to working through this, recommendation by recommendation, is the question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well, we haven't committed to working through it recommendation by recommendation. What we want to be able to do is work with those areas where there is a level of consensus and will to move from Aboriginal people in particular, in Tasmania, and one of the earlier areas of interest that whilst the opinions about how we do it differed greatly, there was a strong level of interest across Aboriginal people in the truth telling and treaty process.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So recommendation number 1 in this particular document talks about creating a truth telling commission. Do you see the value in creating a truth telling commission?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Potentially, yes. What we want to do is not be a white government designing a commission for Aboriginal people to do truth telling through. Instead we have sought to engage with Aboriginal people who can then consult on and design with us, in a co-design

process, which has their input and involvement from the beginning, of what that process looks like.

So a commission of some kind, or some formalised structure like that may be the output of it, but we don't want to presume that and design it and present it to Aboriginal people. We want to work alongside them to develop that and get it right, and that's what the Aboriginal Advisory Group is doing now, and they're having meetings with and hearing from people in other states of Australia where the process is a bit further advanced, like it is in Victoria at the moment. They're gathering insights from those other processes to inform their advice to us on how that should work.

**Mr VALENTINE** - One of the recommendations with regard to treaty on page 9 of this document says in the light of the difficulty of determining who should negotiate treaty on the Aboriginal side, they must be representatives freely chosen by Aboriginal people through their own representative structures. That part is in brackets. Such a group led by Rodney Gibbins presented a draft treaty lutruwita bill to the government six months ago, but they haven't had any response back as far as I'm told. Can you please address the reason why that is the case and why they haven't heard back?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, thank you. I believe that we have advised Mr Gibbins and the tuylupa tunapri group that their proposal has been forwarded to the Aboriginal Advisory Group that we've established, that I referred to earlier. I don't mind providing a little context to that so that it's on the record.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I spoke with Mr Gibbins, of course, but on the media call, it's been six months since the draft treaty lutruwita bill was presented to the state government, sparking community members to speak out against the lack of response received since. tuylupa tunapri chair, Rodney Gibbins, said in the half a year since tuylupa tunapri presented the draft bill, there have been little consultation with the palawa community. He says serious questions have to be raised about the government's commitment about developing treaty and truth-telling in lutruwita. You've probably seen it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm aware of that commentary, and I've met Mr Gibbins as well. I would just like to create a little sequence of events here so that you understand what we've established. In July last year, the Premier and I invited Aboriginal people from across Tasmania through their organisations to attend a gathering in Launceston to have an initial discussion about how we went about designing a process for truth-telling and treaty. A number of organisations sent delegates to that meeting that we held at the Tailrace Centre in Launceston. We had an extremely good conversation there. I'm very grateful for the people who came and shared their thoughts with us there at that time.

From that group, there was agreement that we would put out an invitation for them to nominate members for an advisory group to work through the design of a process for truth-telling and treaty. Not to do the negotiation of treaty or to conduct the truth-telling, but to get us to first base with the design of a process. We had a number of different organisations and groups were there. They provided nominations, and I took responsibility and drew from them, the nominated members, a group. The Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre was one of the invites to that gathering and declined to attend, for whatever reason, but at the same time, in the same city, on the same day, they facilitated a meeting of their network, who resulted in coming up with the membership of what's now called the Tuylupa Tunapri group, as I understand it.



**Mr VALENTINE** - Which I believe wasn't the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, as such. It was a group of Aboriginal people.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We understand, at the time, it was facilitated - it matters less, but everything came on the TAC letterhead, and so it looked like that at the time. They've created their own identity since then.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They have. That's exactly right, and that's the identity that is communicating with -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. I, with my office, had a number of meetings after that with Mr Gibbins and other representatives from the tuylupa tunapri group to talk about how they could join with or participate in an advisory group that had other members that arose through our process. We had a number of meetings and talked for many, many hours about the way that that could work and how we could bring everyone together around the table. Ultimately, they declined to do that, but the invitation remains open to them.

We advised that we would ensure that they were heard in the process, and I understand that subsequently, the Aboriginal Advisory Group has extended the invitation for tuylupa tunapri to meet with them and to make presentation, and we've advised tuylupa tunapri that we've taken their draft treaty bill, and we've made it available to the advisory group and we've encouraged them to engage. We continue to so that all voices are heard.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So they will hear back eventually, are you saying, about that draft bill?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Their bill has been passed on to the Aboriginal Advisory Group that we'll be seeking our advice from, and I understand that the Aboriginal Advisory Group has sought to meet with tuylupa tunapri on that matter, and that invitation remains open.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Howlett has a question.

**Ms WEBB** - Can I have a supplementary on that? Is that all right?

**CHAIR** - Supplementary, Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Fairly straightforward one. Minister, outside your treaty advisory body that you've just been talking to us about, what funds have you granted to the Aboriginal community to hold discussions about treaty and truth-telling?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand that, and I'm just going to seek some advice on this. I think Ms Webb's question was outside of the Aboriginal Advisory Group?

**Ms WEBB** - That's right. I'm interested to know, essentially, if the Aboriginal community want to meet independent of your Advisory Group, from whatever direction are you going to provide funds and assistance in that way towards those meetings and those gatherings of the community?

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - One moment, please. Thank you, Ms Webb. I'm advised that prior to the formation of the advisory - outside of it, as you're requesting - the government previously responded to a request from the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre for some funds to conduct conversations within its networks on the truth-telling and treaty matter, and there was some \$20 000, I believe, and I'll stand to be corrected, provided to them for that purpose. After having created the Aboriginal Advisory Group, though, through the process that we used and the undertaking that we gave, and the people that came in good faith into that process.

Since then, we have said we are not going to fund a range of separate parallel processes, but rather that we will direct our resources and our - we will seek our advice through the Aboriginal Advisory Group that we've established, and we will encourage it to be listening to all voices, especially Aboriginal voices in Tasmania on that matter, and we've resourced that with a half a million dollars budget allocation. That'll be where we focus our resourcing of that process. They may engage with other groups and networks to ensure that the voices of all Tasmanian Aboriginal people are heard, and that will be a matter for them. We're providing the resources for them to do that work.

**Ms WEBB** - The resources provided to them, that group then decide how to utilise those resources to fill the functions that you've asked of them?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. We have undertaken for this to be an Aboriginal-led process. We have an Aboriginal Advisory Group led by Aboriginal people. We have resources and support for them to do their work.

**Ms WEBB** - And they decide how those resources will be deployed.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Howlett.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, could you update the committee on how the government is supporting the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania to share the story of wybalenna.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms HOWLETT** - I hope my pronunciation was correct.

**CHAIR** - The Legislative Council members who came to Flinders Island for our electorate tour, we took the time to visit wybalenna.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Somehow I would like to think that all Tasmanians get to visit that place and learn about it, and it's something that certainly I want, having visited there myself, for my kids to know about this place where they've grown up. So thank you very, very much for your question. Earlier this year, the Tasmanian government committed \$600 000 to the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania for a comprehensive research and interpretation project and restoration works at wybalenna on Flinders Island. The project will enable the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania to tell the story behind the relocation of Tasmanian Aboriginal people from the mainland to Flinders Island and tell the stories of those who lived and died at wybalenna during the early to mid-1800s.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet has executed a grant deed with the Aboriginal Land Council, and the first of three funding instalments has been disbursed in line with agreed milestones for the project. I understand that the Aboriginal Land Council will consult with Aboriginal people in the development of this project, and I look forward to seeing how it progresses. I am sure that information and stories gathered and shared through the project will make an important contribution to the broader, truth-telling conversation.

wybalenna was returned to Aboriginal people in 1999 under the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995 which provides the mechanism to declare land as Aboriginal land and establishes the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania as the body responsible for the holding of title and the management of that land on behalf of all Aboriginal persons. Returning more land to Tasmanian Aboriginal people is a priority for the Rockliff Liberal Government. That's why the 2023-24 budget includes \$200 000 to support the processes underway now in the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio, including legislating amendments to the Aboriginal Lands Act to improve the mechanism, the model for returning more land to Aboriginal people.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. I think I heard you talk about this in your overview. But minister, in light of your government's commitment to the national agreement on Closing the Gap, with one of its fundamental aims being to enhance the capability of Aboriginal community controlled sector, can you indicate any move you have made to direct funding received from the Commonwealth to Aboriginal community controlled sector where they have the ability to provide the funded services. And an example is land management, where the state competes with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and others for land management workers and rangers funding, and is this something you're considering if you're not doing it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can I just ask for clarification of your question? You asked about where the Tasmanian government -

**Mr WILLIE** - Is committed to the Closing the Gap Agreement to build -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. No, but you referred to funding from the Australian government?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, the Commonwealth government.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Which funding?

**Mr WILLIE** - The funding you received through the Closing the Gap initiative.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We haven't.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No. The funding that we are providing for capacity building under the Closing the Gap program is Tasmanian money.

**Mr WILLIE** - Right.

**Mr JAENSCH** - \$5.3 million, and we've recently finalised agreements for the first round of funding under that program, and we have an open process now for proposals for the second

tranche of that funding, taking the total that we'll allocate to \$5.3 million. So there are now three, six, nine. Nine projects funded under the first round. Total funding \$3.2 million. And they are right across Tasmania. A range of different organisations delivering a range of programs that will hopefully lead to better services for their people, their community, partly because they're delivered by their people for their community as well, which is the underpinning philosophy of the Closing the Gap approach this time round.

Not just more services for Aboriginal people, because we've done that in the past before nationally, and it's resulted in a lot of spending, but not a lot of change in the outcomes for Aboriginal people. This approach is about building the capacity of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations to be the provider in the knowledge that services provided by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people have built into them a cultural appropriateness, a safety, a relevance that we just don't get necessarily from mainstream providers, or haven't in the past.

**CHAIR** - Is that list of programs available for the committee?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, it is, and I'd be very happy to read it into the record.

**CHAIR** - Or table. Table is fine.

**Mr WILLIE** - That's helpful, minister. This question has come from the Aboriginal community today, and I haven't had a chance to speak with them about it. But they did provide the example where the state competes with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and others for land management work on a range of funding, and the very extensiveness TWWHA funding, and the question relates to changing the policy of competition.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There's a range of issues in that. Certainly, we're aware that there have been times where parts of government, like the Parks and Wildlife Service, that have sought to employ and train Aboriginal people as part of their operations might have been seen by some Aboriginal community-controlled organisations as competing with them for those people. It's certainly not the intention at all. In fact, a lot the investment that's going in now is about providing the ability for the government to be able to engage better with the Aboriginal people and to work with them in joint land management arrangements, and through processes like Closing the Gap to build the capacity of Aboriginal Community-Controlled Organisations to be commissioned or funded to be the service provider funded by the state or the federal government.

One example is in the work that we were already doing where the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre is an important provider of child safety services in the intensive family engagement service space that we were talking about earlier today.

**Mr WILLIE** - I went to their office. Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. And they have been a proponent and a recipient of Closing the Gap funds under the current round and we're anticipating them putting further proposals forward to build on their work in the area of child safety in particular. And so, there is partnership there. I can understand the perspective where, from time to time, they've thought that we're competing for employees and work, but wherever possible - and this is the reason why the unit that

## **PUBLIC**

Caroline heads in our department is all about partnerships. We want to be able to work together with them.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I will advise that we're bound by standing orders to conclude our hearings today at 7.16pm.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Would you like me to read this list of projects into the record?

**CHAIR** - No, thank you. Just table it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay. It's published already.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. It's still useful. Then we don't have to go searching for it. So if it's available to table.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Would you like me to read it in?

**CHAIR** - Just table it. It just saves us searching.

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is a document with a range of other matters on it.

**CHAIR** - That's fine. Thank you. Any more questions in Aboriginal Affairs?

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, I have some.

**CHAIR** - Don't forget we've got Aboriginal Heritage and Land as well.

**Ms WEBB** - I know. I'm trying to do it - I thought we had until quarter to eight. Sorry.

**CHAIR** - No. We must have used up more time during the day.

**Ms WEBB** - I'm happy to move to the next line item.

**CHAIR** - Move to Heritage and Land.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

### **DIVISION 9**

(Department of natural Resources and Environment Tasmania)

#### **Output Group 6 Heritage**

#### **6.2 Aboriginal Heritage and Land**

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Ms Webb.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, you've placed firmly on the public record, in 2021, the current Aboriginal Heritage Act is not effective. Can you confirm that, under the current Act, actual Aboriginal cultural heritage and cultural heritage valuables remain vulnerable and are currently at risk, in terms of the Act as it stands? I am just interested in sort of a yes or not to that, really, rather than something descriptive given our time constraints.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am not going to give you a yes or no on that. We have identified room for improvements. The Act currently provides legislated protection for Aboriginal cultural heritage, penalties for those who damage it. It provides a statutory role for an Aboriginal Heritage Council. We want to strengthen all of those things.

**Ms WEBB** - Okay. In regard to the Closing the Gap annual report, which we've got, which stated - it was released during National Reconciliation Week, just recently. It states on page 43, 'Extensive consultation and information sharing activities to develop a new Aboriginal cultural heritage protection legislation undertaken by Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania'. So I am interested for you to detail, if you would, when, where and with whom Aboriginal Heritage consulted about the new heritage protection legislation.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask Mr Gall if he wants to prepare to answer that. But there have been - now let me just come back to my paper. So I'll just quickly run through the consultation processes. On 1 July 2021, I tabled in Parliament the report on our review of the current legislation together with the government's response.

In responding to the review of the Aboriginal Heritage Act the government committed to developing comprehensive new Aboriginal cultural heritage protection legislation. In the 2021-22 state budget the government committed funds for major Aboriginal policy reform initiatives, including the review of the cultural heritage legislation.

Then in 2022-23 the government also committed an additional \$200 000 over two years for new Aboriginal Heritage Register, or the development of that, to support operation of the legislation. On 10 March 2022, I informed parliament of my release of a consultation paper presenting the government's position on key elements of new Aboriginal heritage legislation and commencement of a six week period of public consultation on those proposals.

The consultation paper released provided a high-level outline of the government's proposed policy directions in relation to each of the key elements of the intended new legislation. Discussion and feedback to date has indicated positive support for many of the themes and issues outlined in the paper, however several matters are complex, and we are continuing our discussions with Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations and with stakeholders, broadly, to ensure that their views are properly understood.

We're continuing our conversation with all of those stakeholders to ensure that we are hearing them correctly, and this is informing the drafting of an exposure bill which we aim to have ready for further consultation around the middle of this year, ahead of introduction into Parliament by the end of this year. And so the process I have talked about is not without -

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, the bill that you're talking about is the Aboriginal Heritage Act?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, a new act.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - The question I asked you was for detail about when, where and with whom Aboriginal Heritage matters for this act were consulted.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I have outlined a series of stages of public consultation.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes, but you didn't provide detail about who was consulted. You just said that there was consultation, but my question was about the -

**Mr JAENSCH** - Would you like to add some more detail to that, Mr Gall?

**Mr GALL** - Thank you. Through the minister, I don't have the specific details and the dates and who was spoken to, we can provide that if necessary later. But the consultation engagement has been ongoing throughout the entire process, and even at the end of the public consultation periods we have continued to meet with and discuss past pieces of legislation with all Aboriginal organisations that have been available to talk to us. That is also among Aboriginal stakeholders.

But as far as the Aboriginal community organisations, we have had consultation through either face to face or through video conferencing, we have done email mailouts and we have also done phone calls. That has included all Aboriginal organisations which were interested to talk to us. We have also provided information back to organisations that haven't really wanted to engage.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms WEBB** - Can I ask you about the direct request that was put to you by the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania indicating that their preference was that the Aboriginal Heritage Act be progressed in terms of a revised Act ahead of the Aboriginal Land Act? And then you declined to take that on board and progress in that manner that was requested. They are both being progressed at the same time now, is that true?

**Mr JAENSCH** - They're both being progressed. We anticipate we will have the Aboriginal Land Act amendments, that's in drafting now. And we will anticipate that that will be out as an exposure draft first, and that we will present that in Parliament. The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Protection Act is larger and more complex, because it is a whole new Act. There is a range of work that needs to be done on that. We are still hopeful of being able to present an exposure draft of that this year, and to table legislation for that later in the year as well.

In terms of the order in which they're happening, we will likely have the Aboriginal Land Act amendments up first. We note the Aboriginal Land Council's preference for it to be the over way around. There's lots of views that have been shared with us on the order and the urgency of these matters. Our government has made commitments to do both from the beginning and we have chosen an order in which we are doing it.

**Ms WEBB** - The rationale for that order, given the direct request from the Land Council?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well, our program of work was set before they made that request. We're unable to accommodate it, but we're hopeful of being able to have both of those processes returning to Parliament this year.

## PUBLIC

**Ms WEBB** - It is interesting, minister. You have been quite open about your support for a Voice to Parliament at a federal level, yet it is interesting that obviously at a state level we don't have something like that legislated right now. But if this is an indication of how you would respond, as a government, to a Voice to Parliament when there has been a direct request from the Aboriginal community -

**Mr JAENSCH** - But you haven't been quoting from all of the other submissions and -

**Ms WEBB** - No, I have asked you about a rationale with detail.

**Mr JAENSCH** - All of the other voices that we are also listening to, many of which have asked us to resolve outstanding matters that they see that make our Aboriginal Land Act one that they don't see works for them. So we're listening to all of those voices.

**Ms WEBB** - Yet the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania is one of the closest things we have got to a Voice to Parliament, because it's an elected body from the Tasmania Aboriginal community, quite formally done through the Electoral Commission. And the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania formally requested a particular order of those pieces of legislation, which the government declined to respect and put into place. I am just noting how you see that aligning with the idea that you support a Voice to Parliament.

**Mr JAENSCH** - In the consultation that we have undertaken, and that Warner and McCormack undertook, and the feedback we've had from Aboriginal people across Tasmania over a long period of time, we also have been told that there are parts of that process for how the Aboriginal Land Council is elected and constituted, that they feel excludes them. And we are listening to them too. We have to make sure that our legislation is fit for purpose if it is to do its job, and that's what we intend to do.

**CHAIR** - We have time for one final question.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I have a question, but you might have others.

**Ms WEBB** - I have many, but I have had some already so I am happy to share that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Minister, can you detail how the findings from the review into the model for returning land have been incorporated into the government's processes for handing land back to Aboriginal communities in Tasmania?

**Mr JAENSCH** - So consultation on the model for review for land return?

**Mr VALENTINE** - The findings from the review into the model for returning land have been incorporated into the government's processes for handing land back to Aboriginal communities in Tasmania.

**Mr JAENSCH** - What you're referring to there, Mr Valentine, is the process that we're undertaking to frame amendments to the Aboriginal Land Act that I have been referring to.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. So you're saying that it's one of the -



## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - The centrepiece of that is the model for returning land, and that includes that whilst the existing Aboriginal Land Act provides the mechanism for the government to declare land to be Aboriginal Land. It provides for the Aboriginal Land Council to be the holder of title, and the mechanism by which they're elected and what their obligations are.

It doesn't provide a mechanism to propose and add more land to those schedules. So that is one of the things that has been missing: That model for returning land, who can propose it, how it is assessed, how it is brought to Parliament, how it is consulted with Tasmanians, and they are some of the missing elements of that legislation that we're seeking to insert, and that we will be presenting draft legislation on soon.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - We do have time for one more question. We've just found a couple of extra minutes, but it has to be a fairly brief one.

**Ms WEBB** - It's not going to be a brief one.

**CHAIR** - Well, I don't set the standing orders.

**Ms WEBB** - Minister, can I pick one up? I am interested in what is the date at which the current out agreement expires and when you intend to commence renegotiations in preparation of that new agreement.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much. So the advice that I have is that we have, in effect, a recurring funding arrangement with the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania. It is confirmed in grant deeds covering three years of funding at a time. We are approaching the end of the current agreement. There has been additional supplementary funds provided for from time to time for the additional operating costs and for specific purposes agreed with them, including as well, the \$600 000 for the wybalenna project, which is a separate amount that I spoke to earlier on. So we will be renewing our grant deed with the Aboriginal Land Council.

Because the Aboriginal Lands Act amendments are going to be presented in Parliament this year, and if they are passed through it will hopefully mean more work for the Aboriginal Land Council with more land returned, but also some different governance and reporting obligations that have been consulted on as part of that amendment.

We realistically expect that there will be a different resourcing requirement for the Aboriginal Land Council in the future from what we have now. So it is likely that we will be extending funding for an additional period to cover the cost of operation for an interim period, with a view to arriving at a new recurrent funding model for them to cover the range of works that result from the amendment to the legislation.

**Ms WEBB** - I regard to the interim arrangement you have put in place, will that recognise the specific identified need that they have for a Chief Financial Officer position? Noting that they - and perhaps you can confirm this - ALC is the only statutory body in Tasmania not specifically funded for a finance officer in order to assist with the management of the financial aspects of the body.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There has been additional one-off funding of \$30 000 provided through a separate grant deed. That was provided to assist ALC to address administrative requirements identified by the Tasmanian Audit Office. In addition Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania are providing policy support to ALC to assist in the review and development of policies and procedures that will assist its administration as well. Now, in terms of the overall quantum of funding that is provided, we don't direct the Aboriginal Land Council in what it spends that on.

**Ms WEBB** - No, I'm not suggesting that. My question was about the fact that they're the only statutory body in Tasmania not specifically funded for a finance officer. Can you confirm that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll take advice on that, but we don't specify what the Aboriginal Land Council spends the money on that is provided in the grant deed.

**Ms WEBB** - So they should find it within what they're given?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Within the terms of that agreement. So I will stand to be corrected, but the current advice is that we don't specify, for any statutory body, that they specifically have - you know, use it to fund any particular position.

**Ms WEBB** - So would you regard that their funding is sufficient to provide them with a finance officer and they should find it within what they are given, currently?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No. Well, as I have mentioned the base level of funding in the grant deed agreement that has been operating has been insufficient for them to meet certain requirements over the last few years and there has been supplementary funding provided to them. What I am proposing is that, on the other side of the amendment of the Act, should that proceed and should the changes in the roles of the Aboriginal Land Council and the increase in its role result from that, that will require us to reset what the recurrent funding allocation is afresh.

**Ms WEBB** - Yes. My understanding is they feel that the current allocation isn't sufficient for what they are currently required to do in terms of a finance officer.

**Mr JAENSCH** - So that is why we have been -

**Ms WEBB** - So hopefully you won't repeat that same - when you do the reassessment.

**CHAIR** - Right. We need questions, not statements, but thank you.

We have exhausted our time, and before we do sign off I've got some housekeeping. On behalf of the committee, minister, I'd certainly like to thank you for today and the support team that you have had from 9 a.m. It has been a fairly long day, but we do appreciate the work and effort that goes into preparing for the budget estimates process.

On behalf of the Committee I would also like to acknowledge and thank the work of our secretariat support: Simon Scott, Julie Thompson, and Aleira Chalker. A special thank you to Gay from Hansard, who has been a real trooper. Before we sign off, I would like to thank all of the members for their contribution to these four days. A pretty exhausting effort, but everyone puts in, so thank you all.

## **PUBLIC**

A special acknowledgement that this will be the last estimates for the Honourable Member for Hobart, Mr Robert Valentine. We have certainly appreciated his input into this Committee, and the work that he does to prepare for this year but in previous years. That is it from me.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Chair, thank you for your chairing today. I have enjoyed our conversations on a wide range of matters. Seriously, it has been a good day's work, but I have enjoyed your interest in what happens across the portfolios that I am involved with and I thank colleagues who are here at the table with me and those who have been here through the day. And for all their preparation of all of this information, it is a mammoth exercise, and I thoroughly appreciate it. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, and the broadcast has ceased. Thank you, Gay.

**The Committee adjourned at 7.18 p.m.**