



REPORT

Estimates Committee 'B' examined the Estimates of the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Minister for Skills and Training and Minister for Housing and Planning, Hon Felix Ellis, M.P., on Monday, 23 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39: -

Division 6 – Department of Justice

Division 9 – Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Division 10 -Department Premier and Cabinet

Division 11 – Department of State Growth

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Minister for Skills and Training and Minister for Housing and Planning, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Police, Fire and Emergency Management:

- Weiss Review
- Police on long term sick leave and workers compensation.
- “front line services”
- Fatigue management for police
- Local community emergency facilities
- Anti-Protest Laws
- Fire and Emergency Services
- Road Safety
- Drink Driving
- Police Equipment
- Efficiency Dividend
- Employee related budget

- Savings strategy
- Vacancy control, redundancies
- Frontline services
- Police Commissioner efficiencies committee.
- Psychosocial hazards
- Tasmania Fire Service employment
- Forensic Science Services
- Police rostering system
- Police Officer employment data
- Radio Dispatch Services
- Atlas support service
- Dedicated DPFEM contact point to ARL Child and Family Services.
- State Fire Commission Corporate Plan

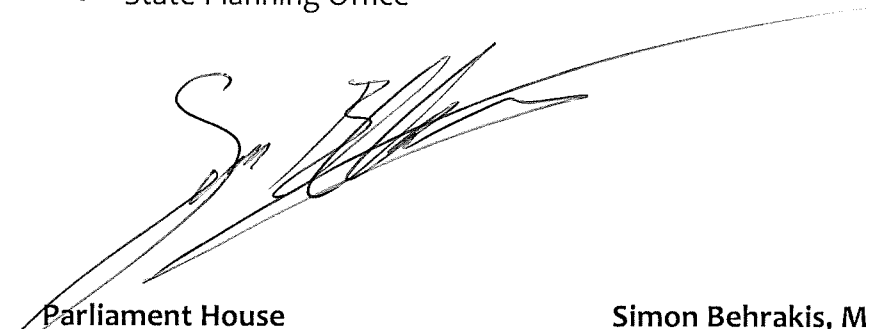
Skills and Training:

- TasTafe
- Teachers recruitment
- Skill Shortages
- Renewables Training
- TasTAFE staffing
- Fee free TAFE
- Student Accommodation
- Renewables Training Centre
- Youth Employment Strategy

Housing and Planning:

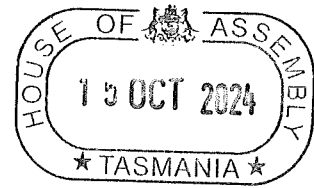
- Housing Australia Future Fund (HAFF)
- Homes Tasmania's priorities
- Lived Experience Advisory Group.
- New homes targets
- Waiting list for social housing
- "waiting list" v "housing register"
- Youth Homelessness

- MyHome delays
- Counting lots as homes
- Planned spend in 2024 towards new homes
- Tender process for housing developments
- Homes Tasmania contracts
- Building and construction industry forecast
- Drop in higher density housing developments
- State Planning Provisions
- Development Assessment Panels
- State of the Environment report
- Kangaroo Bay
- Youth Homelessness
- Social and Affordable Housing
- Disability Accommodation
- Aboriginal Housing
- Homes Tasmania Debt
- Macquarie Point Precinct
- Short-Stay Accommodation
- Bethlehem House
- 10,000 homes commitment and data
- Fountainside purchase
- Homes Tas borrowings and equity
- Homes waitlist and response times
- Homes Tas Staffing
- State Planning Office



**Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024**

**Simon Behrakis, MP
CHAIR**



REPORT

Estimates Committee 'B' examined the Estimates of the Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Hon Guy Barnett, M.P., on Tuesday, 24 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39: -

Division 6 – Department of Justice

Division 5 – Department of Health

Division 10 – Department of Premier and Cabinet

Bill No. 40: -

Division 2 – Integrity Commission

Division 5 – Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

Division 7 – Office of the Ombudsman

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Attorney-General Minister for Justice, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing and Minister for Veterans' Affairs, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Attorney-General and Justice:

- Coroners' Court
- Quad Bike Deaths
- Public Trustee Privatisation
- Legal Aid Indexation
- Legal Assistance
- TLA funding.
- Quad bike safety.
- Tasmanian National Preventative Mechanism

- Integrity Commission
- Commission of Inquiry
- Court delays
- CLC
- Legal Aid
- TALS
- Burnie Court
- Magistrates Court probation officers
- Community orders
- Coroner
- Efficiency Dividend

Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

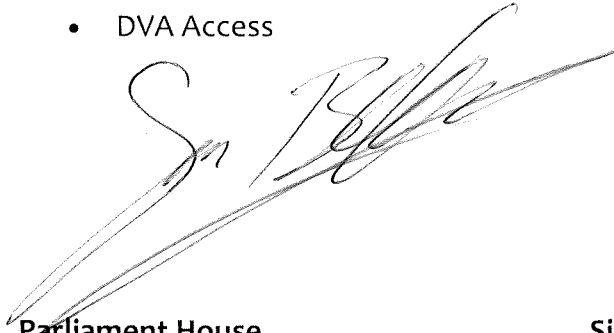
- Rising 28-day readmissions rates
- Medical equipment for hospitals.
- Smoking
- Preventative Health
- Reproductive Leave
- COVID-19
- Human Resources Information System (HRIS)
- Ambulance Ramping
- Ambulance Equipment
- Ambulance Response Times
- Paramedic Shifts
- Reportable Deaths
- LGH Radiology and Pathology
- Locums and agency health staff
- Fountainside hotel
- Transfer of care protocols
- Mother Baby Unit/St Helens Private Hospital closure
- NGOs running deficit budgets
- Budget processes for NGO's
- Funding for Women's Health Tasmania

- Definition of frontline services
- Specific Purpose Account
- Efficiency Dividend
- Savings Strategies
- Northern Heart Centre
- RHH ED expansion
- LGH Masterplan
- Agency nursing
- Vacancy Control measures
- Maternity staffing levels
- Paramedic staffing levels
- Recruitment and retention of health workers
- Public health funding
- Not for profit organisational funding
- Core funding
- Indexation
- Outcomes based purchasing
- Longer term funding agreements
- Forensic Health assessments
- Exposure to scatter radiation
- Surgical robot
- Mental Health
- Spencer Clinic
- Oral Health
- Outpatient services
- Eating disorder clinic
- Relocation assistance for health workers recruited from interstate/overseas
- Pathology staffing at the LGH

Veterans' Affairs

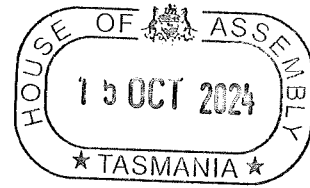
- Visual impact of the Stadium
- Disparity in concessions provided to DVA card holders.
- Veteran Wellbeing Vouchers

- Hobart Cenotaph and Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme
- Veterans Affairs adviser
- RSL
- Election commitments
- Veterans concessions
- DVA Access

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Behrakis', written over a horizontal line.

Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024

Simon Behrakis, MP
CHAIR



REPORT

Estimates Committee 'B' examined the Estimates of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water and Minister for Racing, Hon Jane Howlett, M.P., on Wednesday, 25 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39: -

Division 8 – Department of Natural Resources and Environment

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water and Minister for Racing, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Primary Industries and Water:

- Puppy farming
- Salmon farming
- independent monitoring of CCTV footage from abattoirs
- River Health
- Crop Overspray
- Salmon Industry and Native Birds
- Feral Pigs
- Community-run Irrigation Schemes
- Paraquat
- Irrigation
- NWTD
- Biosecurity
- Abattoirs

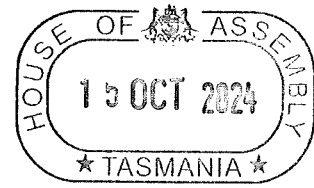
Racing:

- Murrihy review
- Greyhounds
- The Animal Liberation Tasmania report *A Few Bad Apples*
- Minister's communications with Nathan Ford and the Yole family
- Increase in positive swabs
- Attracting Group 1 racing
- Lack of traceability of greyhounds
- Equine and greyhound welfare guidelines
- Workers compensation in racing industry
- Greyhound Racing
- Animal Welfare
- Greyhound Adoption Program
- Conflicts of Interest
- Independent Stewards Panel
- Stewards
- Steve Shinn
- Police Referrals
- Robbie Walters
- Fit and proper person test
- Director of Racing
- Race fixing
- Animal welfare breaches
- Janet Ainscow
- Equine code of practice
- Workers Compensation Insurance



Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024

Simon Behrakis, MP
CHAIR



REPORT

Estimates Committee 'B' examined the Estimates of the Minister for Education and Minister for Disability Services, Hon Jo Palmer, M.L.C., on Wednesday, 25 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39: -

Division 2 – Department for Education, Children and Young People

Division 8 – Department of Natural Resources and Environment

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Minister for Education and Minister for Disability Services, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Education:

- SRS funding
- Cuts to social work, psychologist, speech pathology services.
- Budget savings strategy
- Cost shifting
- Auditing of workload pressures.
- School Levies
- Violence in schools
- Limited Authority to Teach
- Aboriginal educators' permanency
- Bruny Island Kinder
- School programs
- Full funding
- School psychologists

- School resource standard
- School Funding Agreement and negotiations
- School Capital Projects
- Outside School Hours Care
- Staffing and vacancies

Disability Services:

- Autism Tasmania and Disability Voices Tasmania
- Standard of accessibility for democratic processes
- Autism Tasmania funding
- Restrictive practices
- DPAC website
- Disability Voices Tasmania funding
- Disability Reform funding
- Foundational Support Strategies
- Disability Royal Commission
- Disability Rights Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill
- Disability Inclusion Council

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Behrakis', is written over a faint, light blue circular watermark or background graphic.

**Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024**

**Simon Behrakis, MP
CHAIR**



REPORT

Estimates Committee 'B' examined the Estimates of the Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation, Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Science and Technology and Minister for the Arts, Hon Madeleine Ogilvie, M.L.C., on Thursday, 26 September 2024, as follows:

Bill No. 39: -

Division 6 – Department of Justice

Division 7 - Department of Natural Resources and Environment

Division 10 – Department of Premier and Cabinet

Division 11 – Department of State Growth

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee recommends the outputs contained in the Estimates of the Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation, Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Science and Technology and Minister for the Arts, and notes there was concern expressed by some members of the Committee in respect of:

Corrections and Rehabilitation:

- Parenting course for male prisoners
- Staffing levels for the Reception Centres
- Housing for those exiting prison.
- Needle exchange program
- Workers' compensation
- Coronial Inquest Recommendations
- Custodial Inspector recommendations
- Staff shortages and vacancy levels
- Number of probation officers
- Court ordered (magistrates court) Sober Driver and Family Violence programs for offenders.
- Removal of Probation Officers from Southern Magistrates Court
- Electronic Monitoring Devices

- Young persons held at the Hobart Reception Prison and Watch Houses
- Ministerial responsibility for younger people in TPS
- Omission of Younger people in TPS from the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.
- Inmate to correctional officer ratio
- Overtime
- Housing options for Paroles and "served time" prisoners exiting prison

Women and the Prevention of Family Violence:

- Funding provisions to community sector organisations
- Gender budget statement
- Government measures for social change
- Domestic violence review team
- Domestic and family violence initiatives
- Funding
- Reproductive health leave
- Women's Strategy and Industry Liaison Officer
- Coercive control
- Funding for Laurel House and SASS
- Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan
- Peak body funding
- SASS and Laurel House
- Arch Statewide
- Budget Efficiency Dividend and Savings Strategy

Science and Technology:

- Review of connectivity guarantee
- Funding for fibre-optic cables
- Marine Cable
- Investment

Arts:

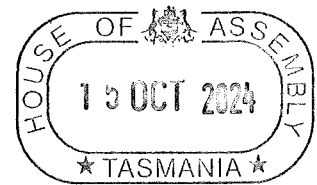
- Heritage Council.
- Cenotaph
- Goods Shed
- QVMAG flood risk
- palawa cultural material held by TMAG

- Theatre Council of Tasmania
- Spending per capita
- Heritage ministry
- Budget Cuts and Staffing
- Tasmanac



Parliament House
HOBART
15 October 2024

Simon Behrakis, MP
CHAIR



ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'B'

Thursday, 19 September 2024

The Committee met in the Long Room, Parliament House at 2:17 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Haddad (Deputy Chair)
Mr Bayley; and
Ms Johnston

APOLOGIES:

No apologies.

TRANSFER OF OUTPUTS TO ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'A'

Ordered, That in accordance with the information contained in the budget documentation tabled in the House on 12 September 2024, the relevant Ministerial portfolio outputs be referred to the relevant stakeholder Minister for examination by the relevant Estimates Committee (Ms Johnston).

MESSAGE TO HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

House of Assembly Estimates Committee B has passed the following Resolution:-

Resolved, That in accordance with the information contained in the budget documentation tabled in the House on 12 September 2024, the relevant Ministerial portfolio outputs be referred to the relevant stakeholder Minister for examination by the relevant Estimates Committee.

19 September 2024
Parliament House
Hobart.

Mr Simon Behrakis MP
Chair – Committee B

ORDER FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF ESTIMATES

The Committee deliberated upon the order for the consideration of relevant estimates contained in the Appropriation (No. 2) Bill.

Ordered, That the Secretary advise:

- (a) The Office of the Ombudsman, Office of the Integrity Commission and Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions that they are required to attend an hour before examination of the Estimates of the Attorney-

General and Minister for Justice concludes (Tuesday, 24 September at 10:00 a.m.) (Ms Haddad)

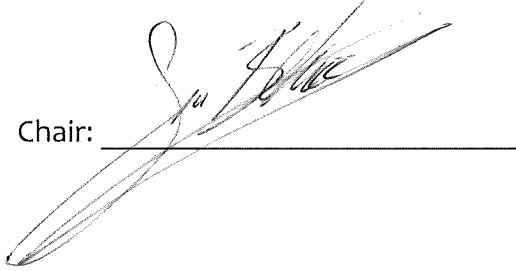
At 2:22 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:00 a.m., Monday, 23 September next.

Confirmed:

Date:

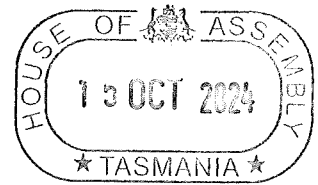
15 Oct 2024

Chair:

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ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'B'

Monday, 23 September 2024



The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House at 9:00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Butler (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Ms Badger (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table

Mr Fairs
Ms Brown
Mrs Beswick
Mr Garland

**ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT, MINISTER FOR
SKILLS AND TRAINING, AND MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND PLANNING**

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

DIVISION 9: DEPARTMENT OF POLICE, FIRE AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

WITNESSES:-

Hon. Felix Ellis MP

Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management:

Donna Adams, Commissioner of Police/Secretary, DPFEM/State Controller
Jonathan Higgins, Deputy Commissioner of Police
Adrian Bodnar, Assistant Commissioner Operations
Ross Hinkley, Acting Deputy Secretary
Scott Wilson-Haffenden, Director Finance
Jeremy Smith, Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner
Mick Lowe, Executive Director, State Emergency Service and Volunteers

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 9.52 a.m. Mr Fairs left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 9.55 a.m. Mr *Fairs* returned to the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

Papers: – The Minister tabled a document titled ‘Tasmanian Police Youth Crime Charges in 2023.’

Overview of Agency activities continued.

Suspension of sitting 11.06 a.m. to 11.17 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Butler (substitute for *Ms Haddad*)
Ms Badger (substitute for *Mr Bayley*)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table

Ms Brown
Mrs Beswick
Mr Garland
Mr Fairs

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 12.12 p.m. to 12.16 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Dow (substitute for *Ms Haddad*)
Ms Badger (substitute for *Mr Bayley*)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table

Ms Brown
Mr Fairs

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR SKILLS AND TRAINING

DIVISION 11: DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Felix Ellis* MP

Department of State Growth:

Jenna Cairney, Acting Deputy Secretary, Business and Jobs

Angela Conway, Deputy Secretary, Business Services

Alex Paterson, General Manager, Skills and Workforce

TasTAFE

Grant Dreher, CEO

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 12.25 p.m. Ms *Badger* left the Table and was replaced by Mr *Bayley*.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 1.16 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING AND PLANNING

DIVISION 6: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

DIVISION 10: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Behrakis* (Chair)

Dr *Broad* (substitute for Ms *Haddad*)

Ms *Burnet* (substitute for Mr *Bayley*)

Ms *Johnston*

Also at the Table

Mr *O'Byrne*

Ms *Butler*

Mr *Fairs*

Mr *Garland*

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Felix Ellis* MP

Homes Tasmania:

Eleri Morgan-Thomas, Chief Executive Officer

Jessemey Stone, Director, Housing Policy and Programs

Richard Gilmour, Director, Community Infrastructure

Department of Justice:

Claire Hynes, Deputy Executive Commissioner, Tasmanian Planning Commission

Ross Smith, Deputy Secretary, Regulation and Service Delivery

Department of Premier and Cabinet:

Mathew Healey, Acting Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Delivery

Sean McPhail, Acting Director, State Planning Office

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 2.17 p.m. *Mrs Pentland* came to the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 2.26 p.m. *Ms Burnet* left the Table and was replaced by *Mr Bayley*.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.21 p.m. *Mr Fairs* left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.23 p.m. *Mr O'Byrne* left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.25 p.m. *Mr Fairs* returned to the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.37 p.m. *Mr Garland* left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

Papers: – The Minister tabled a document titled 'Report on data collection Quarter 3 2023: Short Stay Accommodation Act 2019'.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

Suspension of sitting 4.35 p.m. to 4.46 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Dr Broad (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Mr Bayley
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table

Mrs Beswick
Ms Butler
Mr Fairs
Mrs Pentland

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 4.52 p.m. *Mrs Pentland* left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The time for the examination of these Divisions having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following additional information was requested:

Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management:

1. What is the current number of cases unstated? What is the oldest unstated case? Will Forensics Science Services Tasmania have four FTE cut?
2. What is the current age and time in-service profile of the Tasmanian Police workforce?
3. What is the number of family violence related call outs in comparison to all callouts as a percentage?
4. Have 000 calls this year been connected within 10 seconds with a Radio Dispatch Operator? What percentage of calls have waited longer than this before being connected?
5. What is the average wait time for 000 calls for each of the last 3 years?
6. What have been the five 000 calls with the longest wait times for connection this year?

7. Within the last two years, have any 000 calls that have had to wait for connection related to incidents where a death has occurred either before or after the call? Can you provide the incidents where this has occurred?
8. Why don't the budget papers reflect the income statement of the 2024/25 State Fire Commission Corporate Plan?
9. Supplies and Consumables has nearly \$1million less in the budget than the State Fire Commission Corporate Plan for 24/25. Can you explain this.
10. How much from the Supplies and Consumers output is being paid to the DPFEM and SES?
11. How many people have been charged under the Police Offences Amendment (Workplace Protections) Act 2022? And, in the same time, what number of people have been charged with trespass and public nuisance provisions?

Skills and Training:

12. Can you provide for the Committee the Saving Strategy for TasTAFE and Skills and Training?

Housing and Planning:

13. Why does the Budget Overview state that 3000 new homes have been delivered when this is clearly not accurate?
14. With regards to the Residential Development Zone at the Macquarie Point site, has any of the Federal Government contribution of \$240 million been earmarked for this development?
15. How will the Regatta Point development be funded, and is there any allocation in this year's budget and the forward estimates for Homes Tasmania to start planning and development work for this zone? What will be the mix of health worker accommodation versus apartments for release to the general market? Will you retain equity in this development?
16. What is the:
 - a. Debt to equity ratio; and
 - b. Debt service cover ratio (or proxy measure)
 for Homes Tasmania?
17. How is the debt servicing funding of Homes Tasmania treated by Treasury? As a grant, as an interest payment or as a liability?
18. How many existing homes on the private market were purchased each month for the 2023/2024 financial year, broken down by region (Southern Tasmania, Northern Tasmania and North-West Tasmania)? What was the average price of those purchased?
19. What number of new homes are planned to be purchased from the private market this financial year?
20. How many newly constructed homes were purchased by Homes Tasmania in each month of the 2023/2024 financial year, by region these homes were purchased (Southern Tasmania, Northern Tasmania and North-West

- Tasmania)? What was the average price of those purchased? What was the highest price paid for any new home and in what suburb was it located?
21. How many staff have left Homes Tasmania since inception in December 2022? What proportion of the workforce is this?
 22. What measures are Homes Tasmania putting in place to deal with high turnover?
 23. Can you advise the total sum, inclusive of capital costs, spent and allocated to Wintringham.
 24. How many properties have Homes Tasmania purchased in the 2023/2024 and 2021/2022 financial years which have sitting tenants? How many of these tenants are at risk of homelessness or rental stress if they are evicted?
 25. Will you get targets and measure progress to be reported in the monthly dashboard regarding Homes Tasmania's Housing First Approach to homelessness?

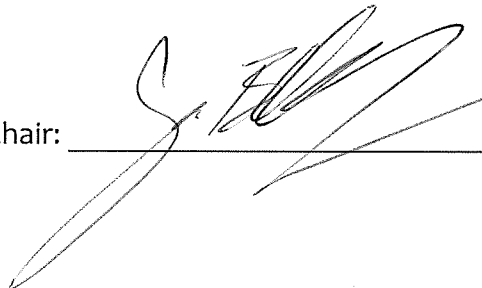
At 6:11 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 8:30 a.m., Tuesday, 24 September next.

Confirmed:

Date:

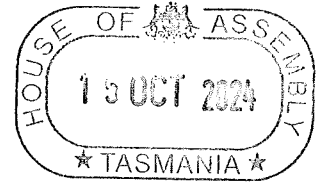
15 Oct 2024

Chair:



ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'B'

Tuesday, 24 September 2024



The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House at 8.30 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Dr Woodruff (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Finlay (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Mr Fairs
Ms White

**ESTIMATES OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, MINISTER FOR HEALTH,
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING, AND MINSITER FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS**

ESTIMATES OF THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL AND MINISTER FOR JUSTICE

DIVISION 6: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WITNESSES: -

Hon. Guy Barnett MP

Department of Justice:

Kristy Bourne, Acting Secretary

Pauline van Adrichem, Deputy Secretary, Justice and Reform

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 8.38 a.m. Mr Fairs came to the Table.

Overview of Agency activites continued.

At 8.40 a.m. Ms Finlay came to the Table.

Overview of Agency activites continued.

At 10 a.m. Ms White came to the Table.

Overview of Agency activites continued.

At 10.03 a.m. Mr *Fairs* left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 10.07 a.m. Mr *Fairs* returned to the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 10.42 a.m. Mr *Jenner* came to the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

DIVISION 2 (BILL NO. 2): INTEGRITY COMMISSION

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Guy Barnett* MP

Integrity Commission

Julia Hickey, Integrity Commission Acting CEO

Output 1.1 examined.

The examination of Output 1.1 concluded.

The witness withdrew.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

DIVISION 6: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WITNESSES: -

Hon. *Guy Barnett* MP

Department of Justice:

Kristy Bourne, Acting Secretary

Pauline van Adrichem, Deputy Secretary, Justice and Reform

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 11.00 a.m. to 11.10 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Haddad (Deputy-Chair)
Ms Rosol (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Mr Fairs
Mr O'Byrne
Ms White

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

DIVISION 5: DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

WITNESSES: -

Hon. Guy Barnett MP

Department of Health:

Dale Webster, Acting Secretary
Michelle Searle, Acting Deputy Secretary Community Mental Health and Wellbeing
Dinesh Ayra, Acting Deputy Secretary Clinical Quality Regulation and
Accreditation, Chief Medical Officer & Chief Psychiatrist

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 11.40 a.m. Ms White left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 11.42 a.m. Ms White returned to the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

Papers: - The Minister Tabled the following report – 'Department of Health, Progress Report 2023-2024, Implementation Plan 2023-2025 – Long Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania 2040.'

Overview of Agency activities continued.

Suspension of sitting 1.00 p.m. to 1.31 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Haddad (Deputy-Chair)
Ms Rosol (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Mr Fairs
Mr O'Byrne
Ms White

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING CONTINUED

WITNESSES: -

Hon. Guy Barnett MP

Department of Health:

Dale Webster, Acting Secretary
Michelle Searle, Acting Deputy Secretary Community Mental Health and Wellbeing
Dinesh Ayra, Acting Deputy Secretary Clinical Quality Regulation and Accreditation, Chief Medical Officer & Chief Psychiatrist
Jordan Emery, Chief Executive Ambulance Tasmania

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 1.37 p.m. *Mrs Pentland* took a seat at the Table.

At 3.36 p.m. *Ms Rosol* left the Table and was replaced by *Ms Burnet*.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.46 p.m. *Mr Fairs* withdrew.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.48 p.m. *Mr Fairs* returned to the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.55 p.m. *Mrs Pentland* withdrew.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 4.42 p.m. to 4.50 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Butler (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Mr Bayley
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Ms Dow
Mr Fairs

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR VETERANS AFFAIRS

DIVISION 10: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

WITNESSES: -

Hon. Guy Barnett MP

Department of Premier and Cabinet:

Mellissa Gray, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform

Rebecca Pinto, Executive Director, Community Partnerships and Priorities

Output 7.7 examined.

At 4.52 p.m. Mr *Fairs* came to the Table.

Examination of the Output continued.

The time for the examination of this Output having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following additional information was requested:

Health:

1. In one report in 2021 the Coroner said:
'I do not consider that [the patient's] death was due to, as the Medical Certificate of Death indicated, a pulmonary embolism, nor, as the post-mortem report suggested, cardiac related. The cause of [the patient's] death was sepsis.'
When the Department reviewed these Coroner's reports and saw the Launceston General Hospital had failed to appropriately report a death, and that death certificates were incorrect, was anything done to investigate the issue?
2. How many times, in raw numbers, were ambulances not assigned within three minutes to P0 and P1 emergency calls?
3. What was the total number of paramedic shifts worked in 2023-2024 (in raw numbers)? What were the total number that went unfilled (in raw numbers)?
4. In 2023 – 2024, how many emergency incidents (in raw number terms) experienced a response time greater than:
 - a. 30 minutes;
 - b. 45 minutes; and
 - c. 60 minutes.
5. How many single response shifts were worked by paramedics in 2023-24?
6. Have any systemic issues or trends been identified with the use of portable suction units used by paramedics in certain events?
7. Women's Health Tasmania put in application through the budget process for top up funding to meet the \$112,000 worth of cost increase it is facing (including inflation and the national wage increase). It was unsuccessful. Its Board has been forced to approve a deficit budget. This organisation runs part of the health system – it manages the brokerage funds that pay for terminations of abortion and long-acting reversible contraceptives. It also provides a range of services accessed by victim survivors of family and sexual violence (the people who are the focus of the work of the Commission of Inquiry). What plans are in place to ensure that these essential services are not cut when its Board runs out of resources?
8. How many triage category 2 patients were subject to transfer of care delays longer than 15 minutes in 2023-24?
9. Regarding the question on how many staff are appropriately trained and registered to conduct forensic medical exams, how many staff are there at each hospital currently (i.e. Royal Hobart Hospital, Launceston General Hospital, North-West Regional Hospital and Mersey)?
10. Research is linking even mild acute COVID infections with population wide increases in a large number of chronic diseases. This has huge implications for our health system and the increased demand we can expect on services, not to mention people's quality of life. At a briefing with the Acting Secretary two weeks ago, we were told demand for health services in Tasmania increased dramatically since COVID infection became widespread. Could you please provide data on the rates of the following health conditions in 2019-2020 and 2023-2024?

- a. Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS)
- b. Heart disease
- c. Arrhythmias
- d. Mood disorders and anxiety
- e. Stroke or blood clots
- f. Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS)
- g. Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS)
- h. Diabetes, including Type-1 diabetes in children
- i. Cancers
- j. Strep A

Has the Health Department observed increases in these conditions?

11. How many staff are on stress leave or workers compensation leave from the Spencer Clinic in Burnie? How many positions are vacant (if it can be provided)
12. What are the government's plans to start collecting data on numbers of terminations (medical and surgical) that it needs to track trends, budget for costs, and support women to avoid unwanted pregnancies by identifying the barriers to accessing contraception?
13. How many women who are not covered by Medicare gave birth in Tasmanian hospitals in the last financial year?
 - a. What was the average of their antenatal and birth costs?
 - b. How many required support for gestational diabetes and what was the average cost of that treatment?
 - c. How many were put on payment plans?
 - d. What was the average rate of repayment at the payment plans?
 - e. How many had their fees waived due to financial hardship?
14. What steps is the Department taking to reduce the risk of scatter radiation experienced by nurses and doctors working in catheterization labs? What steps is the Department taking to move to a more modern form of personal protective equipment than lead aprons?

Veterans Affairs

15. What's the annual salary of you Senior Veterans Affairs Advisor? Is this Advisor's salary drawn down from Veterans Affairs Allocations?

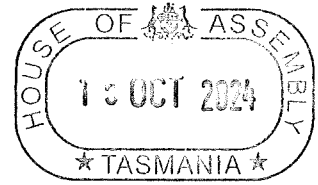
At 5:51 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:00 a.m., Wednesday 25 September next.

Confirmed:

Date: 15 Oct 2024

Chair: 

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'B'



Wednesday, 25 September 2024

The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House at 9.00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Finlay (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Ms Badger (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Ms Dow
Mr Fairs

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER, AND THE MINISTER FOR RACING

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER

DIVISION 8: DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

WITNESSES:-

Hon. Jane Howlett MP

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania:
Deidre Wilson, Deputy Secretary Primary Industries and Water
Anita Yan, Deputy Chief Operations Officer

Primary Industries and Water:
Rae Burrows, General Manager, Biosecurity Tasmania

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 9.48 a.m. Mr Fairs left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 9.51 a.m. Mr Fairs returned to the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 10.02 a.m. Ms Badger left the Table and was replaced by Ms Burnet.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

The time for the examination of this Division having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 11.00 a.m. to 11.10 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Mr Winter (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Dr Woodruff (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Ms Butler
Mr Fairs

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR RACING

DIVISION 8: DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

WITNESSES:-

Hon. Jane Howlett MP

Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania:
Deidre Wilson, Deputy Secretary Primary Industries and Water
Anita Yan, Deputy Chief Operations Officer
Robin Thompson, General Manager Office of Racing Integrity and Director of Racing

Papers: – The Minister tabled the following document, requested during the previous session, the Estimates of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, ‘Update of Table Data - Abbatoirs and Processors’.

Examination of Output Group 5.1 commenced.

At 11.35 a.m. *Mrs Pentland* took a seat at the Table.

Examination of Output Group 5.1 continued.

Suspension of sitting 12.27 p.m. to 12.32 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Mr Winter (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Dr Woodruff (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Ms Butler
Mrs Pentland

Examination of Output Group 5.1 continued.

At 12.34 p.m. *Mr Fairs* returned to the Table.

Examination of Output Group 5.1 continued.

At 1.10 pm *Mrs Pentland* left the Table.

Papers: – The Minister tabled a document detailing racing data.

Examination of Output Group 5.1 continued.

The time for examination of this Output having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 2.15 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Mr Willie (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Dr Woodruff (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Ms Dow
Mr Fairs
Mr Jenner

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, AND THE MINISTER FOR DISABILITY SERVICES

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

DIVISION 2: DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

WITNESSES:-

Hon. *Jo Palmer* MLC

Department for Education, Children and Young People:

Jenny Burgess, Acting Secretary

Kane Salter, Deputy Secretary Business Operations & Support

Overview of Agency activities commenced.

At 2.57 pm Mr *Jenner* left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.26 pm Mrs *Beswick* came to the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 3.39 pm Dr *Woodruff* left the Table and was replaced by Mr *Bayley*.

Overview of Agency activities continued.

Suspension of sitting 4.31 p.m. to 4.37 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr *Behrakis* (Chair)

Mr *Willie* (substitute for Ms *Haddad*)

Mr *Bayley*

Ms *Johnston*

Also at the Table:

Ms *Dow*

Mr *Fairs*

Mrs *Beswick*

Overview of Agency activities continued.

At 4.56 p.m. Mrs *Beswick* left the Table.

Overview of Agency activities continued and concluded.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 5.36 p.m. to 5.45 p.m

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Haddad
Ms Rosol (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Ms Dow
Mr Fairs

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR DISABILITY SERVICES

DIVISION 10: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

Witnesses:-

Hon Jo Palmer MLC

Department of Premier and Cabinet:

Cathrine Morgan-Wicks, Secretary

Melissa Gray, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform

Ingrid Ganley, Acting Executive Director, Disability and Reform

Examination of Output Group 7.1 commenced.

The time for the examination of this Output having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following additional information was requested:

Primary Industries and Water:

1. Communities in the north of Tasmania has stated issues with feral pigs at Gunns Plains and around Waratah, which would be an enormous issue given the damage pigs can cause. What measures and planning have you in place to get on top of this issue as soon as possible?
2. What is the threshold for taking action in invasives? How much damage must occur before action is taken?

3. Will the Government consider declaring unmarked, roaming pigs and goats as a 'pest' under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations 2021, thereby enabling effective control of these animals?
4. Can you please provide the document read out by the General Manager of Biosecurity Tasmania in relation to inspections conducted?
5. With the recent passing of the Bill to facilitate community management of Irrigation Schemes and Tasmanian Irrigations conduct of consultation with irrigators on each side of the 19 schemes operated by TI, is it anticipated that there will be any schemes that apply to transition to community management, and if so, which schemes have indicated they are interested in doing so?
6. Can you clarify how many native birds have been shot by the Tasmanian Salmon Industry since the beginning of 2024 and what weapon or implement is used by the salmon industry to shoot native birds?
7. What is the saving strategy across each of your Ministerial responsibilities?
8. Is the efficiency dividend being applied to Biosecurity?
9. Please provide for the Committee the Inspection of Abattoir Table read from at the Estimates B House of Assembly Committee in the Primary Industries and Water portfolio on 25 September 2024.
10. Have there been any referrals arising from the Murrihy review recommendations made to police?

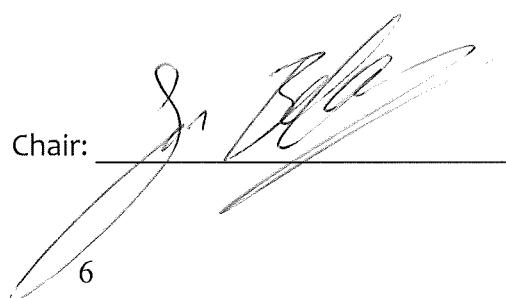
Department of Education, Children and Youth:

1. Please provide the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and any other associated documents from the Government press conference today, 25 September 2024.
2. Please provide to the Committee the breakdown of the survey of schools related to the election commitment of expanding Out of Hours School Care in Tasmanian Schools. Please breakdown the 30 of the 104 respondents who wanted to see this service introduced and the 17 who wanted to expand their current service?
3. Please provide details of all staff employed in Aboriginal Education Services from 2014 to 2024 by region including;
 - a. role and FTE level; and
 - b. status (permanent or annual)?
 For the same period, provide the annual budget for Aboriginal Educational Services division within the Department.

At 6.45 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:00 a.m. Thursday, 26 September next.

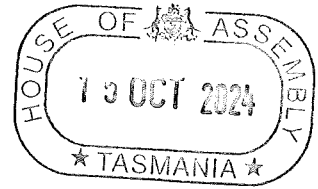
Confirmed:

Date: 15 Oct 2024

Chair: 

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'B'

Thursday, 26 September 2024



The Committee met in Committee Room 1, Parliament House at 9.00 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Butler (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Ms Rosol (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Mr Fairs
Ms Finlay

**ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION, MINISTER FOR WOMEN
AND THE PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE, MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY, AND
MINISTER FOR THE ARTS**

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR CORRECTIONS AND REHABILITATION

DIVISION 6: DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

WITNESSES:-

Hon. Madeleine Ogilvie MP

Department of Justice:

Kristy Bourne, Acting Secretary
Rod Wise, Deputy Secretary, Corrective Services
David Jackson, Acting Director of Prisons
Christopher Carney, Executive Director, Community Services
Gavin Wailes, Director, Finance

Examination of Output Group 3 commenced.

At 10.23 a.m. Mr Fairs left the Table.

Examination of the Output continued.

At 10.25 a.m. Mr Fairs returned to the Table.

Examination of the Output continued.

The time for the examination of this Output Group having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 11.30 a.m. to 11.38 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Brown (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Ms Badger (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Mr Fairs
Mrs Pentland

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR WOMEN AND THE PREVENTION OF FAMILY VIOLENCE

DIVISION 10: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

WITNESSES:-

Hon. Madeleine Ogilvie MP

Department of Premier and Cabinet:

Mellissa Gray, Reform lead, Policy and Reform

Rebecca Pinto, Executive Director, Community, Partnerships and Priorities

Examination of Output Group 7 commenced.

At 11.41 a.m. *Mrs Pentland* left the Table.

Examination of the Output Group continued.

At 11.43 a.m. *Ms Badger* left the Table and was replaced by *Ms Rosol*.

At 11.43 a.m. *Mrs Pentland* returned to the Table.

Examination of the Output Group continued.

At 11.46 a.m. *Ms Rosol* left the Table and was replaced by *Ms Badger*.

Examination of the Output Group continued.

At 12.10 p.m. Mrs Beswick came to the Table.

Examination of the Output Group continued.

The time for the examination of this Output Group having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of Sitting 1.09 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Finlay (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Ms Badger (substitute for Mr Bayley)

Also at the Table:

Ms Butler
Mr Fairs

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

DIVISION 10: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET, OUTPUT GROUP 3
DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, OUTPUT GROUP 1.2

WITNESSES:-

Hon. Madeleine Ogilvie MP

Department of Premier and Cabinet:
Justin Thurley, Chief Information Officer

Department of State Growth:
Jenna Cairney, Deputy Secretary – Business and Jobs

Examination of activities in relation to Science and Technology commenced.

Papers: - The Minister tabled the following paper in relation to the previous output, 'Survivours at the centre – Responding and Reporting 2023: Achievements in the delivery of Survivours at the Centre: Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-2027.'

The examination of the Science and Technology outputs continued.

The time for the examination of these Output Groups having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

Suspension of sitting 2.30 p.m. to 2.34 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Ms Brown (substitute for Ms Haddad)
Ms Rosol (substitute for Mr Bayley)
Ms Johnston

Also at the Table:

Ms Finlay
Mr Fairs

ESTIMATES OF THE MINISTER FOR THE ARTS

DIVISION 11: DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH, OUTPUT GROUP 5

DIVISION 7: DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT TASMANIA, OUTPUT 6.1

WITNESSES:-

Hon. Madeleine Ogilvie MP

Department of State Growth:

Brett Stewart, Deputy Secretary - Creative Industries, Sport and Visitor Economy
Dave Sudmalis, Director Arts Tasmania

Examination of Outputs in relation to the Arts portfolio commenced.

At 2.36 p.m. Mrs Pentland came to the Table.

Examination of Outputs in relation to the Arts portfolio continued.

At 2.56 p.m. Mrs Pentland left the Table

Papers: – The Minister tabled a letter dated 27 June 2024 from Hon Michelle Rowland MP to Hon Eric Abetz MP in relation to Tasmania's telecommunications connectivity.

At 2.58 p.m. examination of Output 6.1 commenced.

WITNESSES:-

Hon. Madeline Ogilvie MP

Department of Natural Resources and Environment (Heritage):

Jason Jacobi, Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment

Micheal Guidici, Acting General Manager, Surveyor General

Melissa Ford, Director, Heritage Tasmania

Department of State Growth:

Mary Mulcahy, Director, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

At 3.05 p.m. Ms Finlay left the Table.

Examination of the Output continued.

Papers: - The Minister tabled the following papers

- 'A Guide to Exploring Discover Heritage,' and
- 'A Guide to Significant Architectural Styles in Tasmania'

Examination of the Output continued.

Papers: – The Minister tabled a document in relation to the current length of service of each member of the Tasmanian Heritage Council.

Examination of the Output continued.

The time for the examination of this Output group having expired.

The witnesses withdrew.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The following additional information was requested:

Corrections and Rehabilitation:

1. For community corrections programs from the order of a magistrate:
 - a. How long does the wait list get
 - b. How long can the wait be?
 - c. How long is the waitlist?
 - d. How many are on the waitlist? and;
 - e. How many can be on the waitlist at any given point?
2. How many cases have occurred where people on home detention orders with electronic monitoring bracelets have slipped the bracelet and have committed crimes?
3. Have Correction staff contacted Mark* from Risdon Vale to request or confirm housing options or availability for soon to be released prisoners?

4. Please provide the number of occasions during the 2023/2024 financial year, a young offender was held at the Hobart Reception Prison for longer than two days.
5. What proportion of the current prison population is made up of non-violent offenders, and what is the total cost to the budget of detaining them?

Women and prevention of family violence:

6. Please provide a financial break down, by organisation and program, of the \$19.402 million for the Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan in the 2024/2025 State Budget and forward estimates.
7. Please provide a break down of funding on Harmful Sexual Behaviour as per Laurel House and Sexual Assault Support Service (SASS) budget submission found in Table A2.2 of the output, accounting for the segregated funding from the National Partnership Agreement and the Tasmanian Government.
8. Please provide a breakdown of funds in "Partnering with the Community" (Community Sector Funding) of the 2024/2025 financial year and 2025/2026 financial year, accounting for the segregated funding from the National Partnership Agreement and the Tasmanian Government.
9. What is the average waiting time for Tasmanians wanting to access prevention of family and sexual violence services?

Arts:

10. Can the Minister please provide the report on the governance review of the Heritage Council concluded by Mr Frank Neasey? (noting redactions of personal information)

At 3.34 p.m. the Committee adjourned till 9:15 a.m. Tuesday, 15 October next.

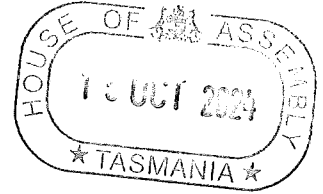
Confirmed:

Date: 15 Oct 2024

Chair: 

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE 'B'

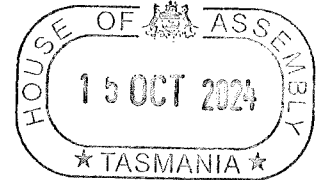
Tuesday, 15 October 2024



The Committee met in the Long Room, Parliament House at 9:16 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr Behrakis (Chair)
Mr Bayley
Ms Johnston



APOLOGIES

Ms Haddad

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meetings held on 19, and 23 to 26 September 2024 last were read and confirmed as a true and accurate record. (Ms Johnston)

DRAFT REPORTS

The Chair brought up draft reports on the estimates of the:-

- Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Minister for Skills and Training, and Minister for Housing and Planning;
- Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing and Minister for Veterans' Affairs;
- Minister for Primary Industries and Water and Minister for Racing;
- Minister for Education and Minister for Disability Services; and
- Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation, Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence, Minister for Science and Technology and Minister for the Arts.

The reports were adopted. (Mr Bayley)

At 9.17 a.m. the Committee adjourned *sine die*.

Date: 15 Oct 2024

Chair: 



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Felix Ellis MP

Monday 23 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Behrakis MP (Chair)
Ms Ella Haddad MP (Deputy Chair)
Mr Vica Bayley MP
Ms Kristie Johnston MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Jen Butler MP
Ms Tabatha Badger MP
Mr Rob Fairs MP
Mr Craig Garland MP
Dr Shane Broad MP
Mrs Miriam Beswick MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON FELIX ELLIS MP

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Minister for Housing & Planning,
Minister for Skills & Training

Donna Adams

Commissioner of Police/Secretary, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency
Management/State Controller

Ross Hinkley

A/Deputy Secretary, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Adrian Bodnar

Assistant Commissioner Operations, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Jeremy Smith

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency
Management

Scott Wilson-Haffenden

Director Finance, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Tyron Clark

A/Deputy Chief Officer, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Grant Dreher

Chief Executive Officer, TasTAFE

Stuart Hollingsworth

Director, Jobs Tasmania, Department of State Growth

Eleri Morgan-Thomas

Chief Executive Officer, Homes Tasmania

Jessemy Stone

Director, Housing Policy and Programs, Homes Tasmania

Mathew Healey

Acting Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Delivery, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Richard Gilmour

Director, Community Infrastructure, Homes Tasmania

Claire Hynes

Deputy Executive Commissioner, Tasmanian Planning Commission, Department of Justice

Sean McPhail

Acting Director, State Planning Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet

PUBLIC

The Committee met at 9 a.m.

CHAIR (Mr Behrakis) - The time now being 9.00 a.m., the scrutiny of the Police, Fire and Emergency Management portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. At the table we've got Donna Adams, Commissioner of Police, secretary of DPFEM and State Controller; Jeremy Smith, Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner; Jonathan Higgins, Deputy Commissioner of Police; Ross Hinkley, Acting Deputy Secretary; Scott Wilson-Haffenden, Director of Finance; Adrian Bodnar, Assistant Commissioner (Operations); and Mick Lowe, Executive Director, State Emergency Service and Volunteers.

CHAIR - Thank you. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question of the minister, and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence for the minister to answer.

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

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. I'll begin my brief opening remarks by acknowledging the exceptional work of our Police, Fire and Emergency Services who helped our communities through the worst of the recent storms and floods. On behalf of a grateful state, my thanks go to the extraordinary Tasmanians who put up their hand to help, not only during the floods and damaging winds, but every day.

The Tasmanian Government recognises that our emergency responders provide critical assistance when our communities need it most. That's why in the 2024-25 Budget, we're investing more than \$144 million in new support that will bolster our frontline police services and more than \$41.5 million of new investment into our people, equipment and infrastructure, significantly bolstering our critical fire and emergency services.

To name a few initiatives, Tasmanians can expect record police recruitment to continue to crack down on crime and 60 additional police, with police numbers now at the highest level in history. The Budget delivers for our multidisciplinary Arch centres that support victim-survivors of family and sexual violence, including establishing a new centre in the north-west.

Our people are at the heart of what we do and we are committed to supporting them as they support us all. We've increased funding to our nation-leading health and wellbeing program and are supporting injured workers with substantial ongoing funding. Building emergency services hubs at Kingston, Rosebery and Wynyard in conjunction with broadened

PUBLIC

operational capabilities will ensure our communities receive diligent and timely assistance no matter where they are. This Budget prioritises investment in frontline services, will deliver stronger communities and make it clear that the Tasmanian government is committed to investment in our operational capabilities to keep our communities safe.

CHAIR - Questions.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, 80 per cent of this department's costs relate to employee salaries; \$11.7 million will be cut from the Police, Fire and Emergency Management budget over the next three years. What were the final saving strategies relating to positions to meet your Budget efficiency dividend?

Mr ELLIS - We've been really clear. We're looking to invest in frontline services. As I mentioned before, we'll see an additional 60 police officers in Tasmania Police to go with our record number of police that we've got at the moment. If I'm not mistaken, we have a new recruit course starting at the academy today and they are exceptional people who continue to put up their hands to work for Tasmania Police as well as our fire and emergency services.

We're continuing to work through our Budget efficiency strategies, but noting that key priorities of ours will be making the bureaucracy more efficient rather than directing work at the frontline of our services. As I mentioned, we're increasing the investment for our frontline services. We think there are opportunities in things like travel, advertising, consultancies and other areas that we can make savings and make our bureaucracy more efficient, as well as investing in information technology strategies like that.

I can tell you, Ms Butler, what we won't be doing is \$4 billion worth of savage cuts, which is what your party promised when you went to the last election. We can absolutely rule that out.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, I am asking the questions here and this isn't an opportunity for you to use marketing tools right now. I would like some answers. So, minister -

Mr ELLIS - I mean that was your budget plan, Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - What roles will be cut from DPFEM and what services will cease as a result?

Mr ELLIS - You just asked me that and I just told you: we're looking to invest in more services and that our focus in terms of efficiencies will be on making the bureaucracy more efficient so things like consultancy, travel and other opportunities.

Ms BUTLER - What services will cease as a result and will you table the saving strategies that you've approved, minister? Can we just stop wasting time and please just answer the question?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, you're fundamentally misunderstanding what the opportunities are. So rather than do what you did when you were in government last, which was sack 108 police officers -

Ms BUTLER - Relevance, relevance, Chair.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - we're looking to find savings when it comes to areas where we can make bureaucracy more efficient.

Ms BUTLER - Chair, can I have the minister please answer the question and be relevant to the question? This is an Estimates committee. It's not a public relations exercise.

CHAIR - I can't put answers into the minister's mouth, but I'll ask the minister to be relevant to the question.

Ms BUTLER - Can you direct him to answer the question and be relevant? Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sure. As I mentioned, we're looking to make savings when it comes to travel, consultancies, advertising and finding additional efficiencies as we continue our major investment into information technology. We haven't finalised our Budget efficiencies strategies just yet, but we have some good opportunities that we're continuing to work on, noting that we're looking to increase investment into the frontline. I'll pass over to the -

Ms BUTLER - Just to interrupt you there, minister, can I ask you, so you were confirming then that you can't table the saving strategy that must have been approved prior to you announcing this Budget because you haven't finalised that yet. Is that correct? And if it is finalised, can you table that?

Mr ELLIS - No it's not finalised yet. That's what I'm saying. We've got some good opportunities and we're looking at those. But, look, I'll pass over to the commissioner of police to maybe give us a further sense of what we think some of those opportunities might be.

Ms BUTLER - I really do want to go through you to speak to the to the commissioner, but to clarify, you don't have an approved saving strategy, even though you have released your Budget for the year? And you're confirming that, first, you don't have it and that's why you can't table it?

Mr ELLIS - We're looking to finalise our saving strategies. Once the Budget has been handed down that gives us a sense of what those opportunities might be. So we're working through that. Obviously, we have our allocated task when it comes to efficiencies, like every other part of government, and we think that there are strong opportunities. I've outlined some of the some of the areas that we're looking at as far as opportunities, but I'll pass over to the secretary and commissioner to give you some further sense of what those opportunities might be.

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister, the department set up a project control committee and we're working through a number of options to put to the minister in terms of achieving our savings strategy. We're looking at it from a perspective of short- to medium-term controls and strategies and then we'll look to medium- and longer-term strategies. The short- to medium-term will include a review of our CBD accommodation expenditure. We think that there's some opportunities there to consolidate and make some significant savings through the co-location of some of our corporate areas. We see that as a really important strategy in the short term.

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We also seek to reduce and manage the operating costs of the department. We're a department that's been managing our establishment for over two years. We have some very strong controls to make sure that we review every position that becomes vacant so that we ensure that we're replacing those positions in the areas that they need them to be replaced. We also have a number of non-salary-related expenditure items that we're reviewing at the moment. To reinforce the comments of the minister, they include travel, transport, advertising, consumables, and we'll also be reducing the cost of consultancies.

Ms BUTLER - Okay, thank you. In the proposed saving strategy sought by Treasury in December, minister, and released through RTI for the period 2024-25 to 2027-28, there were 29.7 FTE cuts of police staff and they'll be reduced from the current total police force of 230.7 FTEs. PAT -

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, as in?

Ms BUTLER - Full time positions.

Mr ELLIS - Of police?

Ms BUTLER - Yes, current total police workforce, this is from RTI documents.

Mr ELLIS - There's about 1400, give or take, about 1450 police officers, so I'm not sure you're referring to the right -

Ms BUTLER - I'll finish my question, minister -

Mr ELLIS - Are you sure you are referring to the right -

Ms BUTLER - I'll finish my question, minister. Police support staff.

Mr ELLIS - Oh, police support staff. Sure.

Ms BUTLER - PAT and the CPSU have said there is no scope for police officers to assist with these roles and duties due to being overworked, with absences due to workers comp and long-term sick leave. Will police officers be diverted to assist services like prosecution, radio dispatch and front counter triage?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I think probably the question misunderstands the nature of the information provided under RTI. That was initial proposals that were put to me by the department, which I didn't accept and for good reason. I think there's more opportunity and now that we've had time to work through what those other opportunities are, the commissioner's outlined quite clearly that there are some pretty significant opportunities for us to do things better and more efficiently in terms of our Budget, things like CBD accommodation for our corporate services, travel, consultancies, all those sorts of things.

As the minister, I'm very committed to making sure we're growing our service and growing our service to the people of Tasmania. That's why I didn't accept those initial proposals. Of course, I do thank DPFEM for the initial work that went into scoping that and I think that's what the community expect. They expect us to invest in the frontline and they expect us to find opportunities to make the bureaucracy more efficient.

Ms BUTLER - If the position reductions cannot be met through vacancy control, minister, what other methods will you be considering? Are you considering redundancies?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I think you've prepared some questions and you're maybe not listening to the answers. We didn't accept those strategies and we have different strategies that we're looking to put in place, so I think your questioning is based largely on a redundant last question.

Ms BUTLER - So you won't be considering redundancies if you can't find the efficiencies through other means, minister?

Mr ELLIS - We're looking to find the efficiencies.

Ms BUTLER - But if you can't find the efficiencies, minister, I completely understand.

Mr ELLIS - That's a hypothetical matter obviously, Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - It's not hypothetical.

Mr ELLIS - Well, it is because you started it with 'if'. So, I'm sorry, but that is a hypothetical. Our focus is around ensuring that we can meet the efficiencies that we have been tasked with and doing so in a way that supports the growth of our frontline as we committed to at the election and ensures that we're responsible stewards of taxpayer money because that's what the taxpayer expects of us, and finding those efficiencies within the bureaucracy is how we're looking to do it.

Ms BADGER - Minister, a couple of questions about police services and equipment. The multipurpose protection vests that are currently being worn by operational police are expiring and will need to be replaced at a cost of around \$4.8 million over the next four years. How are you expecting Tasmania Police to fund the replacement of the vests while they're also dealing with the significant efficiencies placed on them over that same four-year period?

Mr ELLIS - I think we've outlined, Ms Badger, what some of those efficiencies will be. None of those have anything to do with personal protective equipment. So, if that's potentially helpful in terms of your thinking, we've clearly identified that there are opportunities to make savings that have nothing to do with frontline services. That's what our commitment to the Tasmanian people is and what we're looking to deliver.

In terms of equipment, our government has always had a strong focus in investing for safety equipment. We were the government that brought in body-worn cameras for police officers and we've made significant investments as part of the Budget to continue to increase those opportunities for rolling out.

In terms of our police protective vests, obviously we have a range of different investments there and we have some opportunities to continue to work with the department around renewing and refreshing the fleet of vests. I'll pass over to the commissioner to add further.

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister, the actual MIPV program of the vests is a rolling program, so the vests don't all expire at the same time. They've been brought on in different

allocations over a number of years. The first cohort of vests to expire will be at the end of next year and we have a number of opportunities as to how we manage the replacement of the vests. We can get them recertified, which will then provide a number of other years where they can continue to be operational and used by our members or we can replace those vests with new vests.

We're currently trialling a number of vests across the organisation at the moment because technology changes and we want to make sure that we make a decision to get the right vest when we move forward. It's a program of work that we've been managing and, as I said, we have options. At no stage will we be leaving officers in a situation where their safety is compromised. That is absolutely our number one priority, to make sure that we've got safety equipment that's fit for purpose and that's hence why we've got the trial.

Ms BADGER - Following on from that, further on the equipment, and as the minister mentioned, the body-worn cameras, there are we understand some detectives across the state who deal with some of the most vulnerable people in Tasmania - children - and they don't have access to the technology of the body-worn cameras at this point. How does the government justify not having the funding for the full roll-out of the body-worn cameras to all operational arms of Tasmania Police?

Mr ELLIS - I'm glad to hear that the Greens are supportive of the body-worn cameras because I don't think that was necessarily always the case. We've brought body-worn camera funding from zero to where it is now, which is rolled-out right across our frontline for our police officers. It's an important investment because, particularly for those frontline officers in uniform in our busy 24/7 stations, for example, that's important in terms of evidence-gathering and also as a deterrent in terms of assaults on police. We're always looking to review the way that we continue to provide those and make them available. Perhaps the commissioner might want to speak to the kind of risk assessments that we do around which particular staff might have access to it.

Ms BADGER - Yes, and noting that the question was very specifically just about the detectives.

Mr ELLIS - I understand.

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister, this funding will continue to support our newly-graduated recruits. Obviously, as we have an uplift and a growth of police numbers, it's important to ensure that our frontline numbers have access to body-worn cameras. The program has been a rolling program over a number of years. Every time we've been supported with funding, we've undertaken risk assessments to determine which specialist areas should next have the body-worn camera. An example of that risk assessment is our special operations group now has body-worn cameras. As part of this particular funding, that's what we'll do, we'll conduct a risk assessment to determine which areas should next have the expanded opportunity for body-worn cameras.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Through you, minister, to the commissioner, can you give us an indication of the numbers of police officers currently on workers compensation and long-term sick leave, and also a breakdown of how long they've been on workers compensation or long-term sick leave, please?

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Ms ADAMS - In terms of police numbers, there are 201 open claims that are relevant to Tasmania Police, 59 of those claims relate to physical injuries and 142 are psychological-injury open claims. In terms of staff totally incapacitated, we have 108. That's 7 per cent of our organisation. And, was there another?

Ms JOHNSTON - The length of those times that they've been on worker's compensation?

Ms ADAMS - I don't have the period of time for each of the claims, and they do vary.

Ms JOHNSTON - Is that something you're able to get if I put that on notice?

Ms ADAMS - It may be a challenge because we'd have to go through the 201 to actually understand when the claim was open and accepted and how long they've been on, but I'll certainly get some advice and come back to you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. Further to that, I'm interested in police fatigue management policies, in particular how that relates to when officers need to attend across for another agency. For instance, when officers need to attend court appearances and they're not rostered on, but they might have come off a shift or about to go onto a shift, how is that managed between the courts and police in managing fatigue policies over that time?

Ms ADAMS - Fatigue is an issue that we have responsibility for managing under the work health and safety legislation. We have a fatigue management policy that we've been working with our police association, our union, with over a number of years. That policy is being trialled in a number of work areas, which has included some frontline stations and our special operations group. We want to make sure we get that policy right. It has reference to how we manage overtime and where we have officers who may well be members of specialist groups, there's a requirement to do a fatigue management plan. At this stage we're actually evaluating that particular policy. We've got some independent evaluation criteria that we've used. At this stage it's about now working out when we implement the policy.

Ms JOHNSTON - Through you, minister, does that interact with other agencies? So, for instance, when an officer comes off night shift and then has to attend court at 10.00 a.m. that matter might be adjourned until 2.00 p.m. and then he's back on night shift again. They are potentially doing a night shift in court sitting and waiting, and another night shift. How's that managed in terms of fatigue policy?

Ms ADAMS - Again, through you, minister, it's not - the other agencies, in terms of the court, what we do do on our files is we ask our officers to obviously indicate if they are on leave, so we understand their periods of leave and, hopefully, we're able to work with the courts to ensure that they're not recalled to duty when they're on leave.

But, in terms of the shifts, the shifts, they're 24/7 shifts, they move through a cycle and sometimes it's really difficult to actually alleviate overtime and recalling people back to duty for court. That's why the policy is going to be important, ensuring that supervisors and members manage fatigue and that we're aware of the cumulative effects of being recalled to duty, and we've got strategies in place to ensure that we get members having the right breaks at the right time. But any member who is feeling fatigued, they are very clear responses and we can't have people at work unless they're right and fit and ready to go.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Commissioner, I think as well maybe it might be worth providing some information around say some of the legislative work that we've had underway regards the different police officer court appearances. So, say, for example, I'm thinking outlaw motorcycle gang matters where evidence can be provided by a different member of Tasmania Police.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, that is true. We have made some legislative change where the consorting legislation with OMCGs was requiring officers to come and give evidence, which now we've got the opportunity of submitting a statutory declaration to provide that evidence.

One of the other things that we've been doing is we've had a small trial in relation to police officers giving evidence from police stations and not actually travelling to the courts. And, again, we're always looking at opportunities to manage the fatigue and every time you're getting, for instance, an officer not driving from Oatlands to the Hobart Magistrates Court and giving evidence via video-link from their station, that's a really good example of some of the things that we're trying to work with the courts and to do differently.

Mr FAIRS - It's apparent significant investment in police and, in particular, recruiting at record levels. Are these recruits Tasmanian residents and what's being done to ensure that this bright talent is attracted to the career in policing?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. I can say at the outset that Tasmania Police has increased its recruit intake and training to meet the government's commitment to boost police numbers by 226. As a cricket fan, you'll be delighted to know it's an increase of 334 additional police roles, of course, Don Bradman's and, I think, Mark Taylor's number.

There are currently 30 growth positions scheduled to be recruited in the next two years to complete the previous election commitment from 2021. In addition, a further 10 growth positions will be scheduled each year for the next six years to implement the 2024 election commitment.

Tasmania Police continues to attract recruits despite a very competitive employment market and attrition challenges, and that is being experienced by all police jurisdiction across Australia.

The second year of the This Is Tas Police recruitment campaign has again proved successful with advertising across social media platforms, on mainstream media, bus backs, static signage and podcasts. A review of the recruit training has resulted in a recruit training course being set at 28 weeks in length, including a six-week infield training component and this style, of course, maximises the on-the-job training, providing recruits with an increased amount of practical experience, and, in January 2024, Tasmania Police commenced its new training regime with a recruit training course commencing every 10 weeks.

These courses include six recruit training courses at the Tasmania Police Academy, one recruit training course at the northern campus in Launceston and one accelerated training course that was also held at the Tasmania Police Academy. The planned training regime will see up to 164 recruits commence their training in the 2024 calendar year and, as of

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30 June 2024, a total of 109 police recruits have been in training during that financial year and this includes 21 who graduated in March 2024 and 88 currently in training at the Academy.

That's the largest number ever in training with Tasmania Police at any one time, and funding of \$160,000 is provided to Tasmania Police to support the cost of each new recruit. The increased training regime being undertaken by the police academy has required the secondment of additional staff to the area to deliver the increased training requirements, and these are an excellent way for people to also deepen their engagement with the next generation of Tasmanian police officers.

So, we've got a strong pipeline of recruits coming through at the moment and Tasmania Police is widely regarded as an employer of choice. We certainly see a great deal of recruitment among Tasmanians and also people from interstate looking to start a career here as well.

Ms BUTLER - In RTI documents, the department asked to have no savings attached to them as they are a frontline agency and could not afford any cuts. They were fearful of them. Yet \$35 million of cuts were applied by you. You've mentioned frontline quite a few times as having no cuts. What is considered frontline services in DPFEM? Is radio dispatch answering 000 calls not considered frontline?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I think we're potentially going around in circles here because I've outlined what some of the savings opportunities are and they have nothing to do with frontline staff. We've made it quite clear, it's quite obvious to the community what frontline staff looks like: police officers and firefighters, their SES -

Ms BUTLER - I am asking you what is considered frontline.

Mr ELLIS - And I think I've just said police, firefighters, SES. There's a whole range of amazing people in our organisation that provide those critical services. In terms of our savings strategies, I'm not sure we can be any clearer.

Ms BUTLER - Would you like me to reclarify the question, minister?

Mr ELLIS - I understood it. Maybe I need to be reclarify what we're talking about with our efficiency dividends. So corporate accommodation -

Ms BUTLER - Can I re-ask my question, Chair, because he's going nowhere near it again.

CHAIR - Sure.

Ms BUTLER - What is considered frontline services in DPFEM? And is -

Mr ELLIS - I have literally just said police, firefighters and SES.

Ms BUTLER - Is radio dispatch answering 000 calls considered frontline?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I think you're again -

Ms BUTLER - Yes, no?

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Mr ELLIS - I think we've made it pretty clear what we're talking about in terms of frontline. I've also made it pretty clear in terms of what our savings strategies will look like. I mentioned before around travel, I mentioned before around consultancies. I assume that's something you support?

Ms BUTLER - Are police counter staff considered frontline services? Some detail instead of the big generalistic talk. I want to know what you consider frontline services within DPFEM as the minister.

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned before, I think the community has pretty clear understanding of what that is -

Ms BUTLER - No, you, minister.

Mr ELLIS - and things like police, fire, SES. I also reject the premise of your question because, as we've clearly outlined here today, our strategies and our opportunities in terms of savings look like consolidating the accommodation that we have for our corporate services in the CBD here in Hobart. Is that something that you support? I assume so. That's what we're looking to do when it comes to -

Ms BUTLER - I'm happy to step over that side of the room and become the minister if you want to ask me questions? More than happy for that.

Mr ELLIS - Well, your plan is for \$4 billion worth of cuts, Ms Butler, so I don't think people will want you to do that.

Ms BUTLER - Touché. Did you give the department instructions on what is frontline given they say the whole department is frontline.

Mr ELLIS - I gave very clear instruction to the department that I didn't accept their initial proposed savings strategies. I appreciated the work, but I had a sense that there were more opportunities for efficiencies. Working closely with our leadership in terms of Tasmania Police, fire and SES, we've come to that agreement as well. Some of the strategies I've outlined to the committee that you don't seem to want to commit to whether you support or not are pretty clear in that -

Ms BUTLER - What are you talking about?

Mr ELLIS - I'm talking about the fact that you won't tell us whether you support our -

Ms BUTLER - Come on, I'm asking you questions, minister. This is an Estimates committee. Can you please have a crack at it?

Mr ELLIS - support reductions to our travel, our consultancies, our advertising and also the opportunities to consolidate our CBD leases. I think we made it clear that those are the kind of opportunities that, while they're not immediately apparent, with time and with analysis, we've been able to land on it. That's a really positive thing because the Tasmanian community work hard for their money and they expect us to be responsible stewards of taxpayers' money. Where there's opportunities for us to find savings in terms of things like corporate

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accommodation or travel, we should take those and that we should be that we should be looking at those opportunities to provide those savings.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, going back to my questioning, the commissioner previously referred to an efficiencies committee. Will you be sitting on that efficiencies committee?

Mr ELLIS - No, I don't sit on it although, obviously, as they work through, it's my job to approve or not approve of the strategies they identify.

Ms BUTLER - Who will be sitting on that then?

Mr ELLIS - I might pass over to the commissioner, or secretary, I should say, in this case.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you. The deputy secretary, who's here with us today, Mr Hinkley, chairs that particular committee.

Ms BUTLER - Any other?

Ms ADAMS - It has our director of Business Services and our director of People and Culture. I'll look to our deputy secretary just to make sure I've covered.

Mr HINKLEY - The executive director of People and Business Services.

Ms BUTLER - Okay. The agency has identified psychosocial hazards brought about by increased workloads. How will increased workloads be managed, minister?

Mr ELLIS - By recruiting more police is the first answer. We had a commitment at the last election to increase our police from a record level of about 1450 by an additional 60 officers. We're looking to continue to deliver on that commitment. I just mentioned before that we are looking to make significant gains in recruiting. We've also been very proactive in recruiting for new firefighters. It was a real delight to be there at the graduation we had for our firefighters only a couple of months ago. We're continuing those recruitment drives so that we can help meet the needs and expectations of the community and continue to grow our frontline services.

I might pass over to maybe both commissioners to give us a sense in terms of what strategies we have for managing fatigue beyond increasing the number of people we have.

Ms ADAMS - We will continue to look at what we do in each of our work areas and where we can reduce administrative burden. Obviously, we will look to those initiatives.

We've been an agency that has really demonstrated how technology can help in the delivery of our services and we'll continue to do that.

In terms of our frontline policing, we currently have a review being undertaken by ANZPAA, which is a policing research body that represents all police forces across Australia. They're actually looking at the workload and the change in responsibilities of our frontline police. We're doing that review with our union and we're looking forward to getting the report on that particular body of work next year. We're very active in always looking at how we might

do things better, how we might do things more efficiently, and that includes listening to our staff.

Mr SMITH - Tasmania Fire Service has additional staff identified through a workforce planning position that was recently established. We're looking at ensuring that we get additional staff right across the state. We're looking at putting an additional day work crew on the north-west coast, additional field works officers in the north and south as well, and also looking at opportunities to value-add to positions throughout the state.

Mr ELLIS - The field works officer's opportunity is also about supporting our volunteers who, in many ways, are key parts of our workforce in that space. I don't know if you want to elaborate further on that one, Mr Smith?

Mr SMITH - It certainly has been identified the workload of our field works officers and district staff is, at times, overwhelming. We are looking at additional staff to support those positions, as well as the volunteers throughout the state.

Ms BADGER - The Weiss review made some important recommendations, including the establishment of a restorative engagement framework and scheme for victims and survivors, a framework to build engagement and trust between police and the community, the establishment of a victim management team. What progress has been made so far on each of those recommendations?

Mr ELLIS - This is a really important area of work. It's an extension of the commission of inquiry in many ways. I want to, first, again put on record our deepest support for victim-survivors, both of Paul Reynolds and anyone, sadly, who have been victims of those heinous crimes. Certainly, in Tasmania Police, we are committed to rebuilding the trust of the community. Mr Reynolds was in a high position of trust in the community and he quite clearly failed that. We need to ensure that the processes around people that might seek to abuse a position of authority and trust in the community, that we can stamp that kind of behaviour out.

At the request of Commissioner Adams, an independent review was undertaken in relation to the conduct of Paul Reynolds across his 40-year career prior to his death on 13 September 2018, which was -

Ms BADGER - Sorry, minister, we understand the background of it. We are asking you about the progress on those three very specific recommendations.

Mr ELLIS - That is okay, I understand. In terms of the review, there is a range of recommendations that sit across different parts of government. So, for background, the reviews we fed into the broader commission of inquiry process, we have 191 recommendations for the commission of inquiry. The work is being broadly led by DPAC but supported by all agencies. These five include matters that are for Tasmanian Police, matters that for DPAC and matters that sit with the Attorney-General, for example, the Integrity Commission. In terms of the Tasmanian Police matters, we have made some quite strong steps towards this, including increasing our capability in terms of community engagement, noting that there's much more that needs to be done.

Tasmania Police is often strongly embedded with our sporting organisations, which was at the heart of Ms Weiss's recommendations but there are greater opportunities. One of the

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things that Ms Weiss identified was that Paul Reynolds was not only able to groom his victims, he was able to groom the sporting communities that he was a part of -

Ms BADGER - Absolutely. They are the recommendations that I have just read out. What progress has been made on the - I can read out the three recommendations again if that is helpful?

Mr ELLIS - That is alright, I understand what they are, Ms Badger -

Ms BADGER - Great, so has any progress been made?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to Commissioner Adams to talk about that further engagement that we have in terms of our community team.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. Through you, there has been work that has commenced in relation to the three recommendations. In terms of recommendation 2, I have actually participated in a restorative justice process already. Our Department of Justice has a framework that we were working through to ensure that it is fit for purpose for us but we want to make sure that any victim-survivor who feels that they want to be heard can come forward and that we have a framework that's consistent across whole of government.

In terms of recommendation 3, that is well advanced in terms of the work that we've done to establish a community engagement unit. Ms Weiss actually recommends that it has the same status as a geographical command or one of our crime commands. That is a recommendation that I support. I think it is important that our engagement with our community is the strongest feature of what we do in our policing organisation.

We have promoted our first inspector in charge of the community engagement unit. This inspector has been working with the Office of the Independent Regulator and Sports Integrity Australia and has done numerous workshops and face-to-face sessions with our sporting bodies across the state and that work will continue.

What we want to do is develop our strategy before we turn the unit, I guess, into a command. We want to make sure that we're getting the right feedback from some of the vulnerable communities to ensure that we get that right and it is linked to one of the commission of inquiry recommendations around having a community engagement strategy with vulnerable communities. There's some well-advanced work that's been done in that space.

And the last ones in relation to the dedicated victim management team to ensure that victims of from police perpetrators are actually supported in the right way. We have an independent chair of our Police Family and Sexual Violence Independent Committee, and independent chair who's actually providing us some advice about how we should construct this support unit to make sure that we're providing the best support to victims, and we will continue to work through that so that we get that recommendation right as well.

Ms BADGER - The government's committed to implementing all the recommendations of the Weiss review, but there's no funding specifically, at least budget line, allocated to it. How are these recommendations going to be fully funded?

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Mr ELLIS - Yes, obviously we've got significant funding in terms of the commission inquiry. As I mentioned before, this is largely an extension of the commission of inquiry. The commission identified some of Mr Reynolds offending and, from that, the commissioner then commissioned the further review.

Obviously the funding for the commission of inquiry in the Budget already is extensive but, as the Premier has clearly said, as we continue to work through these recommendations, more funding will be needed and more will be available. So we're working through, in terms of the redress scheme, the design of that as a whole of government. DPAC and the Attorney-General are working through those matters.

Obviously, recommendation 5 suggests an expanded role for the integrity commission too, and as we work through those policy matters and those legislative changes, we'll continue to work through in terms of additional funding that's required once we get the scope and the design right.

In terms of Tasmania Police, this is an area that we're already looking to continue to expand. It's part of why we need to continue to expand our police force, Ms Badger. I note that in your budget reply, you propose that we reduce the number of police officers. I don't think that's the right way to go, because policing is so much more than -

Ms BADGER - I'd definitely double-check that and I'll just -

Mr ELLIS - Well, it's absolutely true, Ms Badger. Sadly, you have it in one of your line items. It might have paid to read that before that was put out.

Ms BESWICK - We've talked about having quite a few officers on extended sick leave and 108 incapacitated, and we've talked about how many we're recruiting. We've got 108 positions there that cannot be filled because of our structure and how our system works. What are we doing to try to fix that gap and actually make those positions substantive and to actually really retain people for more than five years?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Beswick, and I note your strong support of Tasmania Police as well and I know as an emergency services volunteer. So, I give you a big shout-out for that as well. It's amazing work.

Look, this is certainly a big challenge. It's a challenge for police jurisdictions around the country and around the world because it's tough work. It really can be extraordinarily rewarding but our police officers and our other emergency services are exposed to some of the most difficult things that people will see in life. They do so, so that the rest of us don't necessarily have to be. As part of that, we need to be making sure that we're supporting them.

Now, we are seeing net increases in officer recruitment but, as you identify, we need to be making sure that we're wrapping the support around those people so that they get the support that they need before they might find themselves being long-term incapacitated. It's part of the reason why I've committed \$4 million per year for our nation-leading health and wellbeing program. That involves a mix of proactive, preventative and intervention measures, and that's 24/7 for our emergency responders. So, that's police but it's also fire, SES, ambulance and whether that's career or volunteer.

That's been a huge uplift. When we came to government 10 years ago, there was only a handful of people who were working in that unit. The growth we've seen there is really pleasing to see, because we need to be making sure that people have that support. Often it can come at unexpected times and ensuring that 24/7 support is there, the peer mentoring as well, is a critical part of our critical incident stress management process and is really important too.

I might pass over to the secretary to add further around that support.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. In terms of retention, which was part of your question about how do we retain officers beyond the five years, retention has a number of key drivers and it's a really important focus for us. Professional development of our staff is one of those areas where you can invest and have our officers develop their capabilities so that they're continually growing. The work that we do do in the professional development space is a key retention strategy.

As an example, we've got a number of training programs; we've reviewed our promotion pathway so that our staff can become supervisors at a much earlier stage than they could back in my day. When they go through the promotion pathway, it's now linked to UTAS and the department pays for the tertiary qualifications that they study for and become accredited for.

We've also got lots of examples of specialist training, whether it be detective training, trauma-informed training, search and rescue, and also we provide opportunities for our staff to go interstate to build their capability and work with interstate peers.

The second key part about retention is making sure you've got a good work-life balance and making sure you've got key parts in your award that prioritise leave and having opportunities to be away from the workplace.

Six weeks annual leave a year is in our police award. Our staff work a 38-hour week. They have the opportunity to take time off in lieu. There's the police accumulated leave scheme where, as an example, they can work four years and take the fifth year off in terms of a model of that particular leave scheme, and we see a lot of people having a career break and taking their families across the country using that particular leave scheme.

A third thing for retention is about being family-friendly and making sure you've got the supports around so that all of our staff who have parental responsibilities are well supported, whether it be primary caregiver leave, grandparent leave, adoption leave, and keeping-in-touch days, up to 10 days when a person is on parental leave, so they keep in touch with the workforce. A really important retention strategy.

The other thing is about workplace incentives. As an example, people who work in our country areas have rent free; they don't pay rent and we've invested significantly again from funding from the government to make sure that all our housing is at a high standard and families can move into country areas without having to pay rent because we think it's important that our police officers are part of those communities.

The other thing is a strong recognition framework, actually recognising the tough job and what our officers do. As an example, we have an annual investigator of the year where we recognise an individual for their outstanding investigative work. What we then do is provide that individual with a development opportunity. They can either go on a training program or

they can go and in another state. Our first recipient last year went to the Serious Organised Crime Division in New South Wales and worked two weeks after she won that award. It's really important to us to recognise the efforts of our staff.

The last piece of retention is around having incentives to come back. Some people will go and try something, it might not work for them. In the past, if someone wants to come back, they start back down the bottom. We don't do that. We now recognise the skills that these individuals, our former members, have and we have a process in place where we recognise their same salary, their same qualifications and their rank and we look at the value that we can get from that individual coming back. That's been some recent work that we've done through the introduction of a re-engagement policy.

There's a lot of work to be done. It's not something that you stop thinking about, because we want our staff to feel that they are well supported. You may well be aware of the research that the generation today has 10 jobs before they're 50. We want them to do their 10 jobs with us. Frontline policing, traffic policing, being a detective, being a specialist, they can do their 10 jobs with us.

Mr ELLIS - And there are some future commissioners already in the academy as well, which is wonderful to see.

Ms ADAMS - I'm sure there is.

Ms BESWICK - So have you found it being effective?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, absolutely. The policy has only been newly introduced and we've got six who have come back.

Mr HIGGINS - Can I just add to one part that I don't think we did answer. Of the 108 people who are incapacitated, there'll be some of those who have been off for many years, some who are more in the short-term, but there are positions within that 108 we've actually filled or shadowed for want of a better term. It's not 108 positions with nobody doing the work. They're spread right across the agency. For example, in the 24-hour stations there are about 450 people, we've got 1450. So there are a lot of police spread around the state doing different roles. Some of those more identified roles where people may have been off for a year or more, the positions are replaced so there isn't that added burden on the person who may be off and feeling that they're letting everyone down or anything. That shouldn't be the case, they should be just trying to get better, the best they possibly can. There are positions that we have done that right around the state with.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, one thing I do want to ask about is the Family Violence Offender Electronic Monitoring program. I understand these devices are very effective in regard to helping protect victims of family violence. Are there plans for Tasmania Police to continue with that?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. As part of the Tasmanian Government's ongoing commitment to protection of victims of family violence, the department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management commenced a technology trial involving the GPS tracking and electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence perpetrators in November 2018 and since this time the electronic monitoring program has been used operationally by Tasmania Police

and is regarded internationally as a highly successful intervention mechanism to address family violence.

The electronic monitoring program is a joint initiative between DPFEM and the Department of Justice, and Tasmania has experienced a year-on-year increase in the number of perpetrators and victims who receive electronic monitoring. The family violence program is world-leading and Tasmania is the only Australian jurisdiction currently applying monitoring technology in this way and there's been significant national and international interest in the program. We confirmed that the other day, again at our National Police Ministers Council meeting. People are looking at what we're doing here in Tasmania.

The defining feature of the program is centred on the application of electronic monitoring as a condition of a family violence order - you might hear me saying FVO - rather than as an alternative to imprisonment or a custodial sanction, which is the practice in many other jurisdictions. Under the legislation, electronic monitoring can only be applied by the court through an FVO, this brings someone onto the monitoring program and the family violence unit must apply for the full or interim FVO with electronic monitoring conditions. That's not an option of the police family violence order at this stage, but in this way the program is referred to as a front-end strategy that can be applied at the early stages of police involvement in a family violence matter. It's particularly valuable as far as an intervention mechanism because it's proven to enhance the safety of victims and to ensure perpetrators are compliant with their family violence order conditions at a critical point in the family violence offending context when, for example, judicial, criminal or support service activities may also be underway.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. You might want to ask a similar DD of the minister for Corrections because I believe the electronic monitoring comes under that remit. Just to be helpful.

Mr ELLIS - Both Tasmanian Police and Department of Justice, as I mentioned Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - In RTI documents, minister, there was a proposed reduction in the 2024-25 to 2027-28 period of 4.1 FTE from the Forensic Science Service (FSS) Tasmania workforce, reducing 31.7 current staff to 26.6 staff. Upon hearing this, forensic science staff commenced industrial action to stop these cuts, and they've said that they are already severely understaffed and cannot complete important work like cold case files. You haven't ruled out radio dispatch or police counter staff being considered frontline, and so they can expect cuts.

Mr ELLIS - No that's rubbish, Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - Is FSS considered frontline? If not, what is the impact of cuts to FSS and how do you expect FSS to complete their full scope of duties?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I don't want to tell you how to do your job, but I've answered this question significantly around about this. We have not accepted the initial proposed strategies and we've come up with other strategies. If you'd like to ask me about the strategies that we are actually thinking about rather than the ones we're not -

Ms BUTLER - I'm asking you about Forensic Science Services.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - we might have a more helpful conversation here, Ms Butler, because otherwise we're just going to go around in circles. We're talking about things like -

Ms BUTLER - You have no intention of answering my questions.

Mr ELLIS - We're talking about things like corporate accommodation, we're talking about things like travel and advertising. You know, if you look at the sort of the investment that we want to make in terms of forensic science, the FSST uplift program is a total allocation of \$3.67 million with \$2.5 million expended to date. And the program has allowed FSST to acquire a number of critical assets including, and I'll get a prize if I say this right, from the team there, liquid chromatograph mass spectrometer, which I think is just about right, a DNA extraction robot and a scanning electron microscope. \$190,000 is allocated over the next two financial years and the funding will be used to purchase additional technological assets. In addition, the residual funding, that's about \$968,000, will be used for the development of an additional storage capacity for critical forensic exhibits as well. This is an area that we're looking to continue to invest in and, and they do amazing work.

We actually restarted the cold case unit, Ms Butler, after it was cut when you cut 108 police officers when you were last in government, because we don't want to, we want to ensure that those families.

Ms BUTLER - You are tedious. This is tedious repetition.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I mean, this is new information.

Ms BUTLER - Just answer the question. This came from an RTI document, minister. Please take it seriously.

Mr ELLIS - As I keep saying to you, Ms Butler, I did not accept the recommendations that were provided at the time. We can continue going around in circles about a strategy that I did not approve or we can actually talk about things of substance here at this table.

Ms BUTLER - Are you telling us today that Forensic Science Staff are safe from cuts and that they are a frontline service?

Mr ELLIS - Look Ms Butler, I have made it really clear we are looking to continue to invest in this space -

Ms BUTLER - So am I right, that is what you are saying here today? So I can go back to the Forensic Science Staff and tell them that they are safe from cuts, the minister told us that in Estimates? I can confirm that with those staff and I am pretty sure they are watching right now and that they are a frontline service -

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I have said we are looking to invest in all of those things, we are making major investments in terms of our forensic sciences.

Ms BUTLER - So I cannot tell them that then? Can I tell them that, minister?

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Ms Butler, the minister is trying to answer the question. When the minister has incited interjections, I have not pulled you up on it, but if you ask a question, let the minister answer it, please.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. As I have said, we are looking to make major investments in that space. I can go through some more if you want, following critical assets as part of our acquisition, a DNA extraction robot \$443,000; a DNA liquid handling robot \$95,000; real-time PCR DNA instruments \$101,000; DNA thermal cycles \$29,000; a liquid chromatography mass spectrometer \$464,000; a scanning electron microscope \$183,000; a Fourier transformation IR microscope \$116,000; additional freezer fridge storage space \$29,000; a new security alarm system \$35,000; new cold storage temp humidity monitoring system \$21,000; replacement temp community air flow control in the DNA instrument room, that is \$511,000; one gas chromatography mass spectrometer \$89,000; that might have been glass chromatography mass spectrometer, and one glass refractive index measurement instrument of \$150,000.

The third and fourth year of our technology uplift, we will see the replacement of a Headspace gas chromatography-flame ionisation detector, which is \$65,000; a high-performance liquid chromatography \$42,000; a DNA centrifuge \$15,000; mobility solutions for remote crime scenes allocated \$23,000.

An additional storage capacity for critical forensic exhibits which will be developed, which is about \$968,000 in terms of the residual. We are clearly looking to make major investments in space -

Ms BUTLER - Can I get back to my question because you really have not touched it.

Mr ELLIS - We have identified areas that have nothing to do with these services when it comes to the efficiencies that we are looking to bring in. If we want to keep going around in circles, I am not sure it will enlighten anybody.

Ms BUTLER - I will go back to my question and I think it is wonderful that you are investing in all that equipment and that will certainly help with the gathering of evidence. But my question was whether Forensic Science staff safe from job cuts and are they considered a frontline service? You did not answer that question. Could you please answer that question? I know those Forensic Science staff are watching and they would be very pleased for you to confirm that their jobs are not at risk and they are considered frontline service.

Mr ELLIS - Look, our forensic science is an amazing job that is why we are making the kind of investments that we are. Now, as I mentioned before you are referring to an old RTI that we did not accept in terms of the strategies. We are just going to keep going around in circles, Ms Butler, if that is all the questions that you have for me over the next three hours. We did not accept that those suggestions and our focus will be on things like travel, consultancy -

Ms BUTLER - There is \$35 million in efficiency dividends over four years, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Things like CBD offices for corporate staff. They are a major savings that we can make that have nothing to do with frontline services. Your approach was to slash \$4 billion and you would not tell people what they are.

PUBLIC

Ms BUTLER - Have you visited the forensic science lab and spoken with the staff there, minister?

Mr ELLIS - I certainly have, they are amazing people.

Ms BUTLER - Did you go into the lab itself and see the critical work that they are performing?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly have.

Ms BUTLER - So you have been inside the forensic labs?

Mr ELLIS - I certainly have, which is part of the reason why I can say liquid chromatography mass spectrometer, but it is also part of the reason why we have such an understanding in terms of the investment that is needed. For example, even small things like the expanded storage facility for DNA exhibits - when seeing is believing and when you get a sense of just how small that that facility has been in the past for the storage, you can really see why the investments to continue to expand it are important. These people do incredible work and we're really pleased to be supporting them. As I said in terms of our strategies we clearly have to focus on different areas that are about making the bureaucracy more efficient and I'd hope that you'd agree with that.

Ms BADGER - Minister, just a question in relation to the coronial inquest into Robert Bo Xu and Jarrod Davies. The recommendations in this report did cross a couple of portfolios. In those strictly relating to Police, are you able to outline the government's position on the recommendations and any progress on implementing them, specifically the following two:

Formal guidelines be developed and implemented for information sharing between CBOS and Tasmania Police,

and

between Tasmania Police and the Liquor and Gaming Branch and Tasmania Police and CBOS so that regular, random spot checks of licensed premises are conducted, any potential breaches are fully investigated and if appropriate prosecuted and any proper disciplinary action is then taken against the licensee under the *Liquor Licensing Act 1990* or against the licensee or crowd controller.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Badger, I will pass that to the commissioner.

Mr BODNAR - Through the minister, in relation to those recommendations, to the second one involving Tasmania Police and CBOS, which specifically relates to security agents and their licensing and checking of their particulars, we have prepared a draft - I'll use the term 'letter of understanding' (LOU). I've recently sent that off to one of the deputy secretaries through Justice to consider. That's been some really good work that we've done since those findings were handed down, only very recently I must say. We have had an inspector work on those guidelines, or the LOU, with a senior member from the Department of Justice. They are

certainly well advanced. I'll continue following up with Justice to see their perspective on the draft that we've forwarded them.

In relation to the first recommendation around Liquor and Gaming, I met with the Commissioner for Licensing following a recommendation from a coroner. That related to the unfortunate death of a gentleman from Queenstown who was killed in a motor vehicle crash. From that inquiry it was ascertained that he consumed an amount of alcohol at a licenced premises in Queenstown and unfortunately drove at some stage after leaving. Unfortunately he was killed in a single vehicle crash. As a result of that coronial and that recommendation, as I say, I've met with the Commissioner for Licensing. I've written to our commands. As a result of that, there have been some random spot checks conducted since that coronial finding was handed down. From memory, I think it was Mr Webster who was the coroner who presided over that coronial matter. We're well advanced there.

There have been a couple of operations that I'm aware of, more so in the southern district, where we've had the divisional inspector from the Hobart Police station out with Liquor and Gaming representatives and also representatives from CBOS, as I understand it. We have issued some infringement notices to licensees. We've moved a number of people on. That's all designed about keeping people safe and also making sure that the licensees are complying with their obligations under the legislation. We're well advanced in relation to both of those.

Mr GARLAND - How is the current police budget impacting response times, particularly in remote and rural areas?

Mr ELLIS - Country station staffing is really important for us. Tasmania is a rural state. We have more people outside of the capital city than in it. I note yourself as a fellow member for Braddon, Mr Garland. We've made significant investments in supporting our frontline officers. We've talked about the historic recruitment for police officers that we've undergone here in Tasmania in the course of our government. Those investments are particularly significant when it comes to country stations. A country station relief policy provides new resources to our police stations in outlining areas.

We also have significant investment, as the commissioner mentioned before. Part of what we look to do to support our people is make sure they have good, comfortable accommodation when they're staying in our rural and remote areas. Those police officers may not necessarily be from the community originally, so we want to make their transition into that community comfortable. That's about providing comfortable houses that are well maintained. That's a \$22.9 million investment. I'll pass over to the commissioner and her team in terms of those response times and the support we provide.

Mr BODNAR - In relation to our operational dispatch times, when I look back over the previous five financial years, I'm going back to 2019 and 2020. For urban areas, it's 18 minutes back in 2019-20. In 2020-21 it was 19 minutes. Then we see a very slight uptick through 2021 to 21 minutes; 2022-23 is 22 minutes; and 2023-24, the last financial year, it's 24 minutes. So, a slight uptick in the urban areas.

Rural, to be more specific to your question, Mr Garland: 2019-20, the operational dispatch incidents was 30; the next financial year, 32; and then it averages out at 35, 35 and 37. What we do know from some of those jobs we attend in the country area, sometimes our travel times can be impacted by the tyranny of distance depending on where the particular job is.

PUBLIC

I think at times in the past, as well, in years gone by, when we've had jobs called in, at some stage, a complainant or a victim may not be available to see the police at that particular time, so we can delay attendance till a time when the victim or the complainant is available. I believe that, at times, has distorted some of our figures in the past.

Our country relief policy, and the fact that we are putting an additional FTE in our designated country cluster areas around the state, will hopefully improve some of those times. What we're doing across our cluster stations, we're effectively putting another police officer in there, which will help provide those local communities. It puts an additional member in the community. So there's that additional support and connection with the community. When our members are on leave, there's a member who's already there available to take that position, particularly when it comes to planned recreational leave, professional development courses or short stints way.

I think our response times have remained reasonably consistent over the last five years in those rural areas.

Mr GARLAND - With regard to marine policing, marine resources, I believe not that long ago we only had two police officers to cover the area between Port Davey and Port Sorell. Has that increased? Where are we at now with the marine side of things, particularly with the Braddon electorate?

Mr BODNAR - Obviously, for the organisation, Tasmania Police, we have a centralised Marine and Rescue Command which is in the southern part of the state. We have a number of police officers attached to that central command, which falls within what we call statewide services. Those officers have a statewide responsibility for marine enforcement, fisheries enforcement across the state.

We do have a number of other officers scattered around the state as well. There is an officer at Strahan; there are one or two, I believe, who work from George Town. There are others around at St Helens as well. Some of those outlying areas are supported. When they've got operations underway, they are supported, depending on the nature of the operations or the complexity, by our staff through Marine and Rescue down here in Hobart.

I know that back in June, there was some work done around Macquarie Harbour in relation to some information we'd received around gill netting because gill netting is illegal in the harbour. There was some work with the local marine police officer and some of our other police officers from around the state to be able to do some work over a weekend. From memory, six offenders were prosecuted as a result of that work. That's just an example of our members working in collaboration. I must say they do a really good job with the statewide coverage that we expect of them, particularly for some of the complexities of the fisheries investigations they undertake nowadays. It's not as simple as getting into a vessel and going out and necessarily boarding a boat. There's a lot of work that goes into some of the marine enforcement activities. A lot of it is unheard of by the public and that's for a reason. There is that statewide support.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of some of that capability, uplift, it might assist the committee to mention our large vessel replacement program, which has gone from strength to strength.

Mr BODNAR - Going back a few years ago, we replaced one of our larger vessels, Police Vessel *Wickham*, which was one of two larger vessels we're looking at at the moment.

We are nearly in completion for PV *Van Diemen*, which is being built in Western Australia, in Geraldton. I understand we're likely to receive that vessel, as in it will be delivered here in Tasmania, hopefully towards the latter part of this year. That's a big investment by the government. That will obviously enhance our patrol capability, particularly that offshore capability. The previous PV *Van Diemen* was purchased by the Australian Federal Police and that is now operating in Papua New Guinea. We've got two large vessels, *Wickham*, and we'll take we receipt of *Van Diemen* shortly.

We also have PV *Dauntless* down here in the southern part of the state. That's more responsible for some work, more inshore capability. We received that vessel, I'm going to say about three years ago. It does a lot of work down around the southern part of the state, particularly around Bruny Island. We also use it for some medivacs off the island at times in addition to the marine and enforcement activities.

In addition to that, we have a number of Devil Cats and Shark Cats positioned strategically around the state for some of those members like at George Town, St Helens and around at Strahan, where I was recently talking to the marine squad member around there.

Mr FAIRS - Chair, I wanted to ask about an area I'm well versed in, youth crime. There's a perceived increase of offending in our cities. What operational policy measures are in place to help address youth crime across Tasmania and keep our community members safe?

Mr ELLIS - Mr Fairs, I acknowledge the work you do with our young people in this state. Ultimately, we want to be ensuring that our young people don't come into contact with the law because they're not offending and they've got great opportunities in life. I acknowledge the work of your foundation, and you as an individual, in terms of ensuring that they have other pathways in life because that's ultimately the best outcome for those young kids.

Tasmania is a safe place to live and we know that total crime rates in Tasmania are significantly lower than those recorded in the early 2000s. However, unfortunately, we know that Tasmania is currently experiencing an increase in youth crime. Youth crime charges increased by 38 per cent in 2022. That was obviously coming off COVID years where we had a very low crime rate in Tasmania, but it also increased 27 per cent in 2023. While not all youth offenders are repeat offenders, we also know that in 2023, it was only 52 individuals that made up 50 per cent of the total youth crime charges in Tasmania. I'll say that again, 52 individuals for 50 per cent of total youth crime. Any criminal behaviour by these youths is totally unacceptable. No business owner or member of the public should be assaulted or in fear of living in their communities.

Tasmania Police is a key partner in terms of major reforms for child and youth wellbeing that have resulted from the commission of inquiry. Implementation of the recommendations will need to be appropriately considered to ensure the ongoing need to prevent and disrupt organised youth crime, which is, sadly a phenomenon we're seeing.

In line with the approach to the *Youth Justice Act 1997*, Tasmania Police has a focus on diverting youths from the court system where appropriate. These diversions can include informal cautions, formal cautions and community conferences. However, it's important to note that for intentional recidivist offenders, Tasmania Police can take stronger actions and we have a zero-tolerance approach. We continue to undertake high-visibility patrols focusing on problem crime areas, particularly during target times when youths are known to congregate,

for example, after school or in bus malls and retail districts. I'll pass over to the team from Tasmania Police if they want to add further.

Mr BODNAR - It's probably important, just to give the committee a bit of an overview about what's happening across Australia when it comes to challenges with youth crime because what we're finding here is not dissimilar to what we're seeing anywhere else throughout Australia.

The Bureau of Statistics released some data in February this year. That showed that for the financial year 2022-23 across Australia, there was a shade over 48,000 youths proceeded against across Australia. That was an increase on the previous financial year of a little bit over 6 per cent. So about 2800 more young people charged in 2022-23 across Australia than the previous financial year. What I have ascertained through that year is every jurisdiction saw an increase in youth offenders. In our own jurisdiction and our own state in Tasmania for 2022, we saw just over 3800 crime charges attributed to youth offenders. Out of that calendar year of 2022, there were 40 youths who were responsible for 50 per cent of those youth crime charges. So only a very small cohort of youths that are continually offending, I suppose.

When we move into 2023, and I've actually got a handout here that I might hand out with permission of the minister, through the minister if I can, and I'd just like to highlight a couple of things for committee members once you have those. It's a really good visual representation of what we're facing here in Tasmania. As I say, we're not an outlier when it comes to youth crime and some of the challenges we're facing, but there are some really good news stories also.

CHAIR - Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. Minister -

Mr BODNAR - So -

Ms BUTLER - Oh, sorry, I wasn't quite sure if you were finished.

CHAIR - Was there more, did you have -

Mr BODNAR - I was just about to refer the infographic if I could, Chair, through the minister.

Look, a couple of things there. If you look at the bottom right-hand tile, as I spoke about, 52 youths made-up 50 per cent of those youth crime charges in 2023. That's an increase on the 40 that we saw from the calendar year of 2022, but really concerningly, next to that you see that there are 180 youths charged who had also been charged with a crime in 2022.

Now we do have some good news stories and our staff who work in the youth crime intervention units are doing some great work in the youth crime space. We do have some stories where we have been able to divert youths away from crime. The minister spoke about some of the diversions, informal formal cautions and community conferences. There are some good news stories where we have been able to change people's lives and change that trajectory of offending. On the flip side, there are also examples of where we haven't been able to do so.

PUBLIC

Again, we've got an obligation to keep the community safe and that's what we intend to do when we're dealing with some of those youth crime issues.

Mr FAIRS - Can I just say thank you sincerely for the police officers who work in the youth space for what they do and help.

Ms BUTLER - Going back to the Forensic Science area, minister. You haven't ruled out cuts for forensic science and you don't consider them a frontline service. What is the current number of cases unstated?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, as I mentioned before, you're referring to an old strategy that we rejected. I don't think it's helping the committee at all to continue to refer to a strategy that we're not looking to implement. We've been really clear: we're looking to find savings in terms of travel, consultancies and areas like that, our CBD accommodation for corporate staff, where we can make major savings in terms of leases. So if you were actually interested in getting an understanding of what our approach is, the line of questioning continues to be just inaccurate and probably unhelpful.

Ms BUTLER - I can ask again, what is the current number of cases unstated in Forensic Science, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I'll pass over to the commissioner.

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister, I don't have that information.

Ms BUTLER - Could that information be taken on notice?

Mr ELLIS - We'll take it on notice.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. What is the oldest unstated case as well, also on notice if that's okay? Thank you, through the minister, and will Forensic Science Service Tasmania have four full-time employees cut, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. As I said, Ms Butler, you're referring to a strategy that I rejected because we think that there are other areas where we can make savings in terms of advertising travel, consultancies and our CBD offices for our corporate staff. The premise of your question is wrong headed. Our approach is around making sure that our bureaucracy is more efficient and that we're being responsible stewards of taxpayer money. We're looking to grow our frontline services -

Ms BUTLER - I can say it again, if you would like me to ask the question again. It might help you.

Mr ELLIS - I mean, you have been saying it for the last hour and I have been saying exactly the same thing, Ms Butler. We can keep going around on a strategy that we are not going down the path on or we can -

Ms BUTLER - I will ask the same question again. Will Forensic Science Service Tasmania have four full-time employee positions cut? Yes or no? You do not have to waffle talk, just a yes or no.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I am really not sure how we are going to progress this. I have said our focus in terms of budget efficiencies is on other areas. If you keep asking the same question, I will keep giving the same answer.

Ms BUTLER - The frustrating thing is that this morning, in his committee, the Premier has agreed to table his savings strategy. He has done the work and it is finalised. You seem to be very behind given we are three months into the financial year already. Will you table your current savings strategies and the funds allocated as savings to each item, rather than rattling off on your thought bubbles, which seems to be all that is going on here?

Mr ELLIS - I do not think CBD leases is a thought bubble, Ms Butler. That is quite specific and it is quite clearly a good idea. If you have a problem with that savings strategy, perhaps you might like to tell the committee. We are working to finalise that and we have been successful -

Ms BUTLER - Minister, that makes no sense, what you are talking about. Just answer the questions.

Mr ELLIS - We have been successful in finding new opportunities. We will be providing those strategies once they are approved and obviously we will be working through that with the secretary and police, fire and emergency services. We are continuing to work through that, but we think we have quite clearly identified good options in terms of making the bureaucracy more efficient -

Ms BUTLER - Will you table your savings strategy as the Premier has done today, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, absolutely.

Ms BUTLER - You will? Will you table it today?

Mr ELLIS - It is not approved today, Ms Butler, but when it is approved. Quite clearly that time spent in review has been worthwhile for us because if you look at the initial strategy that was proposed, that I did not accept, and you look at the strategies that are proposed now, that extra time has actually enabled us to work through and really consolidate how we are going to ensure that we make the bureaucracy more efficient while growing frontline services. We are not far away from completing that work and as I have just committed to, we will be making that available.

Ms BUTLER - That was my next question because you are many months behind any other agency which you have just stated just now. When will that be approved and tabled, minister?

Mr ELLIS - I would assume that it would be relatively soon. We are close to finalising, as I mentioned, we have been able to provide the committee a sense of what some of those opportunities are -

Ms BUTLER - You are that far behind that you do not even have a date?

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - We are working to finalise that, Ms Butler, but quite clearly, we have found some good measures. You have not told anybody whether you support that or not, you have \$4 billion worth of cuts that you will not tell anybody what they are for. The parliament ordered you to provide an alternative budget and you squibbed it.

Ms BUTLER - Like I said, I am happy to sit on the other side of the table and be the minister and answer questions myself.

Mr ELLIS - I think it is quite clear, Ms Butler, that we have some good plans to make the bureaucracy more efficient. You have a plan for \$4 billion worth of cuts and you will not tell anybody what they are.

Ms BUTLER - I think you are really struggling if you cannot even tell us when that can be tabled and when your saving strategy -

Mr ELLIS - As I said, it would be pretty soon, Ms Butler, but -

CHAIR - I will ask Ms Butler to stop interjecting and it might be easier if the minister is not inciting interjections. I will go to Ms Badger next.

Ms BADGER - Thank you, Chair. Minister, the commission of inquiry's scope did not cover Tasmania Police, which is one of the reasons why the Weiss review was needed.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, Ms Badger, but that is not actually true. The commission of inquiry made eight recommendations for Tasmania Police.

Ms BADGER - Yes, sorry, it did not delve far enough into part of the Paul Reynolds case. Obviously, we have had the separate Weiss review which has covered -

Mr ELLIS - It was actually a case study in the commission of inquiry, Ms Badger.

Ms BADGER - So we have had a separate review in full. Can you please confirm then that the Weiss review recommendations will be covered, all their work will be covered, all the funding will also definitely be covered for the Weiss review, even though, as you have just pointed out, it was going to be put in the Budget or it is put in the Budget through the commission of inquiry recommendations. Can you confirm that the money that you say is then going towards the Weiss review will not take away from any of the commission of inquiry funding and what is the timeline for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Weiss review?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Badger. Can I just clarify for the committee, because there were a few erroneous statements in there and it's important that we get these things right. Police were part of the work of the commission of inquiry. Indeed they made recommendations for police to do better and rebuild trust and we take those very seriously. We're committed to all of those. Paul Reynolds was looked at as part of the commission of inquiry. Indeed he was a case study in the commission of inquiry. For those members who haven't read the commission of inquiry document, it's an important one for us all to get an understanding of.

We went further in terms of Tasmania Police and again I support the work of Commissioner Adams in commissioning the Weiss review. We've made it really clear that

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ensuring that children are safe is the number one priority of our government and we put significant investment in this Budget and in future budgets as well. We've made that commitment and we'll leave no stone unturned when it comes to ensuring that children are kept safe. We'll continue to work in terms of the Weiss review recommendations as they relate to police and we'll also be working across the whole of government, the policy work, for example the redress scheme and the changes to the scope of the Integrity Commission are also being examined currently. Our absolute commitment is to accept and deliver on the recommendations from the Weiss review as well the recommendations of the commission of inquiry.

Ms BADGER - Can you guarantee that, both - all the commission of inquiry recommendations and all the Weiss review recommendations - will be fully funded? Can you please give us more clarity on the timeline for the Weiss review recommendations.

Mr ELLIS - Matters for future budgets obviously will work through in future budgets, but we've made it really clear in this Budget that there's significant new investments in child safety, hundreds of millions of dollars, the largest uplift that we've ever seen in our state's history for child safety. We know that there's even more that needs to be done and as we're working through the policy development there, some of the commission of inquiry recommendations are recommended to be done by 2029 for example, so this will be really a long-term work of many parliaments to ensure we get this right and that we continue to fund these important services. We embrace that important challenge and our absolute commitment is on delivering all of the recommendations from the commission of inquiry and the Weiss review.

Ms BADGER - So you cannot guarantee that both will be fully funded, or give any further clarity on a timeframe?

Mr ELLIS - I don't think it's helpful to put words in people's mouths. I've made it really clear, Ms Badger -

Ms BADGER - It's a question. Feel free to answer.

Mr ELLIS - that we've delivered significant funding and as more is required, more will be delivered. That's how we've operated with the commission of inquiry. Our intent is really clear. This is the largest uplift in -

Ms BADGER - Sorry, I guess this just might be a bit of concern that as you said in the previous question that some of the funding for the Weiss review recommendations would come from that outlined for the commission of inquiry in the Budget. We just want clarity on that. Maybe you could provide us with a breakdown on notice for what funding is for which recommendations?

Mr ELLIS - I'm sure that there's plenty of publicly available documents in terms of the breakdown for different funding as relates to commission of inquiry across government -

Ms BADGER - There's not for the Weiss review, hence the question, sorry.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Badger, I'm not trying to frustrate you, I'm trying to be helpful here. We will continue to make investments in this space. The policy work's not finalised in terms of some of the Weiss recommendations. Some of it involves legislative change for example,

and until that legislative change is done, there's nothing funded. So we'll continue to work through those investments and future budgets. This is largely a matter for future budgets -

Ms BADGER - So there is not any in this Budget for the Weiss review?

Mr ELLIS - Well, as I mentioned, there's already work that we've got underway in terms of police. So we're continuing to make that uplift. We've appointed new leadership, we continue to grow our capability in terms of community engagement. The commissioners are being involved in restorative justice frameworks. Our commitment to delivering these recommendations is really clear. Now we need to work through the policy work there, redress schemes, we need to get the design right. We need to make sure the Integrity Commission has the powers and functions and funding that they need, and that'll require legislative change so we're continuing to work through that process.

Part of Ms Weiss' reviews also related to the way that we do complaints handling and things like that where we already make significant investments and it's a process change. But perhaps I might just look to the Commissioner. Is there anything further that you want to add?

Ms BADGER - Specifically around the timeline, I guess that's the one bit that still remains very unclear what that timeline is.

Ms ADAMS - The work that we're doing at the moment is to make sure that there's a real consistency around how the commission of inquiry recommendations are being managed, also in the context of the Weiss recommendations. As I mentioned earlier, the development of a strategy to engage with priority communities - we need to make sure that it there is no overlap, that it actually works together with the recommendations that have come from the Weiss Review in terms of our engagement with the sporting communities, as an example.

As the minister has said, the policy and research work is really important for us to get right so that we're directing our efforts and we understand the funds that we need to support the Weiss recommendations. It's appropriate that we have a whole-of-government position in terms of redress and restorative justice. We're not having a program within our department that's different to the whole-of-government approach to such an important issue.

Ms JOHNSTON - Hopefully I have a better chance of getting an answer to this, minister. Through you, perhaps to the commissioner, could I ask whether the commissioner collects data relating to the age profile of the workforce, and also the time in service, and if that can be provided to the committee, please?

Ms ADAMS - We might have it in here.

Ms JOHNSTON - It might be one you need to take on notice, I apologise.

Ms ADAMS - I will have a look and see if we've got it.

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm happy for that one to be taken on notice to keep the committee rolling if that's easier. Perhaps later today.

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Ms ADAMS - The gender profile, I can give you that breakdown. We have 37 per cent of the police establishment female, and 63 per cent male. I'd have to take the question around the age profile on notice.

Ms JOHNSTON - Also the time in service, is that possible as well? Thank you.

CHAIR - Do you have another question?

Ms JOHNSTON - I do if that's okay, Chair. Obviously Tasmania Police spend a lot of time responding to family violence instances. Do you have any indication of the percentage of time that frontline services are responding to family violence responses, and how is the Budget allocated for that?

Mr ELLIS - While the commissioner is looking for that, it is important to say that addressing family and sexual violence is becoming increasingly more important for police jurisdictions around the world. Sadly these horrible crimes have also seen significant under-reporting in the past. We're seeing a larger number of people coming forward to police here in Tasmania and around the country, which is a good thing. It's important that people are seeking support and that these crimes that were once regarded as things that happened behind closed doors are fully understood for what they are, which is heinous crimes against vulnerable people.

Ms JOHNSTON - I fully appreciate that, minister. I'm interested in how much policing time is spent in responding to family violence issues.

Ms ADAMS - I'll ask Mr Wilson Heffernan to give you the answer in relation to the allocation of budget. Time for frontline police response to family violence 2023-24 is 100,464 hours.

Ms JOHNSTON - What would that represent in terms of funding allocation? It might be a hard question to answer.

Ms ADAMS - It is hard in the way in which we align our budget to the full outputs.

Ms JOHNSTON - I understand you have a dedicated unit, but in terms of -

Mr ELLIS - We'll just have to come back to you. It is an entire command now, not just a unit. The Family and Sexual Violence Command has significant capability, our Arch centres, obviously, our sexual crimes unit. Those kind of investments are becoming even more important as we support victim-survivors coming forward.

Ms JOHNSTON - I appreciate that. I'm more interested in first responders in terms of officers from stations responding to a call, a dispatch call, and how much of the time that they've spent on that. What's that as a percentage of total time and also the allocation? Can you give me a breakdown on the funding to do that?

Mr ELLIS - When you say percentage of total time -

Ms JOHNSTON - The commissioner said, if I understand correctly, it was 464,000 hours.

Ms ADAMS - No, it was 100,464 hours in 2023-24. What that actually means is on average, we attend 18 family violence matters a day.

Mr HIGGINS - Which can take anything from an hour to a day or more, depending on the complexity of it. So, for example, one of our busy 24-hour stations could get a family violence incident that could tie them up, doing it properly, from start to finish for four hours, including supporting the victim, identifying the perpetrator, all the work they need to go into as far as their risk assessments, referrals, orders on place, and that would be for, dare I say it, a simple - if there is such a thing - family violence matter.

Ms JOHNSTON - So the 18 per day, out of how many total responses per day?

Mr HIGGINS - I have 4781 for a year for the last financial year.

Ms JOHNSTON - That's family violence responses?

Mr HIGGINS - Family violence.

Ms JOHNSTON - How many total call-outs?

Ms ADAMS - Call-outs. We'd have to get that for you.

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm trying to understand the percentage.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, you're trying to understand the percentage.

Ms JOHNSTON - How much of that workload that you do every day is related to family violence? If you'd like to take that one on notice, if that's all right, minister

Mr ELLIS - I think some of the offence data, that's publicly available, but we can follow up -

Ms JOHNSTON - Obviously not everything would be an offence. It's a call-out.

Mr ELLIS - Call-outs. Okay. Yes, sure.

Ms ADAMS - You want ESCAD jobs, is that what you're sort of after?

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Okay.

Mr FAIRS - Thanks, Chair. It's important that all our emergency services move with technology and the times, and I noticed that drones are being used a lot as operational policing matters and things like that. Are they a common part of operational policing procedures now and when are they used? What sort of areas?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. This is an area that Tasmania Police, supported by the government, has been increasingly involved in. Remote-piloted aircraft or drones remain an effective tool in terms of combating crime and ensuring the safety of the community.

Tasmania Police maintains 45 drones which are located in all geographic police districts, road policing services, forensic services, marine and rescue services, as well as specialist and tactical groups, and since the introduction of drones under this government in July 2019, Tasmania Police has used drones in 2755 operations statewide. The use of drones has assisted in tracking evading motorists, searching for missing persons and stolen property, and providing investigators with aerial views of crash scenes. They're also incredibly important for missing person searches and even firefighting response too, particularly for large urban scenes.

In addition to the operational flights, drones have been used for 870 training flights to enhance pilot skills. In the last 12 months, drones have been deployed to offenders associated with hooning vehicles on 27 occasions, to 3D-model serious and fatal crash scenes on 51 occasions, and to support 10 major traffic enforcement operations. Drone operations are specifically targeted at an incident or occurrence and are not used for general surveillance.

When considering a drone operation, remote pilots consider privacy, relevant permissions from landowners, as well as local government restrictions and bylaws, and drones are not operated on or over private property without owner permission, warrant or legislative authority. A major exercise was held in April this year to test the drone interoperability in a counterterrorism environment alongside other specialist police capability, and the feedback and evaluation will continue to assist in building the capability. I might look to either commissioner if there's anything further that you wanted to add in terms of what drone capability means.

Mr BODNAR - Thanks, minister. If I may, I think the real benefit for our staff is around that operational safety benefit we see out of these aircraft as well, because effectively this can help enhance our situational awareness irrespective of the job we're dealing with. So whether it be a search for a missing walker, whether it be a search and rescue incident somewhere else in the state.

If we have a siege type incident or a situation in the street somewhere where a person's armed with some form of implement or article, that allows us to use this to go into that with situational awareness, which then helps inform our decision-making and planning. In particular, we can get a live feedback from the aircraft in the sky to the police forward commander who is in charge of the operation. From a safety benefit, it is an outstanding tool for us. It's pretty much embedded as business as usual nowadays for our police officers when it comes to some of those operations. As the minister said, hooning evades lots of different uses, but we're really pleased to have the additional funding to have those 45 aircraft, which better support our police officers, particularly the safety of our members.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, I'd like to have a discussion with you around the police rostering system. All our team have had a lot of information provided to us on that area. It's quite important to police officers at the moment. Over 90 per cent of those surveyed supported the six on, six off roster, noting that it reduces fatigue and promoted general wellbeing. Do you agree that with almost 14 per cent of police on workers' compensation, your government should be funding a roster that is supported by the majority of members?

Mr ELLIS - We're currently working through some roster trials that have come off the back of additional police officers and the frontline staffing initiative that's ensured that we have more police officers available at 24/7 stations. That's been operating since 1 July 2022. I'll pass to the Commissioner of Police in terms of rostering.

Ms ADAMS - Police officer wellbeing and their safety is the number one priority for me and everyone in our leadership group. It's important that committee members understand the journey that we've been on in relation to rosters. What we have in our police award is a roster called Ottawa, which has seven day blocks of night shift. That has been building up fatigue in our staff and obviously doesn't manage the cumulative effects of stress when you're working seven nights of night shift. Since 2020, what we've been trying to do is find an alternative roster to the one that's prescribed in the police award, which has actually been in place for over 25 years. The goal is to find a roster that moves away from that seven night block of night shift, reduces fatigue associated with working at a 24/7 station, but also manages that cumulative effective stress that can occur when members are exposed to repeated critical incidents.

We've trialled a number of rosters. There are two notable trials that have occurred over the last 18 months: four days on, four days off, and six days on, six days off. Members need to support, through a vote, any trial of a roster. They have done that in both of those occasions. You are correct, the six on, six off is a popular roster among staff because of the provision of six days off. What the evaluation has told us in relation to that six on, six off roster is that it relies on overtime to be able to have the numbers that the roster requires. That's a challenge because, going back to the importance of member wellbeing and safety and the fact that you are quite across the number of people that we have on long-term mental health incapacitation. It's really important that we have a roster that is actually conducive to helping reduce those effects of fatigue and cumulative effects of stress.

One of the stations last week in a five-day period required 70 hours of overtime to fill the gaps in the roster. Just to give everybody an example, the roster is based on a 10.5-hour shift. We're asking members to work beyond 10.5 hours, pushing into 12, 13, and in some instances 14 hours. Making decisions at critical incidents when you have been working for those hours can put you into a position of risk where it can jeopardise your safety and the safety of the community that we are responding to.

It's really important that the roster is the cornerstone of that reduction of fatigue and does everything that it can to help us manage those cumulative effects of stress. We're also seeing members recalled to duty on their six days off. The six days off are about having a fatigue break. So what we're asking our team to do is to actually transition to another trial in February and I've been really clear with our team in saying we've had a roster in place for 25 years. It's going to take us a few years to get the right roster and what we want to do is work together with our staff, with our union and in a considered, evidence-based way to understand what are the benefits and the risks of each roster. What we're asking our staff to do is to trial a different roster in February and at the end of that particular trial, we'll sit down and then make some judgments around the benefits and those risks.

As the commissioner, I also have responsibility under the *Work Health and Safety Act*. I have an evaluation report now that tells me that this roster isn't reducing fatigue, in fact, it's compromising members' fatigue. Also, as I said, every time an officer continues to work on, they're getting exposed to critical incidents that have the potential to impact the cumulative effect of stress on them and not provide them with a break.

The roster we want them to trial next in February moves back to eight hours, not 10 and a half. It puts them into teams, five teams, which is extremely important to the members and has been a critical part of the feedback in the evaluation. They want to work in teams. The six-on six-off roster does not allow them to work in teams and hence why we're having so many gaps. This is a roster that's been recently trialled in South Australia and subject to a lot of review in South Australia. It's a popular roster among staff in South Australia, so what we're asking our staff to do is to trial another roster and then sit down together, staff, union and commissioners, and work out where is our risk appetite and so that we're maximising every opportunity to reduce those effects of fatigue.

Ms BUTLER - Through the minister, what's the South Australian trial? What did that rostering system look like? Was that a six by six or four by -

Ms ADAMS - That's a six and four, and puts our stations into five teams. At the moment we have them in six teams, so by putting them into five teams should naturally mean there's more staff and should naturally mean there's less reliance on overtime to fill the gaps. Overtime is important and we're never going to have an organisation and an emergency service organisation that doesn't need to have overtime. We respond to critical incidents. Matters will continue on beyond an officer's shift, but when we have a roster that actually creates gaps and we can't fill unless we've got overtime, well we're obviously not managing member fatigue and it's a roster that we need to consider the unintended consequences of.

I understand that members are concerned, but I want to work with members. We want to get the right roster. We want to have the best roster in Australia and we just asking our members to transition to a new trial.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, how many police officers have resigned in the 2023-24 financial year? How many police officers have retired in the 2023-24 financial year? Out of the 1496 police officers which you have referred to a number of times in parliament, how many are actually active as of today, minister, and if not, can you table those documents or can I place them on notice, please?

Mr ELLIS - I'll look over to the commissioner in her team in terms of the data.

Ms ADAMS - I can answer some of those and I may need to get you to repeat a couple. We had 101 positions or separations in the previous year at an attrition rate of 6 per cent per month per calendar year. You asked about acting; what is the context, if I could understand that?

Ms BUTLER - Resigned, retired and active as of today.

Mr ELLIS - Oh, active rather than acting.

Ms BUTLER - Active, as in serving as police officers. if you take out the workers comp percentage, if you take out the people who have retired or the officers who have retired and you take out the officers who have resigned, how many are you left? How many police officers are you left with that are actually active?

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Ms ADAMS - We have 1421 FTE and that's the operational strength that we have and then if you include our recruits, we have 1485.

Mr ELLIS - From memory, that data is not today, that's 30 June this year, isn't it?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, that is correct, minister.

Ms BUTLER - That total number, does that include or exclude retiring, resigned and on workers compensation? Are they -

Ms ADAMS - It's the current numbers that we have. The ones I've given you are the current numbers.

Ms BUTLER - Yes. So there's 101 police from - do I take that from the 1496 that are in separation?

Mr ELLIS - Perhaps, Ms Butler, it might be helpful to talk to 30 June, because the numbers go up and down.

Ms BUTLER - Okay.

Mr ELLIS - For example, new police recruit courses.

Mr HIGGINS - Perhaps there's some clarity there. So when a person resigns, retires, separates in other ways, termination or otherwise -

Ms BUTLER - Or is on a worker's compensation claim.

Mr HIGGINS - No. Take workers compensation out of it.

Ms BUTLER - Okay.

Mr HIGGINS - So if any of that 101 are not within that establishment, they're off. So then we're recruiting against them to go to our approved establishment of 1421 as of 30 June.

Ms BUTLER - Okay.

Mr HIGGINS - The other question was about the 108 people who are incapacitated. They are within the 1421 but they're not people who can be called upon because they're not in the workplace to actually work. But there are others, open workers compensation claims, where people are on different duties to return them to work and with restrictions they might have with injury, whatever it may be. So they'll be within that 1421 as well, of the approved establishment and that'll fluctuate. That's our establishment but it will fluctuate up and down depending on the recruit courses as they graduate.

Ms ADAMS - I actually have the current numbers if you want it as of today. We've got 1498 as of today, which also includes the 89 trainees.

Ms BADGER - Thank you. I have a couple of questions about -

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Ms BUTLER - I wasn't quite finished on that line of questioning.

CHAIR - We've got less than 10 minutes until we go to the 10-minute break. Have you got a final because I'm doing my best to keep the proportionality here as much as possible. I think you've had about four or five questions on this last one.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, is the real reason the newly-trialled rostering system supported by 90 per cent of surveyed police officers cannot be implemented is because there are not enough police officers due to resignations, retirement, sick leave and the workers compensation leave, and due to your budget cuts the DPFEM, the agency itself, cannot afford the overtime required to meet the criteria of the nation-leading rostering system?

Mr ELLIS - It sounds to me like you didn't listen to the commissioner's answer at all, Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - Can you answer my question, please, minister?

Mr ELLIS - The commissioner's just outlined that there's concerns around fatigue management from a roster that has higher overtime.

Ms BUTLER - Is one of the reasons why they cannot do the rostering and that they have to carve into existing staff who are on their six days off and provide overtime is because there's simply not enough police officers?

Mr ELLIS - So there's a record number of police in Tasmania now and we're looking to increase that further. We've had a record number of police on the parade ground at the last graduation. Some rosters derive higher overtime because of the nature of their structure. I'll pass back to the commissioner and her team.

Mr HIGGINS - To the crux of this and what you're trying to ask, I think, is that the roster trials for the six on/six off and the four on/four off, spread them from award-compliant roster, which has five teams crossed into six, spreading the workforce to fill the shifts at the minimum that is required to do that work.

So that's where, I suppose, the crux is and that's without normal leave that people will take six weeks a year, courses that people undertake which are absences from those workplaces as well. So to even do those - the last part of the trials over the last three to four months, we've had to put stringent controls in about making sure people take their leave but looking seriously at when courses are undertaken. If it's professional development, a person is released. If it's not, the question needs to be asked: can that workplace afford for that person to be away from there.

Under the Ottawa roster, which is the award-compliant roster which Launceston is working, that's our biggest station in the state, as soon as they implemented that roster and they voted to go back to that roster - they voted not to continue with the four on/four off - they went back to the five teams and within a week, they had seven secondments out to prosecution, investigative areas, and country, to provide those opportunities. When I've done station visits and talked about rosters and other things that people want to talk about, I had people pull me aside really concerned that with the six on/six off rosters and the four on/four off that they

won't have opportunities. They won't be able to do our taskforces now - they saturate taskforces dealing with recidivist offenders, which they love doing in each one of the districts.

The current six on/six off, it's extremely challenging to do that. It affects the workplace and then has to be supplemented. There was over 14,000 hours of overtime just at the 24/7 stations last financial year - 14,000 hours that staff had to do over that period. It's considerable. We need to look at that. That's why we're looking at a number of rosters. They've been trialling rosters. They started trialling rosters, the staff at these stations, before COVID. When we tried to stop them doing trials, there were stations that came to us in the control centre for COVID to say can we please keep going? They did, some of them. One of those was an original six on/six off roster back way back in 2020. They had to be staffed across the southern district with essentially collapsing areas. The commander at the time made a decision to do that, to collapse areas to see if it would work. It only worked when it was collapsed.

Ms BADGER - I reckon we can get through these before the break. I have two quick questions. They're broadly both about vehicles. The Motor Accident Insurance Board has historically funded Tasmania Police to provide full-time taskforces across the state to assist with road safety strategies. Can we have confirmation that that funding is still incoming, and that it's still being used for that purpose?

Mr BODNAR - Yes, certainly, that money is still forthcoming. We've had a good relationship with the MAIB for a number of years now. The agreement has recently been renewed, and we're just waiting on an updated MOU to come through. I have it on good authority from the CEO of MAIB that the funding and the MOU will continue in similar terms.

Ms BADGER - Fantastic. The other question was, back in June, *Drive* magazine ran an article that Tasmania Police is considering the new turbo six-cylinder BMW Series 3 to come in for highway patrol duties. I was wondering how that's progressing, and if any other vehicles were considered?

Mr ELLIS - I know you're interested as a motor mechanic as well.

Ms BADGER - This is my favourite topic, although not normally involving the police.

Mr HIGGINS - As you know, we have trialled different vehicles, particularly for our highway patrol, which was started a couple years ago. We brought in the Kia Stingers and were disappointed; not all staff loved the Kia Stingers -

Ms JOHNSTON - Shame.

Mr HIGGINS - But they were disappointed that they were discontinued. We looked at the Volkswagen Passat wagons, which they were quite keen on, but we have been unable to get those ones as well. That's to do with the ratings, I understand. The BMWs are the next ones to come, and I believe they are imminent.

Ms ADAMS - We have five on order.

Mr HIGGINS - I saw a picture and they look very nice.

Mr ELLIS - The police packs are quite different to what people might be imagining.

Ms BADGER - Yes, I'm guessing it's not the standard manufactured version. I was wondering what the cost allocation for those new vehicles was.

Ms ADAMS - I can't give you that. We normally go through Treasury in terms of the lease of the vehicles. No doubt it will come with an additional cost. We can certainly get that. It's about having a limited number of these vehicles that really catch the attention of drivers, that there's a highly visible marked up police vehicle, if I speed or am using my phone while I'm driving, I could get caught. It's really around that high visibility. It's not something that will be rolled out across the fleet. It's really to promote the branding that you could get caught if you offend while driving.

Ms BADGER - Thank you.

Mrs BESWICK - You briefly touched on IT improvements as a way of making some efficiencies. Can you give us more detail there please?

Mr ELLIS - This is one of my favourite areas of discussion, Mrs Beswick. I'm very glad you brought it up. We've actually got a really strong track record of delivery in terms of IT and communications projects. After the tragedy of the Dunalley bushfires, for example, it was noted that our critical response agencies had significant communication difficulty, particularly in a large scale event like that. That's been the catalyst for the Tasmanian government radio network. It is a \$763 million project, so it's enormous in scale. It is part of the reason I get quite frustrated when people talk about 'nothing to show for debt' and that sort of thing because that's a huge investment. It keeps Tasmanians safe and it's actually a world-leading government radio network. It's encrypted and it enables all our first responder agencies - police, fire, SES, ambulance, and also our land managers like Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, Hydro, TasNetworks and Parks to be on the one network and able to communicate together. That's a massive uplift in terms of our capability.

We're also making significant investments in terms of the in-house IT delivery we're doing. Project Atlas is, well, Project Unify is the headline name we use for a range of different projects designed to help us be more efficient in the way we operate and reduce member fatigue in terms of the number of duplicative times they need to enter data when a system should allow them to enter at once. That kind of thing. I'll pass over to the team to walk us through things like Project Atlas, Project Link.

Ms ADAMS - To expand on the minister's comments, we do have a key police transformational project underway at the moment to replace a number of our ageing end-of-life systems. Project Atlas, as an example, will introduce new offence reporting, crime statistics, family violence, property management, sudden death and coronial reporting. We'll also integrate with our call and dispatch system in the police radio room, which will be a significant integration piece for us.

Before the end of the year, our new online reporting for crime reporting will be released. It'll start off with an emphasis on minor crime and then we will look to use that capability to further develop it to address one of the recommendations from the commission of inquiry in relation to allowing victim/survivors to report sexual crime online. We'll introduce it, minor crime, before the end of the year and then do the work to expand that particular platform. That's a significant capability to allow members of the community who might have a damaged

letterbox to be able to go online, report the crime. It allows us to monitor crime in communities and local communities, while also providing an easy platform for members of the community to report the crime. It does reduce the work of our frontline staff, to attend a residence to take a report such as that, so there's a lot of benefits that we will see from that particular project.

We are also connected with Justice in relation to the e-prosecutor systems that have been led through the Department of Justice. We have key people on those project teams because police make arrests, they charge people, they prepare court files. To be able to do that through an electronic system that will integrate with Justice is going to be a fantastic change into the future. We're heavily involved with Justice.

The unified funding has also provided us with an opportunity to upgrade our forensics register. We've talked a little bit about the importance of forensics today. The forensic register allows us to be able to track exhibits. To have a system that's reliable and up to date is an important tool for us. That project is well advanced.

We've also, with the project unified funding, been able to replace the server that supports our ESCAD system, which is our call and dispatch system that our radio dispatch unit use. Every time a member of the community calls that particular, their information, their job goes into a system and then there is dispatch to our staff. We've made sure that the server has been replaced so that it's still reliable and enables staff to get up-to-date information as reports come into our radio room.

It's a significant body of work, the work that we're undertaking with the transformation project. As I've said previously, we're an agency that will always look to what opportunities technology can provide for us and I think that we've demonstrated our ability to manage these big projects and get good outcomes for our frontline staff and the Tasmanian community.

Mr ELLIS - I might quickly add, the National Firearms Register also plays an important part of this. Initially, when we funded Unify, it was also to include what we call Project Recharge, which was a significant uplift in our digital capability for our firearms register here in Tasmania. That's been superseded by work on a digital National Firearms Register. Basically, all our systems are paper-based in the firearm space, so that's going to be a huge uplift in our efficiency, but also to ensure better service to the community.

We've been funded \$16 million by the Commonwealth for Tasmania's part of this national project. We're working through that. Being part of the national register does mean we'll have to make some changes to Unify: make more uniform the way we register firearms in Tasmania to match the different - every state will have to do this, so that we can all be the same. That will be a piece that will be backed by legislation and also backed by funding from the Commonwealth. Tasmania Police also play their part in terms of the development of that significant IT uplift.

The Committee suspended from 11.06 a.m. to 11.18 a.m.

CHAIR - Before I go back to the minister, I'll just say, as the session's going on, I know the Order of the House provides for three questions for opposition, two for Greens, two for the Independents or JLN and one for government. There isn't any provision for supplementary questions. However, some flexibility is afforded to members to complete a specific line of questioning. It's important that the proportionality is maintained. I'm happy not to be too

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onerous and sticking to those 3,2,2,1s but if we can just maintain that sense of proportionality and if I do move on to other questions, you can touch base again after. Thank you all for your patience, it is my first time sitting on this end of the table, so many thanks.

Minister, you did say there was some more information before we push off again.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. I'll pass to Commissioner Adams.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. Just a couple of things. First, I mentioned 18 family violence matters that police attend per day. It's actually 23.

The lease cost for BMWs is \$2212 a month, which includes full servicing and a maintenance pack.

The number of ESCAD jobs, which are the jobs that come into our radio dispatch area, in 2022-23 we had 142,012 and in 2023-24 we had 150,106.

Ms BESWICK - Following on from the questions about the Weiss review and the commission of inquiry rollout, are we ready for reporting? The implementation monitor is due to start imminently. Do we have that reporting system planned and ready to hand onto their desk?

Mr ELLIS - We've accepted all 191 recommendations and Tasmania Police is working diligently. We are on track in terms of our recommendations and that's encouraging, with further rollout to be done in line with the timeframes set out by the commission of inquiry. I'll pass over to the commissioner.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. The independent monitor will be managed through whole of government. The head of the State Service, Ms Morgan-Wicks, chairs the Secretary's Board and a standing agenda item is in relation to the progress of commission of inquiry matters. They'll normally set the framework for reporting for agencies and I'm sure that is something they're working on. We haven't set what that framework will look like at the moment, but I'm sure that will be set and we will all be complying with that framework of reporting.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, with the summer bushfire season approaching full on, how's our fuel reduction burn program affected by the recent severe weather that we've had?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. This is a very important area when it comes to keeping Tasmanians safe because if we can be proactive with our fuel reduction burning, that ensures that we're able to protect them when a bushfire does actually come.

The government's \$112 million fuel reduction program is nation-leading in its tenure-blind and strategic risk-based approach to fuel reduction. The Tasmania Fire Service is one of the three main organisations partnering in the delivery of the fuel reduction program, along with our colleagues in the Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timber Tasmania. The program aims to strategically reduce the bushfire risk to Tasmania and its communities through fuel reduction. The government continues to invest strongly in fuel reduction because it's effective, it works. Fuel reduction may not prevent bushfires, but their potential intensity is reduced, making them significantly easier and safer for firefighters to control.

Since the program began in 2014, more than 1370 strategic bushfire risk reduction activities, and that's burning and mechanical, have been completed statewide and that encompasses an extraordinary 225,588 hectares. That is at 30 June 2024 and we're rolling into fuel reduction season now. During 2023-24, 81 fuel reduction burns were done, encompassing 27,680 hectares. In 2022-23, 156 burns were completed across nearly 20,000 hectares in strategic locations to protect Tasmanian communities

It's important to note that the La Nina weather conditions from 2020-23 did limit the opportunities to undertake fuel reduction activities which is why it's such a credit to our teams that we've been able to do so much burning despite the wet conditions. It in late 2023, weather patterns shifted to warmer and drier conditions and that allowed for an early start to fuel reduction burns in spring 2023, but a later start for fuel reduction burning in 2024. I'll pass over to the Commissioner of Fire and Emergency Services, Jeremy Smith, to add further about what the fuel reduction program means for Tasmanians.

Mr SMITH - Thank you, minister. It's important to note that this is a multiagency strategy to reduce the bushfire risk across the state and we are continuing to plan for fuel reduction burns when conditions allow. The team works around the state with all the stakeholders to ensure they have a complementary burn program with the appropriate plans in place. It also works with the landowners in determining what the risks are on their lands and, where appropriate, put strategies in place to deal with more localised events such as through the Red Hot Tips program.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. Minister, in relation to the \$35 million in efficiency dividends for DPFEM, you didn't rule out cuts to scuttle radio dispatch. Do you consider them frontline? Have 000 calls this year been connected within 10 seconds with a radio dispatch operator? What percentage of those calls have to wait longer than this before being connected? I'm happy to take those questions on notice as well.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I'm really not sure why this isn't sinking in, but we've made it pretty clear what our efficiencies are going to be. It's going to be things like travel, consultancy and advertising, as well as things like CBD accommodation for our corporate staff. If you're going to run a half-baked scare campaign, it's probably at least worth listening to the answers that we're providing. I'm happy to follow up in terms of the data but I completely reject the mischaracterisation in terms of our plans.

Ms BUTLER - Chair, could you please direct the minister to answer the question, please? His answer is not relevant to the question.

CHAIR - Order. Ms Butler, I can't put words in the minister's mouth or direct him to answer a question in a particular way. I will perhaps ask the minister to respond to the question.

Ms BUTLER - You can answer without patronising.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Chair, and as I say, I was asked about efficiencies and I reject the characterization. In terms of the data, I'll pass to the commissioner and her team.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. I don't think we have the data among the papers in regards to the percentage wait time, but we can take that on notice.

Ms BUTLER - Take that on notice - that would be fantastic. What is the average wait time for each of the last three years for those 000 calls, and what has been the five calls with the longest wait times for connection this year as well, if that can also be taken on notice? Within the last two years have any 000 calls that have had to wait for connection related to incidents where a death has occurred either before or after the call and can you provide the incidents where this has occurred? Can I take them on notice as well? Thank you.

Has the Atlas, or the intelligence database, I think that's how it was explained to me for a better understanding, minister, support staff - has that area been cut as a result of your budget cuts as well? Minister, you can liken that to our parliament version of IT helpdesk. Has the Atlas support service staff, the support service staff, been cut as a result of the budget cuts?

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned before, Ms Butler, your characterisation is completely missing the mark. I think we've had a fairly pointless two and a half hours of questioning from you because, like we said from the very beginning, I didn't accept the strategies that you're referring to. We've given you a pretty clear idea of the sort of strategies that we are looking to implement.

In terms of Atlas, we've spoken about, at this table, the massive investment that we're looking to make in that area, about \$32 million. That's going to be key in being able to deliver better service. It's also going to make our people more -

Ms BUTLER - Support service staff, minister?

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned, Ms Butler, I think your characterisations around efficiencies have largely been a pretty disappointing -

Ms BUTLER - I'm so sorry to disappoint you, minister, but can you answer the question?

Mr ELLIS - We're looking to invest significantly in terms of Atlas. A better Atlas system will actually will be more efficient and -

Ms BUTLER - Support staff?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ELLIS - It'll be more user friendly because it'll be a new structure that won't require significant duplication in terms of keystrokes and those sorts of things. I'll pass to the commissioner if there's anything further to add on Atlas.

Ms ADAMS - The only thing I'd add, minister, is with the initiation of such a large-scale project, the support for Atlas is managed by the project now and as we get closer to the finalisation of the project we'll certainly look at a model to support the system with such a broad roll out. At the moment it makes sense that the support to the current system is with the project team.

Ms BUTLER - Okay, brilliant. Minister, another question in relation to contact points for our police officers and services. Do police have a direct dedicated contact point to Child

and Family Services? Is the process for police to use the same 1800 referral line as the public? Can you answer that?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, the information sharing between agencies is a critical part of the commission of inquiry work. We've continued our work in terms of Tasmania Police to do greater integration with our partner agencies, particularly Child Safety. In times gone by, sadly, information sharing was a key point of failure. That's why these significant changes are important. Some of the concerns around privacy in the past have been well and truly overtaken by the need to prioritise child safety as our number one priority. I'll pass to the commissioner and her team in terms of information sharing.

Mr HIGGINS - Police on a day-to-day basis will go through the ARL. Police in our specialist groups -

Mr ELLIS - That is the advice and referral line.

Mr HIGGINS - Advice and referral line.

Ms BUTLER - That's the same 1800 number that the public go through as well? Sorry to cut you off. I just wanted to clarify.

Mr HIGGINS - Yes, but specialist areas have child safety workers embedded in Arch, have had access to those. In the future we're working on a trial with Child Safety Services to have staff on an afternoon shift base and a pilot project working in each region after-hours to see how that goes. That will be in Launceston, I believe Glenorchy, and I think Ulverstone has been identified as a spot. So not to go out in the field as such, but to provide contact points there. That's something for 2025, not our agency, but we'll support them in finding a place in the station that they can work out of because it'd be a great benefit to our staff to have that point of contact where they can do referrals and get those supports if they do come across youth who are at risk.

Ms BUTLER - Through the minister, what's the average wait time from when police officers contact the 1800? Say you are in a country station, I will use St Helens as an example, you need to make a referral as a police officer to the ARL so you call that 1800 number because you're not working in Arch North or Arch South or potentially Arch North West. What is the wait time for police officers or the wait for them to have a response to those 1800 referrals as a police officer?

Mr HIGGINS - I don't believe we will have that type of data. That'll be something maybe the ARL group might hold. It's not something our frontline staff would capture in that way. The way that the referrals are done - that's an emergency through an ARL type situation. It is by entering the child safety report referral on ATLAS, the intelligence system, and then the notification goes straight across. That's how staff actually do it.

Ms BUTLER - Alright. And that's picked up by Child Family Services.

Ms BADGER - I have a couple of questions now on Fire and Emergency services. Now that a Fire and Emergency services commissioner has been appointed, do they have the powers of employment under the *State Service Act*? Do they also have the same or greater statutory powers as the chief fire officer?

Mr ELLIS - To provide a bit of background on this one, Ms Badger, we've just announced on Friday the next tranche of the reforms that we're looking to bring in as part of the fire and emergency services act, or the *Fire Service Act* as it's currently called. A key part of that is bringing together our Fire and SES into the one organisation. That unification is strongly supported among our first responders. By being able to do that, we'll be able to enhance the capability that we'll have right across the service and to be able to respond to different emergencies.

Until those legislative reforms come in, that needs to happen so that we can enable the full scale of powers that we envisage the commissioner will have. The commissioner will be the leader of both parts of the service. We'll have a deputy commissioner for Fire and deputy commissioner for SES. That will ensure that we'll be able to progress that. As part of the reforms, we'd initially envisaged that the commissioner of fire and emergency services would then be advised by an advisory committee. We received feedback from stakeholders as part of the legislation that we went out for consultation last year. The stakeholders still want to see a full commission model - a state fire and emergency services commission.

The commissioner has a range of different responsibilities and that includes things like the PCBU, person conducting business undertakings, I think that's right. With the commitment to maintaining the current full commission model, there will be some different powers for the commission versus the commissioner than what we previously envisioned with a commissioner that has an advisory committee below them. I might look to the commissioner if there's anything further you want to update.

Ms BADGER - Before you do, sorry, I was wondering if the intent was still to have powers of employment under the State Service as well at this point.

Ms ADAMS - In terms of employment powers, both the TFES Commissioner and I as secretary do not have employment responsibility for SES threes and fours. That's the head of the State Service. So we don't have that employment responsibility or function ourselves. In terms of SES ones and twos, that's for the secretary. All other employment functions are delegated to the TFES Commissioner.

Ms BADGER - In the state Budget there is money allocated to the department for emergency risk management and disaster mitigation. What specific programs in terms of climate risks does this relate to? I'm also assuming part of that would be for the national aviation fleet for bushfires. When are you expecting that these would be arriving? Are they still on the same three-month contract as they were in previous years?

Mr ELLIS - We're making major investments in terms of climate change mitigation. It's part of the reason why I'm being so passionate around the need to reform fire and emergency services in Tasmania. We have an old model that was set up in 1979, well before you and I and the Chair were born. It's no longer truly fit for purpose when we have a future of more severe and more frequent natural disasters. I'm not sure why everyone's laughing - have I said something that offends? I don't know. That change is important. It's part of the reason why we want to see continued growth in our capability. It's also part of the reason why we need to invest at the front end for our communities too.

You'll know the Latrobe Flood Mitigation project, potentially. That's a big investment that's been made jointly between the federal government, the state, and the local council. That's really come to fruition now. That will make a major impact in terms of protecting the town of Latrobe.

I spoke before about our need to do fuel reduction burning. I know that different members on the committee have been from parties that have a complicated relationship with fuel reduction burning, but it is important. We've reduced the risk in Tasmania by about 25 per cent since we started it 10 years ago. Those investments are key. I'll pass to the Commissioner of Fire and Emergency Services and the team if there's anything further you want to add.

Mr SMITH - Thanks, minister. I want to bring up to speed about the aircraft that we contract. We work with NAFC, the National Aircraft Firefighting Centre, which is a national body. We procure 15 aircraft into the state, roughly nine helicopters and six fixed wings. They complement our strategy of weight of attack. Over the last six or seven years, the weight of attack mantra for our crews of putting as many resources onto a fire as quickly as possible has proven very successful. To complement that is the aircraft, of which we've got those 15 national ones, but we've also got roughly 25 call-when-needed across the state. They supplement the contracted aircraft for those high-risk days or when we don't have those aircraft in the state, like today. They will go to our call when needed and stand those aircraft up to provide that critical resource.

Ms BADGER - Is there a rough date when they'll be arriving for the summer season, or until it's needed?

Mr SMITH - Our operational teams are monitoring the conditions daily at the moment. We had our state-based briefing last week. The conditions probably will trend towards those national aircraft coming into the state later in the year, so probably early or mid-December. We'll have them in place for the Christmas/New Year high risk period. They'll be in place for 60 to 90 days depending on the conditions. If we need to extend, we will.

Mr ELLIS - I might look to the Director of SES too around some of the flood mapping work that is very important.

Mr CLARK - Climate change predictions indicate that rainfall and flooding events in Tasmania are likely to become more frequent and more intense. SES is working to increase Tasmania's resilience to these risks by delivering the Tasmanian Flood Mapping Project. The project is jointly funded by the Tasmanian and Australian governments and is delivering a comprehensive and consistent set of strategic maps that show the current and future flood hazards across the state. These maps are being used to undertake state-wide flood risk assessments that will identify the current and future flood risks to a range of values across the state.

This flood mapping was used in the most recent severe weather event that we saw in recent weeks. It enables us to look, and use it as a predictive model to where flooding is going to occur. It's also the basis of the community flood guides and community flood plans that are used across local government areas across Tasmania.

Ms BADGER - So, all of those flood mapping scenarios are public for people in the community to be able to be informed and educated?

Mr CLARK - Yes, the data layer will be loaded onto LIST Tasmania, and publicly available.

Mr GARLAND - Given the volatile nature of monoculture eucalypt plantations, as far as a fire risk, we're advocating putting windfarms right through my area in the north-west where there are significant eucalypt plantations. The country fire brigades in Victoria are now boycotting attending and fighting any fires on transmission lines or turbine sites. How does the Tasmanian Fire Service plan to protect residents and farms in the vicinity of a renewable energy zone if similar action occurs here?

Mr ELLIS - I suppose the first thing to note, Mr Garland, is that our all our major plantation growers have their own firefighting capability. For example, in our neck of the woods, Forico and Reliance are two that have a few plantations out in Circular Head. Sustainable Timbers Tasmania is a native producer currently, but is increasingly going to be a plantation grower too. They've got significant firefighting capability; about 70 per cent of their staff are trained in it. They're one of our key partner response agencies. There's significant firefighting capability that's held outside of that. I might pass to the Commissioner of Fire and Emergency Service around that protocol.

Mr SMITH - I'm aware of those circumstances in Victoria. For a more localised in Tasmania aspect, we work closely with the local volunteer brigades to ensure they are aware of their risks and come back to our capability requirements for those particular brigades. At the moment they haven't raised those concerns with me. I talk regularly with Sustainable Timbers Tasmania about their preparations and their stakeholder engagement, and they haven't raised that with me either.

Mr GARLAND - Wouldn't it be prudent to have that conversation given the REZ zone that is proposed for the north-west area there?

Mr ELLIS - It's probably worth noting there's significant transmission right around Tasmania.

Mr GARLAND - But we're going to add more, minister, like significantly more and it is a real valid concern over there. We can't put our head in the sand with this. I was out the back of the Milkshakes when that fire went through quite a few years ago. The speed when the eucalypt oil ignited, the fire was passing the trucks with the drivers trying to get the hell out of there. We've got that all the way in the back of our urban and rural areas there, and this is something that we need to have a proactive conversation on because this is very relevant. You can get the perfect storm out there, imagine getting all the turbines spinning, the fire gets away, creating that draught. You could have something that is just Armageddon-like. It's a real possibility.

Mr ELLIS - As I say, we already currently have eucalypt plantations, a lot of transmission because we need to transmit power from remote dam locations right around the state, and we currently have wind farms around Tasmania as well. These are things that we've dealt with for many years, getting that balance right.

Mr SMITH - Another aspect is we have fire management area committees. We have 10 throughout the state. I'll bring it up with the fire management area committee for your

particular area and see if they've determined that it's a risk or how they're mitigating what they need to in that area.

Mr GARLAND - That would be good, because in the fires past, we've had brigades come from everywhere to help the ones that are there.

Mr FAIRS - With the bushfire warning, panic in the communities can set in, as we know. With the new TasALERT phone app, that has the most up-to-date info for some in an emergency, but for people with smartphones, will they still get the old alerts too?

Mr ELLIS - We've seen in recent natural disasters just how important it is that the community is informed and that communications are strong, because an informed community is a resilient community. They're able to take action as an event is unfolding and they'll have a better sense of what they need to do. Communicating information and warnings to the community when a bushfire is burning, in particular, is critical. The TFS uses a range of communication streams such as the TasALERT website and mobile app, they use social media, the emergency alert messaging system, mainstream media and the national emergency broadcaster, ABC local radio - and a big shout-out to them for their work during the flood and storm we've just recently had - as well as face-to-face communication like door-knocking in a flood zone.

The TFS uses the nationally consistent Australian Warning System to communicate warnings to the public. You would have seen the advice, which is yellow, watch and act, orange and emergency red. It's much simpler and more user-friendly. The Australian Warning System delivers on recommendation 13.3 of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

The government's provided \$250,000 of funding for the operation of TasALERT, which is the Tasmanian government's official emergency information source, which communicates information from the Australian Warning System. When the TasALERT mobile app was launched in August this year, available to both Apple and Android devices, it was amazing to see Tasmanians responding so well. We had 40,000 downloads already when the flooding came through and I think we were number one in the App Store in the news category, which is incredible for a small state. Clearly, the communities responded well.

Mr SMITH - I've only got one thing to add: SMS or emergency alert SMS messages will be sent when appropriate.

Ms BUTLER - In the State Fire Commission Corporate Plan for financial years 2024-25 to 2027-28, it states that it's an amended version - and it's got the date 30 June 2024. If you go inside, and I do apologise if you don't have a copy of that in front of you, you've signed off on this corporate plan on 29 July 2024, approval by the minister.

Mr ELLIS - I have it here.

Ms BUTLER - You've signed off on this corporate plan on 29 July 2024, approval by the minister. Can you table the original State Fire Commission corporate plan? Can you provide the committee with the date the original version of the State Fire Commission Corporate Plan was approved by you as the minister responsible?

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Mr ELLIS - Look, I have to take advice in terms of providing drafts. This is obviously the version that we've approved,

Ms BUTLER - But it wasn't the draft. It was the previous, because this is the amended version. I'm happy to run through the act with you.

Mr ELLIS - I'll follow up and and get some advice. Obviously this is the approved version,

Ms BUTLER - Was the original version of the State Fire Commission corporate plan approved by you and the Treasurer, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, as in the draft version?

Ms BUTLER - The original. This is the amended version. If you run through all your previous State Fire Commission corporate plans, all of them have the actual date of approval written on the footer of each page of each document. This doesn't have that. Also, it's my understanding that - I'll run through -

The commission must provide a draft of the corporate plan to the Minister, the Stakeholder Minister and Treasurer not later than 90 days before the day on which the corporate plan will take effect. The Minister must approve a corporate plan prepared in accordance with this section and section 73F by no later than 30 days before the day on which the corporate plan will take effect.

So I'm looking for when the original corporate plan.

Mr ELLIS - Look, I have some advice here from Mr Wilson-Haffenden - I might pass down to him in a tick. But, due to state election delays to the Budget obviously to September, the original was never endorsed, but due to being endorsed after 1 July. It is amended. The original is -

Ms BUTLER - You were sworn in on 11 April.

Mr ELLIS - the previous year's version. As I mentioned, the Budget is later this year, which is why we're having this discussion in September. But I'll look at Mr Wilson-Haffenden.

Ms BUTLER - That's irrelevant, minister, in relation to what your obligations are under the act with the plans of commission corporate plans. I'm just trying to get to the bottom of it.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I'm just trying to pass over to Mr Wilson-Haffenden to provide some further information for you, Ms Butler.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Yes, through you, minister, obviously the corporate plan is a multi-year document and it provides forward Estimates over the four years. Due to the delays resulting from the election and the delay in the budget, as I understand, the state Fire Commission original draft had not been endorsed prior to 1 July.

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Ms BUTLER - I'm sorry for interrupting. Through the minister, hadn't been approved by the State Fire Commission, or hadn't been approved by the minister and Treasurer?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - The State Fire Commission plan hadn't been endorsed by the Treasurer and minister. The legislation requires that if the plan is submitted after 1 July, then it is an amended plan. So an amended plan can be submitted at any time. The original plan stayed from the previous years, noting that that's a multiple years plan.

Ms BUTLER - Okay. There are big differences within this corporate plan and your actual budget itself, minister, if you look at your State Fire Commission income, on the reporting, so you'll find that on page 21,

Mr ELLIS - Are we talking the corporate plan?

Ms BUTLER - Yes, we're talking about the State Fire Commission corporate plan, so on page 21. And then you compare that with your actual budget, State Fire Commission and statement of comprehensive income, they're not the same figures at all. If you look at 2024-25, 2026-26, you'll see that there are significant changes.

Mr ELLIS - Which data points are you asking about in particular, Ms Butler?

Ms BUTLER - Which is true: the income statement provided by the State Fire Commission corporate plan or the income provided in the statement of comprehensive income in this Budget? They're the same line item.

Mr ELLIS - Which line item were you asking about?

Ms BUTLER - I can ask you first about the supplies and consumables, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Right.

Ms BUTLER - If you compare the two, you'll see that there's a nearly million-dollar difference in the supplies and consumables which is quoted between the comprehensive income in your Budget as opposed to the income statements by the State Fire Commission.

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to the TFES to provide a bit more information around it.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Through you, minister, we'd probably have to take it on notice. There are always some differences between the budget statements and the corporate plan. The budget statements are compiled by Treasury based on the information that goes through our budget management system. It does contain some eliminations, noting the way the funds transfer through the department and through to the State Fire Commission. There are also some small timing differences with the Budget. As I noted, there were amendments due to the late issuing of the Budget. There still may be some further amendments resulting from the Budget. We could do that, I guess, reconciliation for you -

Ms BUTLER - That would be good.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - As there is a couple month-gap between where I signed that off when the Budget came through.

Ms BUTLER - Regardless of the gaps, minister, if you look at total expenses under the SFCCP as opposed to your Budget, there's about \$5 million difference. You can understand why I'm asking you the question of why there's such big differentiation. It was my understanding that your Budget should reflect what the corporate plan has within it. I'm concerned whether or not there's been a breach of the act and the reporting system in relation to this.

One of the other big concerns as well is the supplies and consumables. If you look at supplies and consumables, it's nearly \$1 million less. Can you provide us with some information about what the breakdown of supplies and consumables is? On a layman's way of looking at it, that's a hell of a lot of Post-it notes. It's a huge amount of money there.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, if you think our supplies and consumables are about Post-it notes, I think you've got no idea about Fire and Emergency Services, sadly.

Ms BUTLER - And you don't understand irony, minister. Continue.

Mr ELLIS - I don't think it's a helpful categorisation for people who risk their lives every day to keep us safe, that they're spending \$47 million on Post-it notes -

Ms BUTLER - And the supplies and consumables, minister?

Mr ELLIS - As Mr Wilson-Haffenden mentioned, there are some months between when the corporate plan and the Budget were handed down this year. Obviously we continue to work through around revisions of those. I will look back to the team if there's anything further to add in particular.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - We can take it on notice, but obviously that supplies and consumables wraps up a vast array of various types of expenditure. We can table exactly what that comprises. It picks up supplies and consumables, it picks up community awareness, advertising, et cetera. Much of our firefighting equipment, other operational expenses, contributions for corporate support, and protective clothing are all wrapped up in that. We can break that down further.

Ms BUTLER - Is any of the income being siphoned or diverted through to other areas of DPFEM, such as SES or police, from the fire commission's supplies and consumables in their income statement?

Mr ELLIS - I think we've said that we're happy to take on notice the question about why the discrepancy. We've noted there is a couple months difference in terms of that. I thought one of your budget saving strategies was around supplies and consumables, so it's interesting that that you're now so cranky about it. We'll work through to provide you the information, and obviously we're looking to grow our fire and emergency services, which is why you can see such strong investment in both the corporate plan and the budget statements as well.

Ms BADGER - I wanted to clarify what we were talking about earlier. The commission of inquiry's terms of reference covered the institutions, being the department for Education and Tasmanian schools, the Department of Health, the Tasmanian Health Service and the Department of Communities Tasmania, as well as Ashley Youth Detention Centre. In those

terms of reference was not Tasmania Police, but obviously they were incidentally part of that and part of the recommendations. When the funding amounts were set for the commission of inquiry implementation, that was done with specific reference to the requirements for implementing the Weiss review. Was this done, and exactly how much of the commission of inquiry funding is being allocated to the Weiss review recommendations that you are currently working towards? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

Mr ELLIS - As I say, because Tasmania Police is a key investigatory agency in all of those settings, we obviously have a role to play in terms of the commission of inquiry. The commission of inquiry had extensive discussion around the role of police and the importance of ensuring that we continue to keep children safe in our settings. We have eight recommendations. Paul Reynolds was a case study in the commission of inquiry, and in terms of the budget for DPFEM for our part of the commission of inquiry recommendation rollouts, the 2024-25 budget provided \$39.603 million to assist DPFEM to implement the recommendations of the findings from the commission's final report.

Obviously DPFEM is also committed to being a child-safe and youth-safe organisation in line with the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act, and all staff are undergoing mandatory training regarding child and youth safe awareness and reportable conduct. We have two \$15.1-million multidisciplinary Arch centres for victim/survivors that are operational in the north and the south, and the government is part of -

Ms BADGER - Perhaps I didn't phrase the question properly. It's about the Weiss review recommendations and the funding allocated for that. I know you've said earlier that part of the commission of inquiry funding is for the Weiss review recommendations. How much?

Mr ELLIS - No, the broader funding that we'll be providing over many years - because that's the thing, this is a task that the government needs to meet over many years -

Ms BADGER - Absolutely, it's really important. Many Tasmanians and I would like to think that it would be explicitly outlined how much funding is going towards which recommendation, be it commission of inquiry or the Weiss review -

Mr ELLIS - I'm working through those recommendations, Ms Badger.

Ms BADGER - Sorry, they're for the commission of inquiry. We're just after the Weiss review.

Mr ELLIS - I thought you said for the commission of inquiry and the Weiss review?

Ms BADGER - We are asking how much. You said earlier, just to clarify, that some of the funding in the current Budget looking at the commission of inquiry recommendations flows on to the Weiss review recommendations. So if that's the case -

Mr ELLIS - If I could be helpful here, say, for example, we have currently employed an inspector of police. That's our community engagement inspector. So there's already money people are already getting paid in being able to deliver some of these recommendations. That's a key part of recommendation 3, from memory, in terms of our abilities to engage with the community. There are parts of our Budget that broadly go into this already -

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Ms BADGER - Great, so could we get a breakdown of that specifically for the Weiss recommendations?

Mr ELLIS - The reason why I can't give you that exactly is because not all the policy work is done, and some of it is whole-of-government -

Ms BADGER - Some of it is done though.

Mr ELLIS - I'm trying to be helpful, Ms Badger, honestly. Some of the policy work in terms of designing a redress scheme sits outside of our portfolio, and it's complex work. The secretary of DPAC in her evidence today has spoken about the importance of that work in terms of getting it right, so that we can understand the quantum of what might need to be provided and the best design for a scheme that can support victim/survivors.

We're working through that policy work at the moment as a whole of government, and I'm sure you'll have members in the other committee that will be able to provide a better sense in terms of the current detail that the secretary of DPAC is working through for her recommendations. There's obviously also the opportunity to scrutinise Justice in regards to the Integrity Commission. I'll pass over to the commissioner to see if there's anything further to add on this evidence.

Ms ADAMS - The policy design work has not been completed. We've initiated some actions within the community engagement space and, as the minister has said, we've appointed an inspector to lead up that unit. In terms of understanding what the command would look like, how we manage the restorative justice process and also our unit to support victim/survivors of police perpetrators, that design work is being undertaken at the moment.

Once we understand the various models and options, we'll have a conversation with the minister, and then we'll understand what the Budget implications will be to support those recommendations.

Ms BADGER - How many people have been charged under the *Police Offences Amendment (Workplace Protection) Act* since it was passed in 2022?

Mr BODNAR - I'm not aware of the figures of people who have been charged under that legislation. I know that for the last financial year 2023-24, we've charged just over 600 people with trespass across the state, but I don't have an answer to the specific question you're putting forward, Ms Badger.

Ms BADGER - Do you have the figures for that same period of time for the similar prior offence of being a public nuisance?

Mr BODNAR - No. We would have to see if we could work through that.

Ms BADGER - You can take it on notice too.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, happy to follow up. Our government's commitment is really strong. We want to make sure that people can go to work and undertake their lawful business, and I think it's a disgrace that the Greens continue to back people who are chaining themselves to equipment when they're just trying to do their job.

Ms JOHNSTON - Media reports have highlighted that a number of the recruit courses for the Police Academy have had recruits as young as 18. Minister, do you think it's appropriate that someone straight out of college is recruited to Tasmania Police? If so, what additional support have you provided to those young recruits given their lack of life experience and the difficulties that they'll have to deal with as police officers?

Mr ELLIS - At 18, you're an adult and you can serve in our military. You can undertake a whole range of different work. In Tasmania Police, I think we actually used to recruit people under the age of 18. Commissioner, you might have come in when you were 18.

Ms ADAMS - No, I wasn't. I came in at 19.

Mr ELLIS - At 19, sorry. Obviously, we need to continue to be supporting people. Eighteen is the age of majority in our community and that's a good thing. I don't think we want to go to an American model where you can't have a beer until you're 21. That being said, it is high-risk work and it's important that we're coaching and mentoring people as they go through their journey with Tasmania Police. It's part of why we've seen a significant change in the way that we mentor people in the field while they're still in the academy, which is a really innovative approach, to give people a sense of what the job's about before they graduate. I'll pass to the commissioner and the team to talk about some of that work.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. The selection process for a recruit is quite rigorous, and it includes some extensive psychometric testing to provide an assurance that we have people who have the life skills and are ready to join Tasmania Police.

As part of the recruitment program, as the minister has said, they are mentored and they're provided with a level of coaching. Then we give them some extensive outstations where they go out and work with police officers. We are sending our recruits to the areas that they're actually going to be graduating to, so they start to build that team-based culture and understand the level of support working with their future supervisors.

That is also supplemented by strong wellbeing support throughout their period of time at the academy. Each recruit has access to all the wellbeing support tools available to any other officer, and they get specific instruction and guidance around how to access the tools and how to put their hand up if they're struggling or they're feeling the effects of the training program.

We're also continually getting survey information from our recruits to understand where the pressure points are in our recruitment program. We want to be an organisation that's representative of the community in terms of gender, in terms of age and in terms of life experience. That's what we aim to do, without any preconceived viewpoint that any one recruit is going to be more experienced or better suited than another.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, commissioner. Minister, with the amalgamation of TFS and SES, there needs to be a clear plan for what will happen with the SES facilities currently owned by local government. How is the transfer of local government assets going to be managed under the government's reforms?

Mr ELLIS - Can I thank you as well, Ms Johnston, for your time in local government and your support for our first responders.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, but I'd love an answer to the question.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely, but it is important because local government is a key partner of ours. We're working through this situation currently. There is a range of different - how would you say it - a range of different facilities out there. Some are pretty basic and a significant drain on local government resource and capability. Others have been invested in by local governments and they're important assets for them. The state is the right level of government to be delivering SES services, because wherever you are in the state, you deserve the best possible life-saving support - say, for example, if you're involved in a car crash - because we're all Tasmanian.

We're working through with our partner councils around what we do with the facilities. We're making major investments ahead of that in terms of things like hubs. We've spoken about Sorell, and pay tribute to that council for their proactive work. Kingston, Wynyard, and Rosebery too, where we're actually investing in new facilities to replace old ones, and ones that are not fit for purpose. I'll pass over to our Director of SES or the Commissioner of Fire and Emergency Services to add further.

Mr CLARK - SES continues to work very closely with local council. We do that as part of the units and part of our day-to-day business. We do have MOUs that are in place regarding funding arrangements at the moment. As the reforms develop we'll continue to work with those to make sure that the safety of the Tasmanian community is prioritised.

Ms JOHNSTON - To clarify, would the government be providing funding to purchase those local government owned SES facilities?

Mr ELLIS - As I said, we're working through the arrangements. We think that there's some really good opportunities to continue working together around it. With some facilities we're looking to just build completely new ones. I mentioned the hubs. Say, for example, the Wynyard SES is out the back of someone's house in sort of suburban Wynyard. We want them to come in together as part of a broader facility that's actually on council land. We're working closely with the council there. Other areas have really good facilities that are that are currently owned by the council. We'll work with them around what their transition arrangements are, noting that it's not one size fits all in this space, because there are starkly difference investments that have been made, and capabilities of council. That's been part of the problem, because we're talking about a life-saving service. It shouldn't matter how many people are in a council area when it comes to the jaws of life.

Mr FAIRS - While we're on volunteer firefighters and our SES workers, and I want to put it on the record I sincerely thank them for what they do, keeping us safe, offering their time and help in obviously very stressful and trying times, so thank you. What's the department doing to keep and attract volunteers to the SES, and the volunteer firefighters?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs, and I thank you as well for your support of our Fire and Emergency Services. It was great to see you at our medal presentation in the north in Launceston the other day. Some of those people are truly extraordinary, you know, 60 years of service to their communities is phenomenal.

We're having good success. Over the past 12 months TFS has recruited an additional 502 new volunteer members. SES has also been really successful, with a net gain of 88 volunteer members over the past 12 months. I think that stands in contrast to some of our other partner agencies interstate, and indeed other volunteer organisations that are struggling to get members. We still need to continue to invest in our people through volunteer support units, our new field officers with the fire service, and other capability-building parts of our service. Ultimately, nine out of ten people that get on a firetruck in Tasmania are volunteers. It's even more than that in SES.

It's part of the reason why we announced on Friday the next step in terms of our Fire and Emergency Services act, as you'll be aware. That will contain a volunteer charter to enshrine volunteers at the heart of our organisations. We need to be backing them in so that we have a workforce to keep the community safe. I'll pass to the commissioner if there is anything further you wanted to add.

Mr SMITH - It's important to recognise our volunteers. We could not operate without our fantastic volunteers, whether they're TFS or SES. There are probably three pillars that are fundamental to our volunteers, and they are retaining our current volunteers, recruiting the volunteers of tomorrow - and the minister and I were on the north-west coast at the weekend, looking at our new juniors coming through and it was fantastic to see, and to create an environment where volunteers are supported through a good culture with full engagement and recognition. They're the three pillars and, as I alluded to, volunteers are the backbone of our organisations and we thank them for their service.

Mr ELLIS - Those future volunteers, you'll see in the Budget, an emergency services cadet program. We're working through the design of that at the moment. Being a volunteer has been life changing for me and we want to provide those opportunities to our young people coming through. We already have great youth volunteer programs with the TFS, St John Ambulance and the ADF cadets. Wherever there are opportunities to -

CHAIR - Sorry, minister, I'm going to have to cut you off because the time for this session has -

Mr ELLIS - That's one of my favourite things in the Budget, Chair, but that's okay.

CHAIR - You could keep going for another 10 minutes, but, yes, the time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Skills and Training. Thanks.

The Committee suspended from 12.13 p.m. to 12.16 p.m.

DIVISION 27

(Minister for Skills and Training)

CHAIR - I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions for the benefit of Hansard. For clarity if we can go from left to right so Hansard knows who's who.

Mr ELLIS - What I might do to ensure that we're going to seniority, I suppose, is so to my right is Jenna Cairney, acting deputy secretary of business and jobs, Department of State

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Growth, then Alexandra Patterson, general manager of skills and workforce, and Stuart Hollingsworth, director of Jobs Tasmania; and to my left is Dr Anthony Reed, my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions.

CHAIR - Thank you minister. The time scheduled for the estimates of the Minister for Skills and Training is one hour. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. It's been another busy period in the Skills and Training portfolio and we've been focused on making sure that Tasmanians have access to the training they need to get a job. The Budget delivers support for TasTAFE, which trains more than 20,000 people every year and continues our strong contestable training program that's delivering great outcomes.

TasTAFE has new facilities that have come online in recent times, the Water and Energy Trade Centre of Excellence or the WET Centre, the Agricultural Centre of Excellence at Freer Farm and a cybersecurity training facility. There's more to come with learning hubs and accommodations.

In the Jobs Tasmania space, we've doubled down on our nation-leading jobs hubs and they're secured now through 2027, and we're working with the Commonwealth on what more we can do together to support Tasmanians. We also have a new two-year workforce participation and training program, which will support local organisations to help vulnerable Tasmanians participate in our economy. The Budget also provides new funding for the expanded High-Vis Army program, which includes sparkies and plumbers for the first time.

In terms of migration, we've had success in negotiating outcomes with the Commonwealth to meet Tasmania's unique economic needs and we think there are more opportunities there on top of a refresh population strategy that shows how we're investing to manage Tasmania's growth and to deliver for our community. Finally, Tasmania's first-ever youth job strategy is all about investing in our young people so that we can futureproof our workforce for years to come. This is a strong budget for skills and training that will support thousands of Tasmanians to reach their potential.

Ms DOW - Minister, does the efficiency dividend apply to TasTAFE and the skills and training portfolios?

Mr ELLIS - Efficiency dividends apply across government and we'll continue to work with all of our partner agencies to make sure our bureaucracy is more efficient and that we're responsible stewards of taxpayer funds. But look, I'll pass over to Ms Cairney to update further.

Ms CAIRNEY - Thanks so much. The Budget indicated that government would seek operating efficiencies while protecting frontline services. As the minister outlined, the efficiency dividend is to be across government. The department itself plans to achieve these efficiencies through a combination of efficiency measures and ceasing or scaling-back on non-core and non-priority activities that are either not the highest strategic priorities or have been replaced with new commitments.

Ms DOW - Through you, minister, what would they be?

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Ms CAIRNEY - Regarding department efficiencies, we've identified several strategies that we will use to meet the budget efficiency dividend. Some examples: combining functions and service delivery areas to implement leaner operating models, reviewing how we administer programs, such as grants or our capital program to ensure they deliver value for the Tasmanian community and considering process improvements and systemising processes to ensure they're efficient.

Some other operational expenditure will also be considered as part of our efficiency dividends. So reducing operational expenditure on supplies and consumables. For example, marketing and consultancies, accommodation, ICT costs, travel, postage, which is significant, for example, registration and licencing, renewable.

Ms DOW - Thank you. Can you table the savings strategy for each of those areas, please, minister?

Mr ELLIS - I'll get to Ms Cairney, if there's -

Ms DOW - I can put that on notice if that's -

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister, the department. - yes, we'll take that on notice.

Ms DOW - At the 2021 election, you promised Tasmanians 100 extra TasTAFE teachers statewide. We've since had another election, an early one. Since the 2021 election, could you provide the number of additional net teachers that you have employed across Tasmania with a breakdown across each region please?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of each region, we'll follow up - and I don't know if it'll assist the committee if we bring TasTAFE forward but if the committee is interested in TasTAFE, we do have people here as well.

Ms DOW - We are.

Mr ELLIS - We've got 69 full-time equivalent teacher equivalents. That's through a range of different areas. It's recruitment - it's also part of our reforms as well that have ensured that our teachers are doing more teaching and being paid more, which delivers in terms of our equivalent -

Ms DOW - To be specific though, minister, the question was: how many additional net teachers have you employed across TasTAFE across the state since you made that commitment to employ 100 more?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, as I just said, 69 full-time equivalent teacher equivalents more than there were in 2021. From here on out, TasTAFE are focusing on making sure that we're putting the resources in the right place to meet learner demand. That's resourcing and recruiting to areas that learners and industry are telling us are a priority area. Tasmanians expect us to ensure that we're delivering those resources as efficiently as possible. Over the -

Ms DOW - Speaking of efficiencies, minister, will the proposed cuts across each of these areas mean that there is not money in the Budget to employ those additional - you've said you've employed 67 -

Mr ELLIS - It's 69.

Ms DOW - Sixty-nine; you've made that commitment of 100.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. You made a commitment of 80, by the way, so -

Ms DOW - Is there money still - well, you're the minister responsible.

Mr ELLIS - I assume that you're supporting our -

CHAIR - Order.

Ms DOW - Is there still money in the Budget to make sure that those additional teaching positions will be provided across the state?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. As I've mentioned, we've outlined quite well what our efficiency dividend process is across the Department of State Growth. That's things like travel, consultancies, supplies and consumables, as well as doing things more efficiently in our bureaucracy. We're continuing to grow the number of teachers.

The reason I've mentioned ensuring that we're employing the right people now is that we have particular areas of need nationally when it comes to increasing the number of TAFE and vocational teachers, but it's not uniform. For example, there are particular trades, and electrical is a great example, where there is a shortage nationally in our vocational education training workforce. We want to ensure that we're delivering the right teachers so that we can address some of those important skills gaps that are happening in our economy and in our community.

I might ask the team from TasTAFE to come up. I introduce at the table, if it works for you, Chair, Grant Dreher, CEO of TasTAFE. Grant, would you mind just giving us a bit of a sense of our teaching workforce around the priority hiring areas over the coming 12 months?

Ms DOW - Through you, minister, if we could also have the total number of teachers employed by TasTAFE, please.

Mr DREHER - Yes. Let's start with the number because that's probably easier. All right. The total number of teachers - and we're taking a point in time; you'd understand that those things change. On March 22, the total number was 483 teachers.

Further to the minister's comments, just a broad-brush recruitment campaign is kind of not what we need now. We really need teachers in specific areas. The areas we've identified, as the minister has already said, are electrotechnology and plumbing, allied trades and construction. These are national shortages and that's confirmed across the country. To a lesser extent, engineering and metal trades require some top-up, and there are new and emerging places like cybersecurity and blue technology.

CHAIR - Last question, then we'll go to Mr Bayley.

Mr ELLIS - I will clarify as well, Chair, for the benefit of the committee, I did outline it but just so that we're clear, the 69 full-time equivalent teacher equivalents, that's 45 FTE

recruited teaching staff and there's 24 FTE equivalent. That's arisen because our teachers are now doing more teaching as part of the reforms that we brought in. That gives the community a sense of why it was so important that we delivered these reforms, because it means that we get more teaching for Tasmanian learners. That's grown our capability significantly. The next part of the journey is finding those teachers that we need in areas of particular skills need, as Mr Dreher outlined, so that we're not just hiring any teacher for any course, but that we're really targeted in terms of that investment.

Ms DOW - Is that pronounced in certain regions of the state in those industry sectors? What initiatives or incentives are you providing to ensure that you can get the teachers that you require to deliver this coursework?

Mr DREHER - The issues are probably exacerbated on the north-west coast. We're working with potential applicants if they're new to the state, which we are having some success on. Housing seems to be the biggest issue when it comes to recruiting new teachers with families to the state. So that's an area.

Ms DOW - You should speak to the minister about that.

Mr DREHER - That seems to be that the biggest issue we have when it comes to recruiting people. We'll be launching a new campaign on letting people in industry know the benefits of working at TasTAFE. That will launch in the next couple of weeks. I think that should help people in trades understand how they can come back to TAFE and give back to the industries that they've come out of.

Ms DOW - Just to be clear, there's no regional incentives at all to try to get people out to the regions to teach?

Mr DREHER - Not at this stage, no.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, there is a new renewables training facility listed in the Budget. I'm interested in seeing whether you can confirm that this facility will offer presently missing courses in Tasmania, things such as a full Cert III in Automotive Electric Vehicle Transportation. Also, will it have a heavy focus on wind farm and turbine construction training to ensure that there are local jobs in those industries and skilled jobs don't go to FIFO workers.

Mr ELLIS - I thought you were opposed to wind farms.

Mr BAYLEY - We're not at all, minister, that's just a bit of convenient rhetoric on your behalf.

Mr ELLIS - Which ones do you support?

Mr BAYLEY - We support plenty. Answer the question, if you don't mind. I'm the one asking the questions.

Mr ELLIS - Okay, good one. We actually support the renewable industry, unlike the Greens, who want to pull the plug on Lake Peddar and stop every other wind farm that's being developed in Tasmania. It's quite an interesting question, that you actually want to skill up an industry that you're trying to shut down.

You are correct, we're going to invest \$4 million in terms of our state-of-the-art industry training facility on the north-west coast. We're going to partner with industry, and will have a dedicated focus on renewable energy skills. We think that there are some really good models available to us already in terms of partnering with industry.

I pay tribute to the agriculture industry on the north-west coast that was critical in providing input with our steering committee for the Freer Farm Agricultural Centre of Excellence at Burnie. We've got good opportunities to partner together to support students in our region to participate in the renewable energy future if the Greens don't shut it down. We will continue to seek to leverage additional Australian government funding as part of that project under the National Skills Agreement.

In terms of the specific courses you've asked about automotive -

Mr BAYLEY - EV in particular.

Mr ELLIS - It'll depend on the kind of approach that we take. We're continuing to scope this with the industry. We have opportunities to provide EV training, probably more about automotive facilities that we have around the state, but we have an open mind in terms of what industry is seeking the skills that they will need. There are big opportunities in terms of transmission, which of course the Greens oppose as well. I might pass over to the team at Skills to talk further around the kind of partnerships that we're looking to leverage and what that might mean for courses.

Ms PATERSON - We're looking to establish an industry-led approach to the north-west training facility. There are also opportunities under the National Skills Agreement to potentially leverage some national skills funding contribution towards that centre as well. The idea would be to work collaboratively with TasTAFE and industry to design the future training offering to meet needs both for now and also for emerging industries.

Mr ELLIS - I might look back to Mr Dreher in terms of our TasTAFE automotive opportunities that we have there.

Mr BAYLEY - Specifically around EVs, is the question.

Mr DREHER - In relation to EVs, we do short courses in EV at the moment and EV servicing and EV safety. We work closely with industry on those. The need for a Certificate III will emerge over the next few years and we'll be looking at it, but I couldn't make a commitment on it.

Mr BAYLEY - You haven't got a commitment to make that in that space. What about the timeframe for the establishment of the centre in the north-west? When's it going to be up and running and is it fully funded to the point where it can get up and running?

Mr ELLIS - I mentioned before, we are making a contribution of \$4 million, but we think there's some big opportunities to leverage Commonwealth funding in this space as well. The Commonwealth has rolled out five of their 31 national centres of excellence, all in other jurisdictions, and we think that there's big opportunities to work together, noting that Tasmania is a real renewables. We're continuing to work with them as part of the national -

Mr BAYLEY - So is it contingent on funding partnering?

Mr ELLIS - All I'll say there is that we think that there's further opportunities because if we can partner together, it will grow our capability. We were obviously the lead agency in terms of delivering the water and energy trade centre of excellence here in the south. But where we can work with the Commonwealth to leverage additional funds, we get more bang for our buck and we'll get an even better facility for our learners. It's also important in terms of timeframe, we'll be working with our industry partners around that, so in terms of our industry steering committee, we're working through the process of establishing that and we've got some great partnerships that we'll be able to build. I might look to -

Mr BAYLEY - It's already behind though, isn't it? Have you got a date that you're -

Mr ELLIS - What are you talking about? We committed to it at the last election and we funded it in the first Budget. Behind what?

Mr BAYLEY - Establishing. Have you got a date?

Mr ELLIS - We made the commitment at the last election. At the first opportunity, we're providing funding for it in the Budget just as we committed to at the election and we're looking forward to rolling that out. I'll look to maybe Ms Paterson in terms of anything further to add.

Ms PATERSON - Through you, minister, I can probably add a little bit more around the process under the National Skills Agreement for attracting that matched funding through the Commonwealth. The specific policy initiatives component of the National Skills Agreement requires an implementation plan to be agreed with the Commonwealth before we can release that funding or have that funding committed, if you like. We're working through that process at the moment as quickly as we can.

Mr BAYLEY - When do you expect to finish that implementation plan?

Ms PATERSON - It'll depend on the negotiations with the Commonwealth, I think. I would expect that we would have certainty of their position hopefully by the end of this year.

Mr ELLIS - We've had good conversations already with the with the new federal minister. A shout out to him, he's actually a West Coast Tasmanian, so obviously one of the real heartland areas for our country for renewable electricity generation. I know how passionate he is in supporting our state, too.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, minister. I'll direct you to page 122, budget paper 2, volume 2, which has the detailed budget statements about TasTAFE. What you'll notice here is that the grants are decreasing over time, and indeed, the expenses are increasing, which means that the net result is a significant deficit. Why is TasTAFE being forced to run at a deficit?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you for the question, Ms Johnston. It actually leads on reasonably well from my previous answer to Mr Bayley. As we work through our National Skills Agreement, funding opportunities become available over the over the forward Estimates, but we can't budget that until decisions are made by the federal government in terms of that support.

That's things like capital grants for centres of excellence that pop up from time to time. But it's also an area where the federal government is looking to step in further to provide operational funding. So, for example, we've had a number of new rounds for fee-free TAFE and commend the federal government for stepping forward into this area and make funding available. That funding continues to come through from time to time. So while we can't budget for it, we know there are some big opportunities to continue working with the federal government as part of that process and we'll always look to opportunities there.

I might just look back to TasTAFE and Mr Dreher and see if there's anything further that that he'd like to add as part of.

Mr DREHER - I don't think there's anything I can add, minister, no.

Ms JOHNSTON - Whilst you're hoping and praying that the federal government might come to the party for this additional funding, what happens in -

Mr ELLIS - It would be staggering if they cut Tasmania's funding, I think.

Ms JOHNSTON - Well, you haven't budgeted for it so you've clearly not considered it a definite.

Mr ELLIS - You might be able to ask Ms Dow whether her colleagues are planning on cutting -

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm asking the question, Mr Ellis. Whilst the deficit budgets are running, that effectively is a cut, is it not? Can you detail where these saving measures will have to come from?

Mr ELLIS - No, I think you completely misunderstood my answer there, Ms Johnston, so let me try to be clear. We can't budget until there's a decision made by the Commonwealth in terms of different funding. I certainly know that the Commonwealth has been very forthcoming when it comes to providing additional funds for things like fee-free TAFE. I'd be staggered if the Commonwealth was planning to make those cuts. I know that the opposition at a federal level is very keen to ensure that we're investing in more tradies to build our homes, more people to care for our loved ones, and more people that provide our food. We're continuing to work with the Commonwealth around some of those opportunities. It's very similar to previous years as well in terms of our budget -

Ms JOHNSTON - So you are prepared to say now that there will be no deficit budget for next year or a definite position at the end of the financial year because you're certain that the federal funding is coming?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work with the Commonwealth around those opportunities, but the National Skills Agreement makes it pretty clear that there are big opportunities for us to unlock federal funding as we continue to work through those processes and certainly know that the federal government as a partner of ours in the skill space, see very much their role in terms of backing-in TAFE and the learners that come through those institutions around our country. I'll look over at the team at Skills, if there's anything further to add on that one.

Ms PATERSON - Through you, minister, I can just add some more detail around the types of initiatives that the National Skills Agreement has committed to in terms of potential additional funding to TAFE. So there's \$41 million effectively additional funding for specific policy initiatives on offer to Tasmania under a number of policy initiatives including Closing the Gap foundation skills, improve completions, enhance that data and evidence and in particular in relation to TasTAFE, TAFE Centres of Excellence, TAFE professional networks and the VET workforce. As I mentioned earlier, that process of working through with the Commonwealth on those implementation plans is, is the process that we need to go to through to unlock that additional funding that's embedded in the agreement at the moment.

Ms JOHNSTON - So you're confident then, through the minister, that this result will turn around to a surplus rather than a deficit given the commitments from the federal government?

Mr ELLIS - Our intention has been really clear in terms of TAFE. We've had you know, more than \$100 million worth of additional investment from this government in recent times and certainly we're seeing additional investment from the Commonwealth too. We've been living through one of our largest ever skills and labour shortages as a country -

Ms JOHNSTON - The question was about the financial result. Are you confident that we'll be looking at a surplus budget rather than a deficit budget for next year?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work through it. We've got a strong track record of making investments in this space and we'd expect as part of the National Skills Agreement that our federal colleagues would continue to play their part as well.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, the government's legislation reforms have been in place for a couple of years now. Can you outline some of the improvements that have been made in this area and especially for learners and industry and what they're seeing?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. TasTAFE has made some really strong progress since the reforms came into force. In terms of the workforce, an important milestone for TasTAFE was reached this August with the Fair Work Commission approving TasTAFE's education facilities attendants fair work agreement. This approval follows enterprise agreements reached last year with general and with teaching employees and that means that all three employee groups have now voted to transition and have transitioned to the new national workplace system. The new teaching arrangements has meant an uplift in delivery of the equivalent of 24 full time equivalent teaching staff.

As a government, we've also taken the decision to invest strongly in our facilities, brand new spaces have been opened in the last couple of years, that includes the water and energy trade centre of excellence, the agricultural centre of excellence at Burnie and new butchery facilities and cybersecurity hub at Campbell St. We've also got works underway at Allanvale in the beautiful electorate of Bass to deliver a modern health training hub because we know just how important these services are for the local community, as well as a new student learning hub to make sure that students have a one-stop shop to access support.

We'll also be delivering accommodation improvements at Bernie and at Clarence and in terms of equipment, TasTAFE has made significant investments in technology and is in the market right now for new automotive equipment, including motor control boards that allow

electrotechnology apprentices to understand different methods of stopping and starting a motor, portable simulated engines and electrotechnology testing and verification boards that simulate faults apprentices will come across in the field and other new investments include milling machines for metals at Devonport and Allanvale, new plasma cutters for Allanvale, Devonport and Burnie, a new state-of-the-art CNC machine and training trail for civil construction at Allanvale and new equipment for TasTAFE's in-house hairdressing training salons.

There is more to come, and that's what we're seeing and what we're seeing is students responding to the opportunities available at TasTAFE. Enrolment activity for the second quarter of this year shows that enrolments are nearly 7 per cent ahead of the same time last year and around 32 per cent higher than 2020. We'll keep building on these successes as TasTAFE continue their transformation to focus on putting the learner at the centre, valuing their people and working even more closely with the industries they serve.

Ms DOW - Minister, I recently had the father of a student at Clarence Campus raise with me his concerns about accommodation at the campus and the travel allowances provided to students. His son was from the north west coast, our electorate. Can you advise of any changes to either of these to improve student and family experience and support and when will the student accommodation be completed in the north west and the proposal for Clarence? Will staff accommodation be considered as part of this as we've been updated today on the current challenges around recruitment when it comes to staff accommodation.

Mr ELLIS - A couple of separate things there, obviously you're talking about staff accommodation and student accommodation. It is interesting because I thought you guys were opposed to key worker accommodation being done by Homes Tasmania, but that's another story. So I'll address -

Ms DOW - Key workers accommodation was a part of our policy at the last election, minister.

Mr ELLIS - I certainly heard from Dr Broad some different things, but focusing on Burnie start off with - we committed \$7 million to build student accommodation at Burnie Campus that will house 25 students and increase access to the campus for rural and regional students. TasTAFE will utilise an existing building at the Burnie campus to repurpose towards student accommodation and they have commenced the design phase of the project and launched a development approval with the local council and the expected completion date is July 2025. I might just pass to Mr Dreher in terms of the Clarence investment at that facility too.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister, we have updated all of the accommodation at Clarence and modernised the current accommodation. We now have sufficient accommodation for Clarence and we're just looking at the operating model for that. It was a very dated approach and we've automated that and are just looking at how the support sits around that automation.

Ms DOW - Through you, minister, when it comes to the allowances that are in support that are provided to students that are travelling from regional areas, is there a view to review that? The feedback I had is that it reduced significantly over time from this father, and he was concerned about that. Are you able to provide any further advice about that?

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Mr ELLIS - Yes, so more than \$3.8 million was committed on travel and accommodation allowances in 2023-24 to assist more than 3300 apprentices and trainees to access training, but I'll pass over to the team at Skills Tasmania to provide an update.

Ms CAIRNEY - The Tasmanian Government does provide a contribution to the cost of travel and accommodation to support apprentices to attend training with their RTO, and that can be petrol or accommodation, and we will help learners who are attending Tasmanian-based RTOs -

Ms DOW - Is that petrol or accommodation or both?

Ms CAIRNEY - Petrol and accommodation. As the minister outlined, during the 2023-24 financial year, that \$3.8 million was claimed by more than 3300 apprentices and that's to help support them attend training.

Ms DOW - And nothing for meals?

Ms CAIRNEY - Meals, I don't believe so. The other thing I'd add as well is Skills Tasmania will pay the entire cost of flights for learners if they need to attend an interstate RTO or for learners who reside on King Island, Flinders Island or, importantly, Cape Barren Island.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, you mentioned fee-free courses. I note that TAFE offers some courses and some eligibility in that space. TasTAFE obviously provides a really important education and training opportunities to young Tasmanians and people wanting to get trained up and stay here and work. Obviously, the cost-of-living crisis is really biting and it's hitting young Tasmanians particularly hard. We don't want to discourage young Tasmanians getting an education and furthering their prospects and fee-free TAFE and fee-free education full stop is a positive way to give people a start and give them a helping hand. Will you commit to a fee-free TAFE across the board or just courses, just select courses?

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, what?

Mr BAYLEY - Would you commit to fee-free TAFE for all courses, or only some select courses?

Mr ELLIS - Oh, all courses, I'm with you now. Fee-free TAFE's a joint initiative of the Australian and Tasmanian governments that provides tuition-free training places to learners wanting to retrain or to train and upskill. Fee-free TAFE increase opportunities for workforce participation, for example, for First Nations Australians, young people aged 17 to 24, people out of work or receiving income support, unpaid carers, people with disability and women studying in non-traditional fields. In 2024, following the announcement of 4600 fee-free places in Tasmania, 3400 of those were allocated to TasTAFE across 52 products and the fee-free TasTAFE 2024 campaign has been very successful with 27 products having their allocated places filled. There are 348 places remaining across 25 products and it's a great opportunity for many Tasmanians looking to upskill.

I suppose the important thing there, Chair, is that we're investing in areas of need and for people who are in need as well. We want to be addressing areas that are key skill shortages for us. We want to be ensuring that we're delivering training courses that deliver great job outcomes as well. Skills for jobs is a really high priority for us. We're also investing so that we can support

people who are doing it tough or coming from a disadvantaged background. We also have significant funding to ensure that people can access concessional courses too, so that they're not bearing the full cost. Now of course, it is important that we're talking about taxpayer money, that we're not, for example, providing free courses to people who can well and truly afford it, people on very high incomes or, for example, in courses that don't necessarily lead to a great job or life outcome, but look, I'll pass over to -

Mr BAYLEY - So, that's a no is it, minister, in terms of offering it across the board for courses?

Mr ELLIS - If you want to fund people who are on very high incomes or people who want to do courses that don't have great life outcomes, then go for it, Mr Bayley. But our focus -

Mr BAYLEY - There's a strong case for fee-free education full stop and making it easier for people to get an education, get a trade, get into the workforce and have additional take up is clearly going to have positive benefits.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I spoke about the kind of reasons why you wouldn't do fee-free for everybody and for every course. It would be silly to do, for example, the things that you've just proposed that you would do. We want to make sure that we're targeting our support for people who need it and for jobs that will give them better life chances too. For people on low incomes and disadvantaged backgrounds, regardless of our ongoing commitment with the Commonwealth, we want to make sure that there are significant concessions for those people too, so that your income isn't a barrier to you taking part in a TAFE course that could help improve your life chances -

Mr BAYLEY - They're not the only people doing it hard though, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry?

Mr BAYLEY - They're not the only people doing it hard, concession card holders and the like.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ELLIS - People who aren't necessarily doing it hard are not really the people who you want to be giving free TasTAFE courses to.

CHAIR - Order, I remind the committee -

Mr BAYLEY - They're probably not the ones doing TAFE either.

Mr ELLIS - Look, I think everyone in our community can do TAFE.

CHAIR - Order. I remind the committee that the place for debate is in House. This is for question and answers. Did you have another question, Mr Bayley or we'll go to Ms Johnston.

Mr BAYLEY - Can I go to the Strong Plan for Safer Roads funding and the prioritisation of learner driver programs in Tasmania? Millions of dollars have been granted over the forward Estimates to develop new driver safety programs. Why is funding for established community

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programs like the Learner Driver Mentor Program, which already delivers significant outcomes, remain unfunded post December 2024?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of learner driver -

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you minister, that would be a different output group, that would be the Transport minister, is my advice.

Mr ELLIS - I'll just look to Mr Hollingsworth, is there anything further you want to add?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - No, minister. That is for another portfolio, although we do have some programs in the margins.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Minister, how many TasTAFE courses have been discontinued or suspended since July 2022? Of these, how many were suspended or discontinued due to staff shortages?

Mr ELLIS - It's an important part of the reason why we needed to ensure that we were making our industrial relations fit for purpose and modern so that we can employ our teachers on a flexible basis, they can provide more training, and they can deliver better outcomes for learners in Tasmania. Now that we've completed that significant work with our teachers, we're very grateful for the additional capability. I'll look to Mr Dreher if we have those data from that date available on hand.

Mr DREHER - Thank you. Minister, I don't have those specific data on hand at the moment.

Ms JOHNSTON - Can we take that on notice then, minister? Would you accept that on notice?

Mr DREHER - Okay, can I clarify through you, minister? That's programs that have been suspended or discontinued through staff shortages.

Ms JOHNSTON - What was the total number that have been discontinued or suspended and then also of that, what percentages of those have been due to staff shortages?

Mr DREHER - I did make a clarification that training packages change all the time. Programs are stopped all the time and replaced. I'll clarify the bit that's important, specifically due to staff shortages.

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes, thank you. Minister, I want to go back to Ms Dow's question in which she extracted from you the answer that 69 additional teachers have been employed as part of your commitment for 100 additional teachers since 2022. Can you please indicate what the time line is for the additional 31 to meet that 100 commitment, please?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. As I mentioned, we want to ensure that we're not just employing any teachers, but that we're employing the right teachers and that we have to focus on areas -

Ms JOHNSTON - The right 31 teachers then, what's the time line for that?

Ms DOW - When will they be employed by?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I'm trying to help and answer the question. The focus now is on those areas of school shortage and areas that are hard to recruit for. For example, electricians can make a huge amount of money working in the mines or on a hydro project. Nationally, we're seeing challenges in that vocational education training workforce. For the remaining teachers, as part of our commitment, we're now looking to be very focused. We could run up the numbers very easily if we're hiring in areas that are not necessarily in need, but we're now addressing the areas that are hard to staff because they're very highly paid, for example in the private sector.

I suppose I'll look back over to Mr Dreher in terms of our strategy for hiring those teachers in the future.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister. I just reiterate what you're saying that the need for teachers now is in specific areas, so to put a date on when that will happen would be highly optimistic. The main thing that we'll be doing is focusing on the areas that the minister has already outlined where we need teachers. It's not just a macro number now; they're in specific skill areas and they're not always easy to recruit

Mr ELLIS - It's probably worth noting as well that the federal government has been working really closely with the states around the opportunities that we have to grow our vocational education training workforce. That's things like qualifications reform so that we can encourage more people to come off the tools and come into the classroom. It's working together to identify with industry how we can better support them to identify often the best people that are in their businesses, who might then want to come and work with TAFE. That's been a big part of the reason why our hi-vis army has been really focused on working with industry bodies to increase our teaching workforce across the vocational education training system.

There's significant work that's being done with TAFE, with the federal government and with our partner industry associations so that we can address some of those challenging areas. That's why, now that we've had this big uplift in teachers and teacher equivalents, we're much more focused now on being targeted and smart so that we can deliver the teachers that Tasmanians need so that they can get a job.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can I talk to you about the youth jobs strategy? I noticed that you and Jo Palmer released that recently. Can you tell me more about that work in that space and also what the government is aiming to achieve with it?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs, and thank you again for your commitment to the young people in Tasmania, both in this place and as a private citizen, young people are our future. I think your work is just so commendable.

Earlier the minister, Ms Palmer, and I released Tasmania's first ever youth jobs strategy. Young people are the future of this state, so it's critical that we're focusing on making sure the opportunities are there for them to build a life. We want to invest in them and support them to reach their potential so that we can future-proof our workforce and build a strong community.

The strategy focused on making sure the pathways are there for young Tasmanians in education, training and work, taking a comprehensive approach that builds on things that are

already working well. So far there's around \$59 million being spent on initiatives in support of the strategy. This includes our highly successful regional jobs hubs which are supporting local young people into meaningful employment, as well as important investments in school facilities and a comprehensive driver education program.

The Youth Jobs Strategy has some key targets that will measure our success, because we know that it's hard to achieve what you're not measuring. By 2030 we want to see Tassie increase the level of young people aged 20 to 24 who are engaged in employment, education and training to at least the national average. We want to increase the proportion of young people aged 20 to 24 with a successful year 12 completion or Certificate III or above to at least the national average, because those trade qualifications are equally as valid.

We want to reduce the proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 not in employment, education, or training - you might hear me say 'NEET' - to at or below the national average. We want to increase the mental health and wellbeing of our young people, which is the personal wellbeing index, to at least the national average. We want to increase the ratio of entry level roles to available candidates to the national average.

That's a big challenge for us to work together with our industry partners across the economy in the private sector. As I mentioned, we'll be working closely with local industry as part of this, because they need to have the confidence to invest in our young people, which has the benefit of attracting and retaining a skilled workforce that they need while improving productivity and participation across the economy.

I also thank all the contributors to this process. There were more than 200 consultation interviews and structured forums with employers, community and not-for-profit organisations, industry peak bodies, government, and of course young Tasmanians. The strategy is available online. I might look to Mr Hollingsworth if there's anything further to add, because I know how passionate you are about this process.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Not really a lot else to add, but I encourage everyone to read the strategy and continue to engage in the conversation.

Ms DOW - Minister, in the Budget there is \$11.3 million in the 2024-25 financial year earmarked ask being for facility upgrades and in relation to the transition fund. Some of this, I think, dates back to the 2021 election where you made commitments around regional TAFE upgrades. Can you outline what this capital funding will be allocated to?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass to Mr Dreher to provide further information about those.

Mr DREHER - Thank you. \$11.5 million is not a number I have for anything, but I can talk more generally. Money included an additional \$1.5 million for the Freer Farm Agricultural Centre of Excellence, which is nearing completion at the moment. There was money in there for the health hub at Alanvale. That's a hub for all the health and care industries that has currently commenced and is in the process of being built, as is the taypani Learner Hub, which is in the process of being built at Alanvale. The planning for Devonport and Burnie is currently happening with architects at the moment. That will come on board shortly. Also there was regional access - sorry, money for the north-west and north of the state for equipment specifically, that \$7 million is almost fully expended, and has resulted in significant equipment upgrades in Burnie, Devonport and in Launceston.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Dow, are we talking about the capital grants TasTAFE facilities upgrade and transition fund, which is \$11.25 million? Is that the one?

Ms DOW - Yes, the \$11.3 million. That's what I said.

Mr ELLIS - That's cool, just making sure we're all on the same page.

Ms DOW - You've also outlined in the budget investment in schools and trade training and VET programs through schools. In some of the rural and regional parts of Tasmania, is there a view to work closely with TasTAFE around those facilities? I had thought in 2021 you'd earmarked funding to improve regional access, for example, on the west coast or on the east coast. Can you outline to me whether that will be done in partnership through schools or whether that will be done through the regional jobs hubs project?

Mr ELLIS - The investment in terms of schools is one for the Education minister, but absolutely, we're committed to working closely with our schools so that we can deliver the best outcomes for learners in the community.

Ms DOW - Don't you think it makes sense though, with such scarce resources, that you should be looking to where you can provide asset upgrades in regional communities so that there could be dual purpose or dual use across those educational campuses for the likes of TasTAFE to provide offerings as well, rather than duplicating things in rural and regional communities?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, for sure.

Ms DOW - That's something that you're looking at?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. That's part of the reason why we work closely with Education on the Youth Jobs Strategy, because that is the critical time for a young person - the transition from school into the world of work. We're making sure that they've got the facilities that they need at school and also that they get the learning that they'll need for a job in the future, and that they'll be able to connect in with those further and higher educational opportunities too. In terms of the specific investments, obviously they'll be led by DECYP, but they'll be strongly supported by us and industry as well, because we need to be making sure the training is relevant.

Mr BAYLEY - In light of the rising skills shortages, how does the government intend to boost funding for TasTAFE to meet future workplace demands and ensure that students across the state in all regional areas have access to quality future-ready vocational training?

Mr ELLIS - This is where we're looking to invest. We need to make sure that we have a strong pipeline of workers coming through. Tasmania has been successful in terms of growing our skills base in recent years, but we know that there's more investment that needs to happen. It's working with TAFE, obviously, but it's also working with industry bodies and our RTOs who provide one in two of the courses that happen in Tasmania.

Our High Vis Army project is a great example whereby we're working in an area of some of the most acute skill shortages that we have in Tasmania and around the country so that we

can unlock the experience that those different industry bodies and their RTOs and GTOs have on delivering great outcomes for the community. This is something that we talk about at national skills ministers meetings quite a bit - no one part of the economy can do all the heavy lifting. It can't just be individual businesses, it can't just be government and it can't just be industries as a whole. We've all got to work together so that we can deliver those outcomes to address the skill shortage.

We are having good success and expanding our Hi Vis Army program, for example, into taking into account the Electrical and Communications Association and the Master Plumbers is an important part of that. We need to continue to invest. That's why we need to have that real posture of backing in these industries, backing in TAFE with investments in new facilities and new teachers, and continuing to grow that training capability.

Mr BAYLEY - Can you commit? It's a competitive space, obviously, with the private RTOs, and we really need TAFE to remain a cornerstone of education in the state. Can you commit to increasing funding over time to make sure that it holds its place as the cornerstone of VET in Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - In our world, the learner is at the centre, so the learner is the focus. Ensuring that we're investing in TAFE so that they can meet the needs of learners and they're an attractive place for learners to go and get those qualifications is critical. Whatever the choices that learners are making around the pathways that they want to go down, for example, if you want a career in seafood or maritime training, then most of that is provided outside of TAFE. That's where the opportunities are. Similarly with transport and logistics. Whatever the choices those learners are making, we want to be backing them with funding that follows them and the choices that they make.

That being said, TAFE is a real cornerstone when it comes to delivering the training that we need. Say, for example, trades. I mean, I'm a plumber and Grant's a chef. There are a whole bunch of those vocational trades for which TAFE is perfect, because it's capital intensive and it also takes a long while to get people through a four-year apprenticeship. Continuing to invest in those key areas is important, but we also need to be really targeted. We need to be investing in areas that are going to help address those skill shortages and that are going to give learners the best opportunity to grow and thrive. We don't want to be providing courses that are dead ends. We want to be providing courses that are in areas of need and areas of growth. Getting that balance right is important. We mentioned the Cyber Security Training Centre - it might be a good opportunity, Grant, to talk about that as an area of growing need where we need to continue to invest in TAFE.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister. We need to look at cyber and technology, I think, on a vertical and a horizontal axis, and certainly our Cyber Security Centre will have a little bit of a vertical axis. More importantly, we'll be looking at how we role and skill Tasmania's workforce in this really important space. It hasn't been done until we started doing it last year at a Certificate IV level.

We're also delivering the Essential Eight programs and looking at what it is as far as how you use technology - whether that's AI, whether that's other types of ChatGPT - across your industry to do better than what you're doing. In reference to what the minister has said, that again is quite an expensive place to work in, but it's a great space for TAFE to be. We've opened

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that centre here in Hobart, and we're looking at how we roll those programs out across the state now.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, if I can take you back to those 31 teacher positions that are still yet to be filled. Could you give a breakdown on the areas of expertise that you're trying to recruit those positions for?

Mr ELLIS - That'll depend on the demand in the future -

Ms JOHNSTON - Or currently.

Mr ELLIS - But I might be able to provide a sense of what those areas might be, rather than if they're broken down by individual -

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm assuming you're trying to actively recruit for them now, so you should be able to give me an indication of what those areas you're actively recruiting for are?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, absolutely, the areas, I'll pass over to Mr Dreher.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister. The key areas we're recruiting into at the moment are licensed trades. As has been mentioned, electrotechnology, plumbing and construction are probably the key three areas we're recruiting into at the moment in the trade space. Also, there's a shortage in the care industry, so nursing and it's called individual support, but that covers aged care and disability. Again, in the technology area, we're looking at teachers in that area.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you have numbers for each of those industry areas? In the electrical trades area, for instance, how many are you trying to recruit in that particular area? How many are you trying to recruit in aged care?

Mr DREHER - No, we don't have numbers for that.

Ms JOHNSTON - Right. Can I just get clarification, finally, on an answer you gave beforehand. Minister, you mentioned that 69 had been recruited already against that 100 objective. Can I just clarify, I think you said that 24 of those 69 teachers are now just teachers doing more teaching, is that correct? So the actual number of new teachers is 45?

Mr ELLIS - It's important that we're getting this right. We've employed an additional 69 FTE teacher equivalents, so that's 45 new people and it's also unlocking the equivalent of 24 new teachers because they're now delivering more training for Tasmanian learners as well. It's 69 all up, and that's been a part of that growth that we've had, as well as those teachers doing more training and so getting paid to do more as well.

Ms DOW - Minister, how many free TAFE places were offered to private providers in 2024?

Mr ELLIS - I might have provided the answer to that in 2023, so let me just double check I got that right. TAFE was allocated 3400 fee-free places in 2024. I might pass over to the team from Skills Tasmania in terms of the broader number, if we have that available.

Ms DOW - If you'd like we can pop it on notice, if that's easier.

Mr ELLIS - I think we should be able to find it.

Ms DOW - My next question, minister, is why were these places provided to private providers when my understanding is TAFE is short of places?

Mr ELLIS - We've had a really strong uptake in terms of TAFE. I spoke before about the fact that there are significant parts of our economy that don't have TAFE coverage because they're provided by industry bodies. For example, if you're in marine training, and this was an area that we spoke about quite extensively with the former minister, if you're in marine training, if you're in transport and logistics, if we're only funding TAFE, you're not funding any of those learners and so we had strong support from the federal Labor government to ensure that we're meeting the needs of all learners, that they're at the centre of those of that training that's being provided.

There are training places that are provided as part of the broader economy, the care economy is another strong example where a very large percentage of training places are actually provided by non-TAFE providers. It's about making sure that those choices of those learners, whether it's industry or provider, are respected, funded and supported. But look, I'll look over to the team -

Ms DOW - Are you concerned, minister, though that enrolment numbers are dropping off post-COVID, but also surely there is potential to enrol more students if they were offered those free areas of course work at TasTAFE. I'm sure you could increase the numbers -

Mr ELLIS - All those students are enrolled, regardless of where they go. So that's the thing, it's about funding the learner. So, if the learner chooses to go to a private RTO and receive fee-free training, then that should be a choice that is supported and particularly if they're in industries that TAFE doesn't have coverage of, I think it would be deeply inequitable for us to say if you work on salmon farms, you can't get fee-free TAFE, if you work in trucking you can't get fee-free TAFE and -

Ms DOW - I am not suggesting that. I was asking a question about the potential for TasTAFE.

Mr ELLIS - But that would be the consequence of denying those learners the opportunity to receive funding.

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister, there were actually zero RTO places funded in 2024. There were some in tranche one in 2023, which the minister provided the numbers for.

Ms DOW - A final question?

CHAIR - Noting the time, I will move to Mr Bayley because we are about to run out of time.

Mr BAYLEY - Final question: in terms of the 2021 commitment, around 100 jobs, we've had extensive conversation across the table about that 69 FTE, including I guess 24 who have been bumped up to full time. That leaves 31 underneath the commitment of 100. You are

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recruiting. Can you confirm that you're recruiting to meet that 100 full-time equivalent position target? Does that still stand that you are recruiting and trying to fill another 31 positions?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, but we're working, as we say, in a more targeted way. Rather than going out and being really scattergun, we're being much more focused. We expect it will probably take us a little bit more time because highly experienced electrical trainers, for example, don't grow on trees.

Mr BAYLEY - I understand that. So the target stands: you are still trying to get to 100 and is that fully funded in the Budget to meet that commitment?

Mr ELLIS - We're working through as far as delivery of this process. I'll pass over to Mr Dreher in terms of the sense of the timeframe that we might have. I mean, we've sort of already provided evidence that it will depend on who becomes available and some of that broader national work. Is there anything further you want to add?

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister, only to reiterate that we are very specific in the type of skills that we need now. It's not just a broad brush let's get 100. It's very important that we get the skills in the areas -

Mr BAYLEY - I understand that, but through you, minister, the aspiration is still to meet that 100 target and that it is funded.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we'll continue to work through as far as providing funding as those teachers come online and become available to us. So yeah, we've got a strong target to recruit 100 and we think that there are some big opportunities to continue to work together but noting that now is the time to have that change in approach. We've had the broad uplift across TAFE's teaching capability and now we need to be more targeted and more, I suppose, discerning in terms of the different areas that we're looking to recruit for. So, that'll depend on the Tasmanian economy and what courses are in demand and where teachers become available.

CHAIR - The time for screening has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Housing and Planning.

The Committee suspended from 1.16 p.m. to 2 p.m.

DIVISION 9

(Housing and Planning)

CHAIR - The scrutiny of the Housing and Planning portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair, and great to be here with you. At the table with me currently, to my right, I've got Ms Eleri Morgan-Thomas, chief executive officer, Homes Tasmania. We've got Ms Jessemy Stone, director, Housing Policy and Programs, and Mr Richard Gilmore, director, Community Infrastructure. To my left on the end, we've got Mr Mathew Healey, acting deputy secretary, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations, and to my immediate left, Dr Anthony Reid, my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. The time schedule for the Estimates of the Minister for Housing and Planning is four hours. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. Our government recognises that every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head, which is precisely why our 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan 2023-2027 sets out our plan for safe, appropriate and affordable housing for our state. Importantly, we've set clear and ambitious housing supply targets of an increase of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 30 June 2032. We've made substantial gains in the delivery of 10,000 social and affordable homes goal with an increase of 3696 social and affordable homes as at the end of July 2024. We're well on track to deliver our significant commitments. We're at a third of the target in a third of the time.

However, our government recognises that more needs to be done. As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we've stamped out stamp duty with a 100 per cent discount for houses up to \$750,000 for first home buyers, a saving for first home buyers of \$28,900, making it easier for around 1500 young Tasmanians to get into the property market. We've also cut stamp duty in half for Tasmanians who buy an apartment off the plan or under construction up to the value of \$750,000 for two years.

We are delivering on our commitment of 10,000 more social and affordable homes by 2032, which will further increase our housing supply, drive the Tasmanian economy and activate critical, valuable and rewarding jobs in our construction sector. An important part of our 2030 Strong Plan is to lock in Tasmania's position as the best place to live, work and raise a family in the nation. That means backing more Tasmanians to invest in property and more support for renting families with the cost of living. That is what we're doing through boosting our Private Rental Incentive Scheme with an additional 200 homes. We need more houses, apartments and units for Tasmanians to live in or to rent, and every single one of these measures will turn plans into reality sooner.

It also requires a planning framework that supports sensible and sustainable development through a consistent set of rules, and without local government politics blocking developments that our state needs.

Dr BROAD - In this accompanying document, Tasmanian Budget Overview, if you go to page 11, we'll see that under the More Affordable Rentals headline, it says:

We're building a record number of new houses, with more than 3000 delivered in the last four years.

How can you argue that you've delivered 3000 houses in the last four years?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly, homes would be -

Dr BROAD - I am going very specific to the language that's in your document. It says:

We are building a record number of new houses, with more than 3000 delivered in the last four years.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Certainly, we're looking to deliver more homes and that's generally the language we use. I'm just checking with Ms Morgan-Thomas in terms of that particular

language. When we talk about the opportunities, it's usually around 'homes' and that makes up a broad range of different things.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - At the end of July 2024, we had 1801 social housing and supported accommodation. They were -

Dr BROAD - That's come from your latest update. I agree with that, but this is the budget document that describes this government delivering 3000 houses. That's very specific language. Why is it that the budget document appears to be very misleading in the language that it's used?

Mr ELLIS - Generally speaking, we use the term 'homes'.

Dr BROAD - I'm not talking about what you generally do. I am talking about this very specific line in your own budget document that is woefully inaccurate. 'New houses', it says.

Mr ELLIS - We'll take some advice and get a clearer picture on it and follow up. Generally speaking, we use the term 'homes', rather than 'houses'. I'm sure people can see why that oversight might have happened. If we need to update, I'm happy to do that as well.

Dr BROAD - The problem that we have is that you're claiming that you've gotten to a third of your target in a third of the time, your target being 10 000 social and affordable homes.

Mr ELLIS - Correct.

Dr BROAD - Your budget document is going even further and saying, '3000 houses', which is not true. We can go over the actual breakdown of what you're counting in your target. You're counting crisis units, you're counting purchases, you're counting so-called affordable residential lots. It seems like they're misleading -

Mr ELLIS - You don't support affordable land supply?

Dr BROAD - You're claiming that you're going to build 10 000 houses. That's how it started.

Mr ELLIS - What do you think goes on an affordable housing a lot?

Dr BROAD - I'll get to the affordable housing lots a bit later, but that's very concerning -

Mr ELLIS - That's what goes on in a home.

Dr BROAD - I'm very concerned and you have to build one in two years.

Mr ELLIS - How does -

Dr BROAD - Well, we can get into that. You're trying to be argumentative.

Mr ELLIS - I'm just saying the fact. That's what happens when you have housing lots. Homes go on them.

Dr BROAD - We can get to that one later. I'm just very concerned about the language that you're using. For example, the one highlight for me in the Budget was Bethlehem House. That's not a line item in your budget but that was very good. How many beds at Bethlehem House from that recently announced funding will you count as part of your 10 000 homes promise?

Mr ELLIS - You're right, it is an important investment. We include crisis accommodation for an important reason: that we need to take action across the whole housing spectrum, so investing in crisis accommodation is important. I would have thought that would be something the opposition would support. It's also it's also a big investment in terms of those beds because they have a lot of wrap-around support. They're not a large number, but they're a significant investment. If we weren't counting crisis and accommodation as part of our KPIs, I would have thought the people would be pretty disappointed that we weren't doing that. I'll pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas in terms of the number of beds and the counting treatment but it is an important investment.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Firstly, can I just clarify whether you're talking about old Bethlehem House or New Bethlehem House?

Dr BROAD - The old Bethlehem House.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The repurposed one?

Dr BROAD - Yes, the repurpose.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I can get the number for you but I believe it is around -

Dr BROAD - It's 36 or something.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Something like that, yes.

Dr BROAD - Have they already been counted towards your target?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Not yet, no.

Dr BROAD - Will they be counted towards your target?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I expect so.

Dr BROAD - Will they then be removed in three years' time when the refurbishment starts? It's only a temporary measure.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, if they come offline, yes.

Dr BROAD - So, then you will actually reduce your target by 36. I think the number's 36, but whatever it is, you'll then reduce your target.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - They wouldn't be counted if they're not able to have people in them.

Mr ELLIS - Because it's 10 000 net, so it fluctuates from time to time.

Dr BROAD - But whatever figure actually ends up being funded, you'll count them in your target temporarily until they're removed.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - As we do when we are - as the minister correctly says, it is a net number, so if we have a public housing property that we can no longer use for public housing and we knock it down and redevelop it, it's the net number that is added to the target, not the gross.

Ms BURNET - I want to just talk about short-stay accommodation. It's clear that short-stay accommodation is driving down vacancy rates across the state and it's making it hard for Tasmanians to afford housing. You promised to introduce a 5 per cent levy on short-stay accommodations. Could you explain to the committee the progress that's been made in introducing this? And is it just about revenue-raising or is it a real approach to try and solve some of the housing issues?

Mr ELLIS - This is a matter for the Minister for Finance, but I can probably provide a broad update for you. We're working to deliver that commitment. It's an important part of our commitment. You talk about the revenue. That's actually really important because the revenue for this is committed towards stamping out stamp duty for first home buyers. We think it delivers on that key process. Ensuring that short-stay accommodation providers are paying their fair share and also providing cost-of-living relief to everyday Tasmanians - young couples, for example - who are looking to buy their first time. That's a saving of about \$28,900 for someone who's purchasing a \$750,000 house, which is part of what you're eligible for.

As I say, broadly speaking, that matter is a matter for the Minister for Finance, but certainly, we have other planning considerations around short stay.

Ms BURNET - There's a chronically low vacancy rate in Hobart - it's 1.1 per cent. In Launceston, it's 1 per cent, and in Burnie, it's 0.7 per cent.

Mr ELLIS - Which doesn't necessarily relate to short stay, but -

Ms BURNET - Yes, but it does have an impact. There are 29 councils, and I have recently done a survey of local government elected representatives. About 50 per cent who responded said that short stay needs to be reined in. That's what they're concerned about. I'm wondering what more your government will do to rein in short-stay accommodation and whole homes?

Mr ELLIS - We're supporters of short stay and the sharing economy. Interestingly enough, Nick McKim in his first speech to the federal parliament was a huge supporter of short stay, but I suppose those things only last for so long as they're convenient for the Greens.

Ms BURNET - It's about whole homes that we're talking about.

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Mr ELLIS - Sure. Tasmania's got one of the clearest planning policies in Australia on short-stay accommodation. We have flexible planning rules that are supported by data collection to inform local policy.

Our approach is fair. It's consistent. It's simple to administer and easier to police than jurisdictions which place a limit, for example, on the number of nights the short-stay accommodation can operate a year. Any council that's got a case to support further limit on short-stay accommodation can apply local restrictions with the approval of the Independent Tasmanian Planning Commission, but in support of our balanced planning -

Ms BURNET - It doesn't work very well, minister. I've been there. It doesn't work very well at all to rein it in.

Mr ELLIS - Perhaps you might like to elaborate in terms of why your council fell short, Ms Burnet.

Ms BURNET - We were told one thing by the minister and when we took it to the commission, it wasn't a matter of falling short at Hobart council, it was a matter of, 'Well, actually, those rules don't apply'.

Mr ELLIS - Without further detail, I can't really comment, but certainly, we support our balanced planning regulations. We'll also seek to incentivise the return of some properties to the longer-term rental market to boost housing supply. Through our 2030 Strong Plan, we're extending land tax exemptions for those that switch from short-stay accommodation to longer-term rental.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, under the first round of the Housing Australia Future Fund, my understanding is that Tasmanian bidders were granted funding for approximately 479 homes, which is great. I understand that government housing bodies and other jurisdictions have done well through this funding as well. Did Homes Tasmania put in bids to access the Housing Australia Future Fund, and, if so, how many of these bids were successful?

Mr ELLIS - We did, and I have to say at the outset, I was pretty disappointed with how we went. We didn't receive funding for very many projects at all, and there was strong success in Tasmania, as you noted - about 500, which is about 3 per cent of the total funds across the country, as opposed to about 2 per cent, which is what Tasmania's population is.

Homes Tasmania supported one of the projects through one of our community housing providers, but we did come up short in a range of different areas or for a range of different projects. That's really disappointing, and certainly we are looking to review why that was. You said that some housing providers did well and that's true. Others didn't. Victoria, I think I'm right in saying, was not successful with any of their applications, but we need to examine that. We need to probably take ownership of it as well, I would say. It would be very easy to say, 'Well, the Commonwealth should have funded us'. I think there's an opportunity for us to say, 'Okay, why did we miss the mark?', particularly if it's quite competitive nationally. Do we need to look at things like delivery in terms of value for money or the scope of projects.

Some of the successful bidders did do really well in Tasmania in terms of cost to deliver. They probably had a different approach to what Homes Tasmania took. I might pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas to provide a further update in terms of how.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - At the current moment we are unable to find out much detail about that. The Commonwealth has put non-disclosure requirements on successful bidders, so we only know about the unsuccessful projects around the country. We do not have very much information. We are scheduled to get feedback in early October and we will be examining that very carefully. As the minister says, we will be going through what worked and what didn't work.

Mr O'BYRNE - When you say you have come up short, how many were successful?

Mr ELLIS - Noting the non-disclosure, what might we be able to provide?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We understand that there are -

Mr O'BYRNE - I am talking about Homes Tasmania's bids.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We had two types of bids. We had one where we were 100 per cent in by ourselves, and we had about the same number where we were partnering with a community housing provider. One of those has been successful across two projects.

Mr O'BYRNE - So, none of the Homes Tasmania bids were successful?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No.

Mr O'BYRNE - How many bids were there?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It was a total of 882 dwellings, which was well over what they were ever going to fund. That included our bids with community housing providers; that wasn't just our bids. Our bids were 483.

Mr O'BYRNE - The fund has been promoted as a ticket to get homes out of the ground and you have not been successful. That's pretty disappointing.

Mr ELLIS - We mentioned the partnership arrangements that we have, noting the non-disclosure agreements and all that sort of stuff. Generally, we put up some pretty good bids. Absolutely, it is disappointing that we weren't more successful in terms of the bids that Homes Tasmania were putting up wholly and solely. This is round one of that and it will be important as far as round two that we're really reviewing what did and didn't work as far as round one and finding the right balance with some of the projects that we're putting up, for example, are we putting up projects that are absolutely shovel ready?

I think that was a high priority for the Commonwealth - they wanted to basically fund things that were virtually ready to go, as opposed to some that are in the development process, but that all depends as well as far as round two. It has been an interesting process as you know in terms of the announcement of this grant round. We are still not quite sure what exactly has been successful around the country, but once we get a clearer steer on that we'll be able to better tailor approach to meet some of the needs that the Commonwealth is trying to deliver. I might just pass to Ms Morgan-Thomas again.

PUBLIC

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In Tasmania we believed there were about 1500 dwellings submitted across the board. Since the announcement to unsuccessful providers, I have discovered there are another couple of hundred we didn't know anything about. Tasmania was very well represented; it was massively oversubscribed.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, what is the state government doing to ensure that the significant social housing portfolio remains well maintained, and that tenants are comfortable and satisfied with our social housing homes?

Mr ELLIS - Our government's committed to ensuring that social housing tenants are provided with quality homes that are well maintained, and to providing the quality property that all Tasmanians expect. Our government inherited a \$90 million backlog of maintenance in 2014 from the former Labor-Greens government when they lost office. Since then, our government has invested more than \$300 million in social housing maintenance from July 2014 to June 2023. As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, the 2024-25 Budget provides \$20 million over four years for maintenance upgrades of social housing properties in the Homes Tasmania portfolio. That's over and above our government's existing investment on maintenance for social housing properties.

In the previous financial year, Homes Tasmania has expanded a total of \$29.76 million on maintenance. Importantly, this includes Homes Tasmania's maintenance on upgrades of energy efficiency, with the work valued at \$4.13 million. This supports tenant satisfaction surveys that have shown that Homes Tasmania tenant satisfaction rose from 73 per cent in 2021 to 75 per cent in the most recent survey from 2023. Homes Tasmania tenant satisfaction with thermal comfort and energy efficiency were the highest in the nation. Chair, that's a great result, but we aren't being complacent. Homes Tasmania are getting on with further maintenance and upgrades across the portfolio to ensure that our social housing tenants have the quality of housing that we and all Tasmanians expect.

Dr BROAD - What's the most up-to-date number of total social housing dwellings in Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - This is now publicly available in terms of our housing dashboard. This is the July housing dashboard.

Dr BROAD - I have a figure from 30 June 2023, which is 14,605.

Mr ELLIS - Are you talking about the total social housing dwelling numbers? Sorry, I was thinking you meant the 10,000 target. That's cool. Do we have that data available?

Dr BROAD - On your page 16, you have 2023, the same figures that I have, but you haven't got - you don't have a more up to date figure?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - There is a time lag in the report on government services, because we send the data into the Commonwealth, and they return it to us in about January.

Dr BROAD - We can go on the figures you have, then. In the latest dashboard, you claimed that at the end of July 2024 you completed 1801 social housing and supportive accommodation in the last four years, when the actual number has only risen by 793. How is that possible? Those two figures don't equate. Even if you look at your own table on page 16.

In 2020 there are 13,812. In 2023 there are 14,605, and yet you've claimed that you've completed 1801. Those two figures don't equate.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - There's a few things going on with the report on government services. The way it reports, there are a lot of small organisations that hold properties on our behalf. Some of those don't report. We have a big push at the end of every year to get particularly the smaller community housing providers to put in their data. Some of those are missing data. We have that problem coming through every year. We had a big push on finishing a number of properties that were delivered, the 1500 that we had a target for the 30 June 2023. A large number of those properties got delivered in the first three months of the financial year, so, they wouldn't have been counted. So, those numbers are correct. We have lost a couple where we've redeveloped some properties, but it's pretty small. It's a relative, like I said, it's on and off. So, there's a number small number of properties that we've removed from the count because we've redeveloped them.

Dr BROAD - The other problem is that we're not seeing a reduction in the wait list. So, both the wait list isn't dropping and the time on the wait list isn't dropping and yet you're claiming that you've done 1800 and there's no drop.

Mr ELLIS - Probably the important thing to note there is it's not necessarily a wait list. It's actually a register of people that are eligible. So, that can include -

Dr BROAD - Semantics.

Mr ELLIS - Well, it's not, because anyone can go on the list if they're eligible and, for example, that includes people that are already in secure housing. There's a range of different factors that affect the number of people that are on the housing register. But the important thing there as well is that we do need to continue to invest, because there are people that are seeking more long-term housing support. And so that's exactly why there's half a billion dollars in the budget for building more homes.

That's why we have a target of 10,000 and it's part of the reason why, as well, we take action across the housing spectrum, because not everybody on that list will ultimately go into a social house. They may find opportunities in terms of the private rental market and things like that. So, if we're able to support people into different housing outcomes that support them despite the fact that they may be eligible to be on the housing register, that's a good result. But look, I'll pass back to the team from Homes Tasmania if there's anything further.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The housing register is going, but what we can see is that the rate of is going up but the rate of growth is slowing, which is a good sign. We also know that our ability to allocate into social housing is a lot of that comes from vacancies of people leaving and going and doing something else. So, we've seen since before COVID fewer and fewer people moving out of social housing.

So, what used to happen, you would have people, the average age length of a tenancy would have been six or seven years. Now, they're much longer, people aren't moving out. That affects our ability to move people in, so there's a few things going on, and there's a lot of people under pressure in the private rental market who we know, if Commonwealth rent assistance was higher, would probably be able to stay there if there were subsidies for the private rental market.

It's not just a social, some people just have an affordability problem. Other people need more support or they're older in age, so they're unlikely to be able to sustain private rental in the long term. We know there's different things that you need across the system.

Dr BROAD - The problem I've got is that you have a government that's patting themselves on the back, saying you've got to a third of the 10,000 homes target. We've got Homes Tasmania saying that 1800 have been delivered. We have a Budget document that says 3000 new houses have been delivered, and yet what we see is we don't see a reduction in homelessness. We don't see a reduction in the social wait list and, in fact, the highest priority wait list has gone up from July 24 to September 24. It's gone from, in your figures, 584 up to 704. I would imagine if you had actually delivered 1801 homes then that number for the highest priority -

Mr ELLIS - Dr Broad, are you saying that those social homes don't exist?

Dr BROAD - Well, I don't know, where are they? Why?

Mr ELLIS - Well, they are in our communities.

Dr BROAD - I mean, why isn't it having an impact? So, because you're asking everything, from blocks of land -

Mr ELLIS - Well, no. Social housing, that's a discrete number in there. That's quite particular, and all of those homes exist and I think it's quite surprising that you would say that there would be some kind of -

Dr BROAD - Well, they don't have people in them. Why aren't they reducing the list?

Mr ELLIS - We've got a very high rate of occupancy. But, Dr Broad, I think I mentioned before around the eligibility matter for the register. The other thing as well is that you know that we're a third of the target and a third of the time - that means that quite clearly we've got two thirds to go and, that two thirds, that's a significant uplift. That's, you know -

Dr BROAD - You can talk about that, but why isn't it having an impact on the wait lists, on homelessness?

Mr ELLIS - Well Ms Morgan-Thomas just mentioned that the rate of growth has slowed. So, I mean, yeah, that's quite clearly - we're starting to have an impact. We need to do more -

Dr BROAD - You said 3000-what?

Mr ELLIS - 3696.

Dr BROAD - Three six nine six and we're only seeing a rate of slowing -

Mr ELLIS - Well, that is why the target is 10,000, not 3696, because we need to continue to invest.

Dr BROAD - Don't you understand that you're not actually seeing an impact in the raw numbers?

Mr ELLIS - Well, we just talked about there is, because we're seeing a slowing rate of growth. We know that there's more that needs to be done and we've begun those significant investments. The Budget clearly lays out future investments that we're looking to make because we want to make an impact in this space, and we recognise that housing affordability is a challenge here in Tasmania and nationally.

That's why Tasmania is actually at the forefront of some of these investments. In 2022-23, Tasmania population was 2 per cent of the nation. We delivered 15 per cent of all social houses in Australia. That rate of increased growth in investment in that space is important. But we can't just leave it there. We can't just stop at 3696. We've got to continue to grow and I'll pass over to the team if there's anything further you want to add, Ms Morgan-Thomas.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, the MacPoint precinct plan has a residential development zone, as we all know, at Regatta Point and the development and the \$240 million from the federal government that's not GST exempt is actually conditional on building affordable homes on the site. The precinct plan is clear on the fact that the housing there would be a mixture of Homes Tasmania and Health department affordable housing for health workers and apartments for release on the market. Can you confirm if any of the \$240 million from the federal money has been set aside to invest in this residential development?

Mr ELLIS - Yeah, look, happy to follow up in terms of the arrangements there in this. Yeah, happy to take that notice and provide further information.

Mr BAYLEY - Well, I mean, it was conditional upon housing, that money was given to your government conditional on housing. If not, and I assume not, because we keep seeing the Premier commit it to the stadium project, how will you -?

Mr ELLIS - I wouldn't make those assumptions.

Mr BAYLEY - Well, that's what all the figures say, minister Ellis. It adds the federal \$240 million contribution into meeting the price tag of the stadium. So, it begs the question.

Mr ELLIS - Well, it is a precinct plan. I think what the Greens don't understand is that, you know, we're looking to take action across the Macquarie Point.

CHAIR - Just to try to avoid interjections. If Mr Bayley asks a question, I'm sure there might be things that the minister disagrees with, so, I will give that opportunity in the end.

Mr BAYLEY - But look, in the absence of the \$240 million - because I think you'll find that it is very clearly allocated towards the stadium - how will the residential development at Regatta Point be funded? Is there anything in this Budget for Homes Tasmania to start to do the planning work and the development work to get it up and running. It's zone 2. I acknowledge it is at stage 2.

Mr ELLIS - As I said, I'm happy to take that on notice. Unless there's anything further from the department to add.

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Mr HEALEY - No, only that the precinct plan has obviously recently been approved and released and, as the Premier said this morning, there's still a lot of work to do to understand the processes for the broader delivery on that precinct plan. It's probably, through you minister, something that could also be taken up with minister Street.

Mr BAYLEY - Well, on that, minister, you probably won't be able to answer this question. I was going to ask what will the mix of health work accommodation versus private apartments be. But what would you like to see the mix be? What would you advocate the mix of health accommodation, health worker accommodation versus private apartments be?

Mr ELLIS - Yeah, look, I've got an open mind. I've got to say that it is good that the Greens do support key worker accommodation. It's actually an important part of us taking action across the spectrum and we delivered the Fountainside facility so that we can secure the long-term future of that for healthcare workers in Tasmania. We also secured the old Aberdeen, I think the hotel used to be called, but we called the Punch Bowl facility, which is 24 new units for healthcare workers in the north as well. So, I've got an open mind. We'll address the needs as they arise. Certainly, securing Fountainside has made a material difference to our ability to provide long-term accommodation for key workers in the Hobart CBD. We'll continue to work with Homes Tasmania and the Health department on what exactly the right mix is.

Mr BAYLEY - Will you commit to retaining equity in that development at Regatta Point?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work through that, and happy to provide an update -

Mr BAYLEY - There's just the precinct plan and there's no detail behind it.

Mr ELLIS - The plan has only just been released, but I'm happy to continue to work around the specifics of it.

Mr BAYLEY - You have been working on this for a very long time.

Mr ELLIS - As I'm happy to continue to work with the Health department and Homes Tasmania around the exact mix.

Mr BAYLEY - Would you rule out gifting this prime waterfront land to a private developer just to do this development? Would you gift the land to them, or would you rule out gifting the land to a developer?

Mr ELLIS - I don't really have any specifics there, Mr Bayley. We are going to continue to work to deliver our commitment. I've said I'm happy to take on notice some of these matters, and we'll work through your specifics of your question.

Mrs PENTLAND - Before I ask my question, can I just get some clarity with the 10,000? How many of those are going to be just lots? Are we talking 2000, or -

Mr ELLIS - It all depends. In our dashboard you can see that we've got 3696, and as part of that we've delivered 411. That's about 10 per cent, but it will depend as well on the opportunities as they present. For example, if a large opportunity like Huntingfield presents itself in the future, that'll assist us to deliver some more homes through that. I've mentioned

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before that we've delivered 1417 of the 3696 social houses, 740 affordable rentals and 631 affordable home ownership as well. We'll continue to take action across the spectrum.

Affordable land sales are actually really important because a lot of Tasmanians want to be able to build their own home, and if they can access affordable land, that increases the housing supply for our state. The government's got a key role to play, particularly as a large holder of lands, Crown land for example. Mr Garland and I spoke about this the other day in parliament. If there are opportunities for us to unlock that for Tasmanian families, then we should take that. That is really good thing too, because it helps to continue to drive the investments that we can make for Homes Tasmania. Land typically has a reasonable return, and that helps us unlock further funding for us to invest in things like social housing.

Mrs PENTLAND - That was going to be my question. With the \$1.5 billion that you've allocated for the 10 years, obviously those lots of lands would be delivering revenue. Are you still committed to spending \$1.5 billion over the 10 years in housing? Where are you at now with that budget and what are you planning to spend in 2024 towards new homes?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we're committed to that target. There are elements of action that we take across the spectrum that actually drive an income. You're right, land is one; another one is affordable home ownership, whereby we partner with first home buyers in the MyHome program. The equity that the government holds in those homes likely increases over time, and when those are sold or bought out by the homeowner, that then enables Homes Tasmania to derive an income, which drives further investment in other parts of our plan and similarly, affordable housing in general.

There are also opportunities that are not in the targets, for example, our commercial arrangement that we have with the Health department on key worker accommodation, but that's separate to the 10,000, and that's important to note. That action across the spectrum provides us further capital to inject. As part of the budget, we're delivering about \$500 million over the forward Estimates for housing through Homes Tasmania. I'll pass over to the team. Is it this current financial year that you're after the data for?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - How much will we spend this year on -

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes, and where would that see you as to the total of 1.5 billion?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So the total we are assuming is the investment - it doesn't count the land, is my understanding.

Mrs PENTLAND - That's correct.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - That is additional, but that's part of the way that we leverage the government investment to bring in other investment, whether it's shared home ownership or whether it's our ability to reinvest -

Mrs PENTLAND - I understand. We just had that conversation, that obviously the land's a revenue stream. Are you still committing to the \$1.5 billion?

Mr ELLIS - That's probably more a question for government, but absolutely. In terms of the data - Ms Morgan-Thomas?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - As of 30 June 2024, we borrowed \$266 million - all that's available to us.

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes, and then this financial year?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - \$210 million over the forward Estimates. There is -

Mr ELLIS - \$454 million to 30 June 2028.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, as you all know, the House of Assembly passed a motion calling on the government to conduct a review into Homes Tasmania. Can you please update the committee on this piece of work?

Mr ELLIS - The *Homes Tasmania Act 2022* requires that the minister initiates an independent review of Homes Tasmania as soon as practicable after the fourth anniversary of the commencement of the act. I'm currently considering the appropriate terms for an early review of the governance reporting and accountability of Homes Tasmania to make sure that it's able to deliver as intended. I note the strong interest from Mr O'Byrne in this space and appreciate the collaborative nature in terms of the design of that work.

We established Home Tasmania to ensure that we brought innovation into the pursuit of social and affordable housing in Tasmania, and establishing Homes Tasmania under an independent board is a key part of that strategy. This also needs to be balanced against the need for transparency in operations of the organisation and strong accountability to the Tasmanian community. That's absolutely vital and something that I believe really strongly in.

The independent reviewer will consider whether we have got this balance right. It will consider reporting arrangements to the minister of the day and for the community regarding strategic decisions and operations of Homes Tasmania, support for the government in terms of ongoing policy advice on social and affordable housing initiatives, and the relationship between Homes Tasmania and the building and construction industry in Tasmania too.

I'm also considering appropriate experts that could lead this review. They need to be independent, but also bring strong expertise in terms of governance and accountability. I'd also prefer that they have experience in the social and affordable housing sector. I expect to be in a position to talk further about the review over the coming weeks and look forward to updating parliament and the community very soon.

Dr BROAD - Did the government instruct Homes Tasmania to buy the Fountainside Hotel?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of an instruction, I'd just have to check in terms of the technical arrangement. Certainly, we're very strong supporters of it. There wasn't a technical instrument of direction, but certainly it was an opportunity that popped up and both the government and Homes Tasmania are very supportive of that opportunity. A big part of it is because it secures the future of Fountainside for healthcare workers.

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If we hadn't have purchased that, for example, it could have been bought by a private player and then the Health department would have to go out and buy those properties on the private rental market. That actually puts more stress on the private rental market.

We work closely with Homes Tasmania to ensure that we can secure the future of it. I'll pass to Ms Morgan-Thomas to maybe talk further about it.

Dr BROAD - Who actually made the decision?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The Homes Tasmania board formally made the decision because it's over my delegation. It was an idea that Homes Tasmania took to government as opposed to the other way around. First, with the Punchbowl property - the Aberdeen Motel that the minister mentioned earlier - that's where we first did some feasibility testing with Health. Would this work for them? Because we'd been working with them over issues in Launceston for a while.

Then when the Fountainside property came on the market, we did further feasibility testing with Health around that and realised the value of doing the thing. It was the other way around.

Dr BROAD - Where in the corporate plan does it talk about purchasing accommodation for medical workers in Hobart?

Mr ELLIS - It's certainly in the second reading speech of the *Homes Tasmania Act*, so it's -

Dr BROAD - No, it talked about regional Tasmania, not Hobart.

Mr ELLIS - No, it talks about key worker accommodation in the second reading, in the speech.

Dr BROAD - Regional Tasmania.

Mr ELLIS - It clearly talks about key worker accommodation. I am surprised that Labor are opposing this now because I would have thought that -

Dr BROAD - Colony 47 was the second buyer. Was the government aware that Colony 47 was also interested in the property?

Mr ELLIS - We were aware that there was some interest. It's about finding the right balance. There's healthcare workers in there currently, and prior to the sale. Working through the right properties in the right location, Fountainside is 50 beds literally right next door to the Royal Hobart Hospital and currently has healthcare workers in it. That's a really good outcome for health care in Tasmania.

Dr BROAD - It's also right next to an area where people are sleeping rough.

Mr ELLIS - There are other opportunities in terms of facilities but Fountainside, you can partly tell because Health was in there prior to the sale. It is the perfect opportunity in terms of housing key healthcare workers. That's why we're strongly supportive in terms of that use.

There are, of course, other facilities we provide support for in Hobart CBD and in other locations around Hobart for crisis accommodation, for example, and continue to work closely with Colony 47 and other community partners so that we can deliver those. But I've got very strong support in the community for the decision to purchase the Fountainside and secure that for key workers. It just makes sense and it's a really important investment in the future of health care in our state. I'll pass to the team from Homes Tas if there's anything further to add.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - When we were going through the purchase price, you never actually know who you're bidding against. We knew that Colony 47 was interested but, looking at their balance sheet, did not think that was likely to be a viable option. Maybe it was. I don't know. We were very concerned that somebody else would come along and purchase it, so in our analysis, who the other buyers might be, some of those included hotel operators or investors who'd hold it for a long period of time but wouldn't necessarily guarantee to, we don't even know whether they would want to continue leasing it to Health.

We were concerned about the impact on the private rental market, noting how tight vacancy rates are and knowing, from our experience in Launceston, where Health had secured a lot of properties on the private rental market, what the likely impact was, and we put in what we thought was a very competitive bid.

Mr ELLIS - Just to add to the answer in terms of the first part of your question, page 7 of the Homes Tasmania Corporate Plan 2023-2026:

Housing is central to Tasmania's ambitions for growth and continued economic prosperity. Providing sufficient housing for our key workers, including those in critical frontline roles, for example, teachers and healthcare professionals and a surge of seasonal workers in areas such as tourism, agriculture and mining, is fundamental to the state's future.

Dr BROAD - Which document are you reading from?

Mr ELLIS - From the corporate plan 2023-26.

Dr BROAD - Is the government also considering purchasing accommodation for other sectors, such as police and teachers, and that being the responsibility of Homes Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - We think we've got a great opportunity there. Other jurisdictions have government housing providers and it enables those departments you mentioned before, Health, Education, DPfEM, to focus on what they do well, which is keeping the community safe, educating our kids, providing health care. And then Homes Tas has a specific and excellent skill set in terms of asset management and providing those kinds of services in a housing sense. We're continuing to work with different partners across government because Homes Tasmania is very experienced in that space, if we can provide further support.

Another example from another jurisdiction is Defence Housing Australia, which operates separate to Defence itself because that's not what Defence does.

Dr BROAD - Defence aren't buying houses for teachers, though.

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Mr ELLIS - Well, they need to buy houses for people that work in defence. So, there is a separate body that provides housing people in our ADF.

We think that there's opportunities to take action across the spectrum and we'll work with our partner agencies.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In the action plan from 2023-27, item 4.13 is:

Explore options to centralise procurement and management of rental accommodation for relevant State Service employees.

That comes from some discussions that we've been having with departmental heads around, in one location you might have Education has some houses, Police have some, Health has some. They might not have the right configuration. We know from managing a large housing portfolio that it's all very well waiting for a property that's a two-bedroom house when all you have is three-bedroom houses, that sometimes they need to be able to move things around. There's some efficiencies in bringing that together.

My view is you do those things slowly and build up expertise as you go, but there's the opportunity to do some of those things more efficiently, particularly in a decentralised state like Tasmania. But that was in the action plan.

Mr BAYLEY - I want to go back to debt. Last year's annual report showed that there was borrowings with TASCORP of a bit over \$60 million. The budget papers have got it rising to \$230 million and in just a few years it's going to be a pretty staggering \$720 million. That will cost Homes Tas \$40 million just to service interest payments when we go out there. You mentioned earlier the Homes Tas borrowing limit of \$266 million. Has that been raised?

Mr ELLIS - I suppose the first thing to note is that we're borrowing for good assets. Everyday Tasmanians would understand -

Mr BAYLEY - Because you're not funding them?

Mr ELLIS - What are you talking about?

Mr BAYLEY - You could always fund them from consolidated revenue and put more money into -

Mr ELLIS - Or we could unlock a new model that enables us to leverage additional funding above and beyond that, and that's exactly why we set up the Homes Tasmania model because it enables us to borrow for good debt. I think Tasmanians out there with a mortgage would understand that is a worthwhile investment because real property grows in value over time.

For example, our MyHome program enables us to take an equity stake so that we can unlock a first home-buyer's dream with only a 2 per cent deposit. That means that we're able to continue to grow that person's opportunity, but we're also able to continue to grow equity in the share we've purchased. Unlocking that kind of opportunity is actually a really key part of why we've delivered the Homes Tasmania model, where they're able to borrow. We've spoken already about this Budget allocating, or allowing for the borrowings of up to \$454 million by

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30 June 2028, on top of the \$266 million in borrowing. All of those are a good thing because it goes for intergenerational -

Mr BAYLEY - That means the limit has been lifted?

Mr ELLIS - We need to work through like a technical process in terms of lifting those limits with the Treasurer. That is standard administrative thing when it comes to TASCORP. I'll pass over to the team to give you a bit of a sense of what that administration looks like.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The debt is not secured against the asset. I think that's a really key point. The debt is secured by a Treasurer's Guarantee. In order for us to raise additional funds through TASCORP, we need the agreement of the Treasurer. We also need the Treasurer to agree to guarantee it, and then we have a to-and-fro with TASCORP because TASCORP has to be satisfied with the deal as well. You've really got a tripartite arrangement there, including the minister, of making a joint decision.

Mr BAYLEY - So, it's factored in, it is in the Budget, but it's not yet agreed with the Treasurer. Is that how it works?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's agreed in the budget level but then each time you do a transaction, it's like a mini mortgage-type arrangement.

Mr BAYLEY - Everyone else, given your analogy, minister, ultimately seeks to pay down their debt and end up with none. Has Homes Tas got a strategy to pay down the debt? Is that a goal you are seeking to achieve?

Mr ELLIS - We spoke before about those revenue opportunities that come in, whether it's the sale of land that we borrow to develop, the sale of an affordable home that's purchased through the MyHome program that then, say, if there's capital gains that realised through that, that then returns to Homes Tasmania as well. So, there's a range of different opportunities in terms of bringing more revenue into Homes Tasmania.

Mr BAYLEY - But it's not reducing the debt, not in the forward Estimates anyway.

Mr ELLIS - Look, the forward Estimates were expected to grow and that's the thing, when you're say, newly into the housing market or you're newly into establishing a statutory authority that has greater powers to borrow. We want to actually unlock the opportunities to build more homes because we recognise acute supply at the moment, so if we're going to reach our target of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032, our state needs to act and that's important.

CHAIR - Last one and then we'll go to Ms Johnston.

Mr BAYLEY - The federal debt of \$158 million, which was relieved in 2019, was seen as debilitating, that's why it was relieved, ultimately.

Mr ELLIS - Because it was under the old model.

Mr BAYLEY - Sure. You're compelled to report, it's a \$15 million saving as I understand it, and the agreement was that you report on how that \$15 million is spent in the Budget.

PUBLIC

I couldn't see it in the Budget this year. Is there is there a report in this year's Budget as to how that \$15 million is being spent?

Mr ELLIS - I suppose first, importantly, that's under the old model and part of the reason why we've established this new model is to actually unlock some of those borrowings. Now, if people want to retire your debt, if people want to pay for your mortgage for you, then we'll gratefully receive that, but we also need to ensure that we're actually building the capability for the organisation to borrow. As for the specifics, I'm not sure if we have something to hand on that, but I am happy to take it on notice.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thank you. We do know - so the Budget includes 13.6 million to be redirected from the CSHA debt and for that we - that's earmarked for 20 new social housing and 30 new affordable housing to be completed in 2024-25.

Mr BAYLEY - Forgive me, is that in the Budget?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's in the Budget -

Mr BAYLEY - Could you table an explanation?

Mr ELLIS - Page 131, footnote 3:

The item includes funding made available under the former Commonwealth state housing agreement debt waiver agreement, which will be primarily used in support of capital projects including the Community Housing Growth program.

Mr BAYLEY - Are you able to table specifically what that will be invested in, those projects you just mentioned?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Do you mean the addresses of those -

Mr BAYLEY - The number of units and the type of units.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's what I just said, 20 new social housing and 13 new affordable housing.

CHAIR - Ms Johnston.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. As of July 2024, there are currently 4,744 households in what you call the housing register, which I think most of the community call the housing waiting list. What proportion of households on the housing register include children? How many are families with one child, how many are families with two children, how many families are with three children, and how many families are with four or more children?

Mr ELLIS - To the team, let's find that information.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In the register, 3,380 have no children, 634 have one child, 426 have two children, 192 have three children, and 113 have four children.

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Mr ELLIS - It'll be four and above on that statistical.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yeah.

Ms JOHNSTON - That's from July 2024?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes.

Ms JOHNSTON - Yep, thank you. Whilst I'm on the housing dashboard, there has been a cut in the level of data that's previously available under the old housing dashboard on the average wait time for priority applicants in the housing register to be housed. Why is this?

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, we're actually including quite a lot more data in terms of the housing dashboard in the new reporting arrangements, the first of which was July 2024. We're always looking for opportunities to include more information there, too, so people can understand what the challenges are and also what the opportunities are. Regarding that particular statistical information -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - They're still reporting the average wait time for priority applicants to be housed as a rolling 12-month average. We're still keeping that under there, but with no intention to hide anything, we were trying to make a readable report, really, but -

Ms JOHNSTON - We used to have monthly figures rather than a rolling 12-month average.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - If that's useful information we could -

Ms JOHNSTON - Something that I know my constituents eagerly -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Can I hand over to Ms Stone?

Ms STONE - Through you, minister, there wasn't an intention to hide the monthly information on a rolling average. It was only like a less than 1 per cent change, so we thought that the information provided was on a month without showing every month for that year wasn't meaningful information.

Ms JOHNSTON - I know it's something that my constituents look at because they're very keen. Can we add it back into the dashboard please?

Mr ELLIS - Always open and taking advice on that and we'll have a look. Speaking more broadly, as well, if we can present data to people in a more meaningful way, then we're open to that. Because, at one end, it's people like, say your constituents, who use it to apply in the register, but it's also helpful data for our business community, when they're thinking about the kind of investments that they might need to-

Ms JOHNSTON - That's a yes then? You can provide that?

Mr ELLIS - We'll take advice, but yes, our posture is if we can provide more understandable information, we're always open to it.

PUBLIC

Mr FAIRS - Minister, housing land supplies is obviously a key feature of the state government's Tasmanian Housing strategy. Can you please update the Committee as to the states of these important housing land supply orders projects please including the subdivision of Huntingfield.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you Mr Fairs. Our government's *Housing Land Supply Act* provides a direct and efficient process for the rezoning of suitable government land for residential development and facilitates the provision of social and affordable housing. To date, our government has made 13 housing land supply orders across all three regions of our state. This means that more than 70 hectares of land has been rezoned for residential development and creating the potential for up to 1000 new homes. It's important to be clear that these orders speed up the rezoning and transfer of land to Homes Tasmania, which reduces the lead time to prepare the lots for detailed development applications and construction. Subdivision and housing construction is currently underway in Rokeby. Construction of 15 new dwellings will shortly commence at West Moonah. Youth housing is under construction at Newnham. An 11-lot housing subdivision is proceeding in Devonport. Subdivision works have commenced at Huntingfield, and planning is well underway for housing at Romaine and Warrane.

In recent weeks the Kings Meadows Housing Land Supply Order in the beautiful electorate of Bass has been made thanks to this parliament and I'm currently in the process of lodging two new orders for land on smaller parcels in Brighton and Penguin. We've also adopted a strategic approach to the identification of housing opportunities, enabling Homes Tasmania to complement rather than compete with the private sector in the residential land market. Homes Tasmania is currently undertaking feasibility studies across a number of sites in all three regions, totalling an area of about 80 hectares. Where appropriate, these will be brought forward for rezoning through the Housing Land Supply Order process which is just one of the levers that we will continue to pull as part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future.

Dr BROAD - What's the debt-to-equity ratio of Homes Tasmania?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The equity is about \$4.5 billion, but the debt is not secured against the asset, it's secured against the Treasurer's Guarantee. It's all equity, no debt against that equity.

Mr ELLIS - I suppose you'd be asking for kind of a stand-in even though it's not technically -

Dr BROAD - It's not technically, but it does give an idea of the amount of debt that it's carrying.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I can give - don't ask me to do maths on the spot, but I can get that for you.

Dr BROAD - What about a debt service cover ratio then?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yep, we can do that.

Dr BROAD - You'll take that on notice?

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Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yup.

Mr ELLIS - We're pretty good though, I've got to say, because we got \$3.5 billion worth of assets, and a couple hundred \$100 million worth of borrowing.

Dr BROAD - Is Homes Tasmania solvency reliant on government equity injections.

Mr ELLIS - I think we've spoken about this already in terms of the debt, it's actually a Treasurer's Guarantee as part of the way that tab is structured.

Dr BROAD - It still needs to be serviced.

Mr ELLIS - Yeah. And part of the government's approach to Homes Tasmania would cover the borrowing costs as part of that, so that Homes Tasmania can focus on leveraging more funds to build more homes. And our balance sheet is very strong. We have \$3.5 billion worth of assets that are relatively fungible too. If you compare it to building a bridge, a home is obviously a quite a different kind of asset. I'll pass over to the team, however, if there's anything to add to that.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No.

Dr BROAD - You said - I can find the appropriate part of the Budget - You said that the government covers the interest repayments, the debt servicing, and not Homes Tasmania, but it sits on your books. There's an interest, there's a line, saying - detailing service cost, borrowing costs of 11 - I searched in a hurry, but your borrowing costs were \$11 million and now this current financial year they are set to be almost \$25 million, going up to \$28 million, \$35 million and \$40 million. Why is that sitting there on -

Mr ELLIS - Additional debt service funds of \$71.3 million have been provided to Homes Tasmania over the forward Estimates to support these borrowings, and total funds -

Dr BROAD - Where's that in the budget?

Mr ELLIS - Let me have a look.

Dr BROAD - That comes from Premier and Cabinet, does it?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It comes from Treasury, so the grants line in the revenue and other income, you will see that goes up over time and you will see the note under there that it -

Dr BROAD - Which page of the Budget are you on?

MS MORGAN-THOMAS - Page 131. The payment comes to us from Treasury as part of the appropriation. We count that on the grant side, and then we also count it as the money to support borrowings, because it comes through Homes Tasmania to TASCORP. It doesn't go straight from Treasury to TASCORP. So, it's sitting in both the revenue and the expense lines, basically.

Dr BROAD - How is it accounted by Treasury then? Is it accounted as an equity injection, or is it accounted as servicing borrowings?

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to look to Mr Healey, if there's anything you want -

Mr HEALEY - No, it's probably a question for Treasury. We can find that out.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to follow up with Treasury.

Mr BAYLEY - I want to talk about specialist disability accommodation. In Tasmania we have a high proportion of people living with a disability: 26.8 versus 17 per cent elsewhere. There's significant demand, and I note that your dashboard says that 2735 Homes Tasmania tenants are living with a disability. The Housing Strategy Action Plan reports that as of April last year, 38 per cent of all applications on the housing register involve a person living with a disability, so we acknowledge that there's a significant need. The action plan identifies a specific action around addressing the housing needs of people with a disability, and it should have been delivered by 30 June this year. The action reads:

Develop a plan for the future of the Homes Tasmania specialist disability accommodation portfolio for people with extreme functional impairment or very high needs.

Has this plan been completed?

Mr ELLIS - The Tasmanian Housing Strategy 2023-2043 and associated action plan sets out the government's plan to address the housing needs of all Tasmanians, including people living with a disability. From 1 October 2024, all newly built properties from Homes Tasmania will be required to meet the National Construction Code's liveable design provisions. That will mean that they'll be accessible and adaptable for people living with disability. That's really important because, as you mentioned, we have quite a high rate of people with disability applying for our homes.

Homes Tasmania is the owner of a small number of properties that are designed for people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs, and these homes have been built with robust features and living areas for the provision of 24/7 support from specialist disability support services that provide on-site care to those residents under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Teams of NDIS-funded staff provide support to those residents. Homes Tasmania is working closely with support services and remains committed to working together to develop solutions to improve the quality of life for residents, and a significant part of the design of these properties is to assist those living with disability and staff.

I'll pass over to Homes Tasmania.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Many of the specialist disability accommodation - as you know there's a small number of those, so a couple of hundred. We've been in discussion with the sector about what's the best way to manage those properties. Some other state housing authorities have completely divested the disability portfolio, and that was one of the options available to us. There wasn't a lot of support for that in the sector. It's a difficult sector because nobody can control who's in or out except if your clients are getting NDIS funding.

PUBLIC

We're not able to access specialist disability accommodation available through the NDIS. We've been doing some work with the non-government sector and advocacy bodies around what's the best thing to do with that portfolio. There was very strong support in the industry sounding we did last year for us to become an SDA provider as well, because regardless of whether we continue to own all of our properties, we know that we will be the provider of last resort for some of our clients with very challenging behaviours. We're about to go and release a tender to get some advice on how we become an SDA provider, so we will do that. Once we become an SDA provider, some of our SDA clients have packages from the NDIS that go for the accommodation bit of around \$50,000 a year, which we would invest in the disability portfolio over time. We would reconfigure our group homes because that's actually key -

Mr BAYLEY - So, the Homes Tasmania plan to provide for this that was identified in the strategy to be delivered by 30 June - is there such a thing? Has it been released?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - There is a plan that's gone through our board. It's not a public plan, but it's not a secret plan. There's a plan that's gone through our board to become an SDA provider, and the disability sector would be aware of that. We'll be working with them. To get accredited as a SDA provider is a regulatory process we've got to go through, and I imagine that it takes a -

Mr BAYLEY - And you have made a decision to do that and go through that process?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The board has made a decision, and I think the tender is going out this month. It's ready to go. We're just -

Mr BAYLEY - So, it made a commitment also to maintain those assets that provide for specialist accommodation?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Maintain and possibly redevelop some of them, because, like a lot of state housing authorities, we have legacy group homes, which for all sorts of reasons don't work for people with disabilities.

Mr BAYLEY - Does the plan include increasing supply in that very niche space?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It may, but in recent months there's been a considerable influx of providers because consumers have choice now. Consumers can go with another provider, and there are a number of providers coming in who are not at the really high-needs end of the market. I forget what the technical term is, but there are a lot of providers coming in buildings wheelchair-accessible properties. I suspect that where we will be is in a niche bit of the market, but it's likely that we will redevelop some of our existing properties.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, back to the Housing Australia Future Fund. One of the justifications for shutting down the Housing department and creating Homes Tasmania was to leverage private and commercial expertise and experience to maximise delivery of social and affordable homes. You only get so many bites of the cherry of those kinds of national funds, and they will run out. It's quite disappointing, isn't it, that we've not been able to deliver one home in terms of the bids you put in in the first round?

Mr ELLIS - Sorry if I haven't communicated that correctly to you, Mr O'Byrne. We have been successful in terms of the -

Mr O'BYRNE - But not in a single standalone, which is-

Mr ELLIS - No, on that metric we haven't been. That's part of the reason why we need to be evaluating so that we can get a better understanding of what exactly the Commonwealth is driving for and wants to see. I mentioned before that it seems that rather than funding things to be developed, they wanted things that are effectively already developed and then they can immediately press go on.

We'll be looking at that. There is obviously the Housing Australia Future Fund round two, and that'll be another significant opportunity for us. We'll obviously evaluate and review how we've done on this one. It's disappointing, but the real test will be after round two. If we're in a similar boat and we've missed the mark, again, that'll be extraordinarily disappointing. We want to be, as a learning organisation, really taking ownership of the situation, seeing what what's working and what's not.

If, for example, the process for us being more successful is partnering with more community housing providers so that we can deliver together, then absolutely those are things that we'll be looking for. If, say, bringing in our existing pipeline of work, having the Housing Australia Future Fund fund more of those things that are shovel ready - if that's an opportunity, then we'll be looking to that too. But certainly, we need to make sure that we're doing better next time.

Mr O'BYRNE - If you ask the person in the street around their understanding of the justifications for the creation of Homes Tasmania, 98.9 per cent of the media and the narrative from the government is that we're creating Homes Tasmania to deal with the housing crisis, which has been around for a number of years. I'm not saying it's a new crisis, it's been around for a number of years. When you actually see the activity, on one hand you've got a whole lot of Homes Tasmania activity, purchasing key worker accommodation for other departments, not necessarily for social and affordable housing, and your own Budget papers predict that the housing wait list and wait time essentially are continuing to balloon out. How do you justify all of the noise and all of the money that you're moving around where effectively the situation's getting worse and you're essentially bailing out other departments on key worker accommodation? Are the priorities wrong?

Mr ELLIS - I reject that categorisation but I'll come back to it. The main thing that we need to be doing is delivering more supply. Obviously, we're on track in terms of our targets and they're not headline-grabbing, but the developments that we see around Tasmania in big ways and small, a five-home development here, a 20-home development there, those are the kind of things that add up over time to really shift the dial. Homes Tasmania has been making major strides forward. We've noted before, around 1800 social homes have been built as part of the transition to this new model.

In terms of the federal government support, let's not mistake - we'll be delivering in Tasmania, 500 new social homes. That's, in some points with Homes Tasmania support, in other points it's our community housing providers, all of those for the everyday mum and dad that's out there that maybe is struggling to find secure accommodation and needing a social home. Those are still 500 homes for them. As far as the way that the Commonwealth designates where it should go, that's ultimately something that we need to work through around meeting

their needs so that we can then meet the community's needs. We'll still get on and deliver the projects that we need to and deliver towards the 10,000.

Regarding the key worker accommodation, I know that this is an area that you're quite focused on. I'd say, quite clearly, this is a commercial arrangement with the Health department. We have skills and capability in terms of asset management, so it works well but it doesn't affect our ability to deliver on the 10,000 other than it probably leverages more capability so that we can do that, just like as I was mentioning, the affordable land release or the MyHome program, although that does actually help deliver our target, but it gives us even more capability to perform in other areas too, that you mentioned like social homes in particular. Ms Morgan-Thomas, anything further to - I've got to stop waffling on.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No.

CHAIR - Mr Fairs.

Mr FAIRS - Thanks, Chair. Minister, we know the building/constructing sector is so critical in providing jobs and homes for Tasmania and our future. With Homes Tasmania, what role does that play in supporting the sector?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. Our government's committed to delivering on our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future and the commitments to provide more housing options for Tasmania, to bring more housing supply online and to allow more Tasmanians to realise their dreams of home ownership.

We'll continue to deliver on our commitment to deliver 10,000 more social and affordable homes by 2032, which will further increase housing supply. It will drive the Tasmanian economy and it will activate the critical, valuable and rewarding jobs in our construction sector. I've already stated the targets, but I can say that 13 per cent of Australia's additional social housing stock in 2022-23 came from Tasmania, that's well above our population share of 2 per cent and demonstrates just how much our government, through Homes Tasmania, is out there building and delivering the housing that Tasmanians need.

Our commitments made during the election were also focused on supporting industry to deliver more housing in our state. That includes cutting stamp duty in half for Tasmanians who buy a new apartment off the plan or are under construction up to the value of \$750,000, that's for two years. Adding a \$10,000 per unit incentive for developers with up to 50 units to get more infill, medium and high-density units, unlocking more residential lots with the increase of the residential land rebate of \$15,000 per lot and providing short-term interest-free loans of up to \$1 million for medium density units and apartments to assist with early headworks charges. Our government through Homes Tasmania has got a strong record of delivery supporting it by our incredible building and construction businesses and tradies right across the state. We are a third of the way to our target in a third of the time and we're on track.

Dr BROAD - How does Homes Tasmania determine the price to sell or offer to the market an affordable lot?

Mr ELLIS - Sure, look. I'll pass to the team from Homes Tasmania about the way that we designate those things.

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Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Many of the lots we deliver are smaller, fitting in with medium density and all of those things and you know the price of land continues down the chain as the property gets sold and resold. The size of the land will define the price. So, a lot of what we do is drive it by that and we set it at a price that's the valuation of the property, but typically on a smaller lot.

Dr BROAD - Can you be clear about that? Do you get someone to do a valuation and that's what you sell it for?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Can I ask you to respond to that, Mr Gilmour?

Mr GILMOUR - Through you, minister, we use the office of the Valuer-General. For all of our land supply projects, we get them valued early in the design process so we can work out that the design is considering commercial feasibility and that what we're delivering is going to be right-sized for the market and then we get one slots, once titles are created before they hit the market, we get that valuation reviewed and then that gets reviewed on a monthly basis more or less.

Mr ELLIS - Dr Broad, just an update on another matter, comments from Treasury that I can provide to the committee. The Budget includes appropriation to Department of Premier and Cabinet to provide grant funding to Homes Tasmania to cover its borrowing costs. This is included in the \$147 million identified as grants in Table 28.3 on page 131 of Vol. 2 of budget paper no. 2.

Dr BROAD - There's obviously a development at 37A North Fenton St, Devonport, which was the old bowls club site and minister Ellis put up a post on your Facebook talking about 11 homes for Devonport at the old bowls club. Now, this was a week or so ago you put that post up. The issue for that is that this was actually a land supply order back from I think it was 2018. That's, you know, years old. Have you counted those 11 blocks that are available in your target?

Mr ELLIS - So, we double check around that. Obviously, the first five of those lots, as I mentioned in the post, are currently available for sale through the MyHome Shared Equity program and some of the remaining six lots also show great potential for even multiple units to be built on that site. It's certainly a site that's rich in opportunity as well as in one of the most beautiful places in the world. Eleri, did you want to provide an update there?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, Fenton -

Dr BROAD - North Fenton.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - North Fenton. Can I ask Mr Gilmour to respond?

Mr GILMOUR - Thanks, Eleri. Through you, minister, North Fenton, which is a former Devonport Bowls and Croquet Club. The subdivision's been approved. We will be retaining five lots, one larger lot and then four lots that are contiguous, and that will be for development, a mixture of 20-unit complex that we're proposing would be for older people for social housing and then 18 units for affordable rentals. The balance of those titles are now on the market.

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Dr BROAD - They've been on the market for quite a long time. They've been on the market for more than 12 months and they haven't sold. I've seen them on Domain for it would have to be 12 months. How is selling a 350 square metre block at North Fenton St affordable at \$230,000? So, 350 square metres for \$230,000.

Mr ELLIS - So I think what makes that one affordable is through the MyHome Shared Equity program. So, obviously the affordability comes in through the ability to get in with a 2 per cent deposit if I'm right on that one, there's more than -

Dr BROAD - I think you're missing the substance of my question. That seems quite a lot for 350 square metre blocks in Devonport. When you consider -

Mr ELLIS - I think you are missing the substance of my answer. The affordability is the fact that it's a very low deposit to get into it. For example, at MyHome, that's about people on low incomes and able to access an opportunity to buy land or a home through only a 2 per cent deposit. That's where the affordability piece comes in, in that space.

Dr BROAD - So \$230,000 for a 350 square metre block - that's almost the minimum lot size that's available under the planning scheme - whereas you can get a 700 square metre block at Hawley for the same price. Now, when you're at Hawley on a 700 square metre block you're either putting in very expensive units or a million-dollar house.

Udiminia in Ulverstone has 900 square metre blocks I think for \$165,000. If you wanted a 900 square metre block at Moonbeam in Ulverstone you'd get that for \$215,000, whereas what you've got offered here is a 350 square metre block for \$230,000. That seems like it is the top of the market. If you look at the north-west coast, if you buy a \$230,000 block, you're going to need to put a lot of capital onto that.

You're not going to build a small house, because if you were going to do that, you could buy a block at Udiminia and get something -

Mr ELLIS - You're talking about areas that are outside the CBD of the north-west coast's largest city. That's the thing with this location - it's close to town, as I assume you know. When you look at Udiminia or Hawley, they're not close to the centre of Devonport. I think I've mentioned before that this is around the MyHome program, which is for low-income earners and ensures that they have the ability to buy a block of land or even an existing dwelling for as little as a 2 per cent deposit.

That's very affordable when we think about that 2 per cent deposit, and the government is then a shared equity partner. I'll go back to the team if there's anything further to add on that one.

Dr BROAD - Within 100 metres of that block there have been houses sold - this is houses - on blocks that are twice that size for \$510,000, and then if you go a little bit further north, just one street further north, \$415,000, and another for \$485,000. It seems like the price that you have on this block is not affordable and that's why it hasn't sold.

Mr ELLIS - We obviously always want to try and meet the market, but if there's anything further -

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Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We'll have a look at the price on it and go back to the Valuer-General. We have constraints around us about whether we sell below valuation, and one of the difficulties in selling below valuation is that you're providing a windfall for the first purchaser, which may not go to the next one. But you've brought that to my attention and we'll have a look at it.

Dr BROAD - This is the whole rhetoric that you've been putting out. You talked about needing to right size it and it needed to be affordable, and yet it appears that you're at the top of the market, and that would explain why these blocks have been sitting on Domain for almost a year and not selling.

MS MORGAN-THOMAS - We'll have a look at it, and we'll have a look at the zoning, which I believe is in a residential -

Mr GILMOUR - The zoning is unique, it is the first inner-res zoned land in the Cradle Coast region. That's one of the things we were able to achieve through the Housing Land Supply Order. The density that can be achieved on those lots and the height is a higher yield than the gen-res zone, which would be consistent with some of the examples that you've used.

Certainly, we have had the valuation determined by the Valuer-General and they're generally more conservative than the other way. It's around the zone. You get an uplift through the zone - inner-res is deemed to be more valuable than gen-res because of the yield you can deliver.

Mr BAYLEY - I have some questions about Aboriginal housing, particularly on Cape Barren. The Budget holds a one-off payment to help the Cape Barren Island community plan the design, delivery and ongoing maintenance of municipal and essential services and housing. This is welcome and acknowledged, but there's nothing in the forward Estimates to actually deliver on what is planned, noting that housing is a significant constraint on Cape Barren Island in terms of Aboriginal people returning there to work or people wanting to return there with their families.

Funding of \$1 million will help plan and articulate some housing needs, but with construction costs massively inflated on an island like Cape Barren, it's unlikely to fund many or any houses. Will you commit to funding for housing on Cape Barren to deliver on what this plan comes up with?

Mr ELLIS - Providing safe and appropriate housing and homelessness services for Aboriginal Tasmanians is one of the Tasmanian government's top priorities, and it's a key focus of the 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy. Homes Tasmania is committed to delivering a net increase of 10,000 social affordable homes by 2032, and this will include delivering much-needed housing for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

The Tasmanian government is committed to growing the capacity and capability of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in line with the recommendations of the national Closing the Gap agreement and the Tasmanian Closing the Gap implementation plan. Consistent under all of these commitments is the aim for the Closing the Gap peak to lead a statewide Aboriginal housing review and the development of an Aboriginal housing policy, which is an action under the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2023-27. It's not directly related to a budget or an election commitment.

I'll also note that at 31 July 2024, there were 337 Aboriginal housing properties, including 165 Homes Tasmania properties, 172 community housing provider properties and 36 Indigenous community housing properties as at the latest reporting period of 30 June 2023.

I'll pass over to Mr Healey if there's anything further to update from a DPAC perspective.

Mr HEALEY - Only more broadly, you mentioned that we have been supporting Cape Barren Island in terms of providing essential infrastructure services for a number of years now, supported by funding that was a one-off funding provided by the Commonwealth. That funding has now been spent, and as you quite rightly pointed out, there is an allocation in the Budget to allow us to continue to support those services whilst we work with the island and work with appropriate engineers and the Department of State Growth on what the long-term solution needs to be for -

Mr BAYLEY - So, nothing in the forward Estimates to deliver that, though?

Mr HEALEY - We'll need to work with the Commonwealth and we'll need to work with the island on what that solution is. We're not entirely sure what the solution needs to be moving forward.

Mr BAYLEY - On Cape Barren, I understand that of the Homes Tasmania - or what used to be Homes Tasmania - properties, they were all transferred to the Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association on request so that they can fulfil their role as self-determination and allocation, noting that they are houses built on designated Aboriginal land. I understand that a couple of the more recent properties - I think there are about six, are still in Homes Tasmania's ownership, and yet had been agreed for transfer to the Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association. Can you commit to delivering on that transfer so that the association on Cape Barren has ownership and full self-determination over those houses?

Mr HEALEY - That issue has come up in the discussions around the essential infrastructure, and certainly we are really keen to work collaboratively with the Cape Barren Island Association to find solutions for all of these and to make sure that we're working with the island in a manner that's entirely consistent with our obligations under Closing the Gap. No commitment has been made, but certainly there's been really constructive discussions around the future of the island and the services on the island.

Mr BAYLEY - The association is determined to maintain its role as the entity that sets the amount of rent and also allocates the tenancy. Can you commit to that being an ongoing right of the Cape Barren Island Association to manage those houses in that way, making all of the decisions in terms of rent-setting and allocation?

Mr ELLIS - Is this in regard to the six?

Mr BAYLEY - This is in regard to the six, yes.

Mr HEALEY - I think a very similar answer, in that the discussions are how we set the island up well and how we set them up sustainably, and how we work with them, as I said, in a way that is entirely consistent with our principles under Closing the Gap, so empowering that community to own their future.

Mr BAYLEY - Just to be clear, which agencies are having those discussions?

Mr HEALEY - The Department of Premier and Cabinet is supporting the relationship with the Cape Barren Island Association, and the Department of State Growth is currently leading the review of the essential infrastructure in terms of the ongoing solutions. Of course, we're working with Homes Tasmania as well on the issues associated with the houses on the island.

Mr GARLAND - How many short-stay properties do we have in each region of the state - the north, the north west and the south - and how many of those short-stay properties have a permit?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Garland. Consumer Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) have the data available on that. Let me just see if we are able to find that information now or whether we provide it on notice to you, Mr Garland. Okay, so to hand, I've got a brief that says the Tasmanian Government's collected data relating to short-stay accommodation since 2019. For quarter three, 2023, the total number of applicable properties listed for short-stay accommodation was 6845. That's an increase of 291 properties from the previous quarter. Of the total properties, 3431 were reported as also being a primary residence. You asked about regions. We have data here, 2864 premises listed in the greater Hobart area, but we'll break that down by further in terms of north, south and north west with 1882 listed as a primary residence. But look, I'm happy to take that on notice and follow up for you.

Mr GARLAND - Cheers.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, Housing Connect for people who are experiencing homelessness or in housing need, Housing Connect's the entry point, as you know. Can you update the committee on status of the reforms for Housing Connect?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs, and yes, this is a very important area when it comes to our customer service for people who are doing it tough. Housing Connect 2.0 commenced on 1 July this year, following a significant reform project to improve services for Tasmanians seeking housing assistance. A key change to the Housing Connect service model was the introduction of a statewide front door with connections coaches who provide integrated support for people with low to moderate support needs. Service improvements to the Housing Connect front door include comprehensive assessments for people seeking assistance and targeted intervention to connect people to resources and community networks to help them find and keep a home.

The new Housing Connect service model provides personalised support tailored to people's individual circumstances and life stages, with specialist support for young people, single people, couples and families and older people. Key development coaches provide intensive support to help people with complex problems that can impact their capability to find and maintain long term, safe, affordable and appropriate housing. Training modules have been developed to support the Housing Connect workforce and the delivery of the new service model. Homes Tasmania is continuing to deliver improvements to Housing Connect, including a new website that will provide access to information and services, support self-direction and enable Tasmanians to apply for housing assistance online.

Young people in housing have been a key focus of how of the housing system improvements in Tasmania, including Housing Connect and young people will now receive Housing Connect personalised service from a specialist youth provider and will also benefit from improvements to the service system, including a service level agreement between Homes Tasmania and the Department of Education, Children and Young People, a youth housing support services community practice which meets regularly with key stakeholders and more tailored housing options for young people such as the Youth to Independence Homes and facilities that are doing such amazing things in our community. I know how passionate she is about this project, so I might look to Ms Stone if there's anything further that you wanted to add.

Ms STONE - I'm not sure, minister, you've covered a lot of things, but it has been a major reform and I think it's been really good how we've worked together to get to the point that we're at the moment and I'm looking forward to seeing good things come out of it.

CHAIR - Now, the rotation did have independents each time around, asking two questions and Mr Garland's asked a question and then left. So, before we start the thing again, did any independent want to take that second question?

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm happy to take the question, Chair, thank you very much. As part of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy Action Plan 2023-27, a commitment was made to establishing a Lived Experience Advisory Group to inform the Tasmanian Government-developed Housing Policy by 30 June 2024. Has the Lived Experience Advisory group been formed? How many members are part of this group, how many times has this group met and what are the terms of reference and could they be tabled please?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you Ms Johnston. I'll pass to Homes Tasmania to provide an update on where we're at currently.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thank you. The advisory group hasn't yet been established, although we've done a lot of work about the development of a model and we're in the process of doing that. We've researched several evidence-based models for lived experience engagement because what you don't want is a really broad group where you're asking quite specific things. If you have a very broad group that involves social housing tenants and you're asking them about youth housing, for instance, they're not going to be engaged. We've looked at various models about what is the best model that will be applied to the sorts of things that we'll be working on in Homes Tasmania over the next couple of years.

We've been researching that. We want it to be trauma-informed and fit-for-purpose. You don't want to re-traumatise people either when you're in the process of getting them to share their lived experience. The models that we're looking at vary in their size, meeting frequency and structure, so it'll depend on what we're doing at the point in time rather than have a group that is static for a long period of time and then come in and ask them random questions about young people and then about the housing register and then about design of houses. We're working through that at the moment.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you have a timeline for when that would be established and the group would be functioning? A revised one?

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Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Not right at this moment. A work in progress. We're very committed to it, though, I do want to say that. We are very committed but I have been anxious about setting up a group that has a young person, a public housing tenant, a community housing tenant, somebody with a disability and looking for something about something that's token. I actually want something that really tells us how to design significant reforms that we're doing at the point in time.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, unfortunately Mr Garland's not here, but I'll table for the report if that's okay. The report on data collection from CBOS for the *Short Stay Accommodation Act 2019* that's got the most recent data, it's better than regional level, it's at an LGA level which is good. Do you want to table that to the committee secretary?

Dr BROAD - How many newly constructed homes were purchased by Homes Tasmania for each month of the 2023-24 financial year?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Newly constructed homes that were purchased?

Dr BROAD - Yeah.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Do you mean turnkey or do you mean purchased at what point?

Dr BROAD - Yeah, turnkey.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So, already could have been purchased by somebody else at the point they're ready to be. I think we would have to take that on notice. It was -

Ms STONE - We will for the whole question, but I'm just trying to find the number -

Dr BROAD - Could you also say how many existing homes on the private market were purchased as well.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In?

Dr BROAD - Each month, for the last financial year.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We'd have to take that on notice.

Mr ELLIS - We would have maybe data that's at a longer time period. So, if it's quarterly or something like that, is that okay?

Dr BROAD - Well, give us as much as you can. I'd also like to know, because if you haven't got the data at hand, you won't be able to tell me the breakdown by region, the average price. If you could take all that on notice please. What is the highest price paid for any new home and in what suburb was it located, for the last financial year?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, we can do. We can take that on notice.

Dr BROAD - That one on notice as well?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - My impression is we didn't buy very much in the last financial year, so, I mean, it's not a hard thing, I just don't have it on the top of my head.

Mr ELLIS - We do from time to time look to secure different properties as they pop up, particularly if they're strategic. It's part of the reason why as well we have our private rental incentive scheme. It's obviously not only purchase space, but we enter into an agreement with landlords so that we can secure a home for the private rental market for people who are on the affordable housing register and that's particularly operational while we're at this very low vacancy rate in our economy and our rental market currently where we're able to secure those properties for the medium to long term for people that are doing it tough then that's often a really good outcome and particularly if it's in locations that have not been well supported by past builds in Homes Tasmania or community housing providers, noting that they are often clustered in certain areas.

Dr BROAD - Can you advise how many new properties have been signed up to the expanded Private Rental Incentive program and that have been confirmed to have been delivered in the first 100 days of government?

Mr ELLIS - Let me see, I'll look to the team from Homes Tasmania.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We were oversubscribed at the beginning of the year. Whatever the number was, we had additional. We've had an expression of interest out and we're collecting expressions of interest at the moment.

Mr ELLIS - And because currently in our data dashboard, if I'm not mistaken, Ms Morgan-Thomas, we've got Private Rental Incentive Scheme at 224 as at July this year.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes.

Mr BAYLEY - Noting the conversation earlier about young people, Mission Australia's Youth Homelessness survey revealed that 10 per cent of people aged 15 to 19 experienced homelessness in the last year. That's 39 per cent of the homeless population in this state. Young people are making up a significant percentage of people sleeping rough and couch surfing and struggling to find a home. Organisations and civil society groups have been calling for a youth homelessness strategy and yet we haven't had a commitment from this government to do so. Will you commit to developing a youth homelessness strategy so that we can fully understand the scope and the scale of this problem and clearly see the steps that you intend to take to address it?

Mr ELLIS - The ABS collects some quite solid data on this, but I suppose more broadly, providing safe and appropriate housing and homelessness services for children and young people is one of the top priorities for the Tasmanian Government and a key focus of the 20-year Tasmanian housing strategy. We're looking to take action across the housing spectrum as part of these strategies and the vast majority of children who are homeless are accompanied by a parent. Young people can access 10 of the 20 homelessness shelters in Tasmania unaccompanied by an adult, and eight shelters and additional dispersed homelessness properties when accompanied by their parent or guardian.

The Tasmanian Government's election commitments for 2024 included an additional \$1.2 million over two years for Jireh House and McCombe House, which are shelters for

women and their children, and an additional \$1.5 million over two years to contribute towards 100 more rapid rehousing homes from women and children escaping family violence. That's an increase of 50 existing so it's more than tripling the total number. Homes Tasmania oversees a number of housing and homelessness services for children and young people including crisis and transitional accommodation, alone or accompanied, brokered emergency accommodation which is accompanied. The Youth2Independence Supported Accommodation program, which is alone and quite an extraordinary program I have to say -

Mr BAYLEY - I acknowledge that there are services and there are good services. I'm happy to acknowledge that. The question is whether your government will develop a youth homelessness strategy, a particular document, a specific strategy to address youth homelessness in the state. You can obviously pick up on all these services you're pointing to, but to package it in a strategy that clearly shows you take this seriously and you have a plan to deal with it because these are vulnerable people. They are an important part of our future and we have a serious obligation to ensure that they are safe and housed.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I think we're on a unity ticket as far as just how important this approach is, so as I was outlining before, I have an open mind on it. We have a strategy that delivers across the spectrum and across age groups and part of the reason for that is that people will often utilise different parts of that service throughout their life or their different situation they'll often do that with other people too.

So, a strategy that takes action on homelessness for young people also needs to perhaps consider the parent and guardian that they might be fleeing family violence with. So, the youth homelessness is enshrined within our strategy as a key part of what we're looking to do. If there was value in pulling all of that out and putting in a separate document -

Mr BAYLEY - Stakeholders believe there is, minister.

Mr ELLIS - It's something I've got an open mind to, but the key focus is we need to make sure that youth homelessness is absolutely integrated in the broader strategy because those young people have loved ones often in a similar circumstance or in the same circumstance. They also will not be youth forever, so as they grow we need to make sure that we have a joined-up system that's able to accommodate their changing needs as they as they go through. They might also be, for example, in some of our other categories of need, such as a young person with disability. They are captured as part of our broad strategy both in terms of their youth and in terms of their disability and that gives us the ability to look strategically which is what a strategy is all about. As I say, I've got an open mind in terms of this. We want to take action across the housing spectrum and across need and we'll continue to work -

Mr BAYLEY - I urge you to use that open mind to actually push the 'go' button on this because stakeholders are clearly calling for it, experts are calling for it, and it's clear we have a responsibility to these young people.

Mr ELLIS - Look, I certainly agree on the responsibility that we've got for them. Ms Morgan-Thomas is there anything further that you wanted to update? No, thank you.

Mrs PENTLAND - Can the minister outline the specific process Homes Tasmania follows to go to market for tender for housing developments? What criteria is being used to

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ensure competitive bidding and how does the government ensure that these larger projects are delivered efficiently while engaging local contractors?

Mr ELLIS - Obviously, we've got requirements of the *Financial Management Act*, but I'll pass over to the team from Homes Tasmania and maybe outline what those tenders look like.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I'll just give a bit of an introduction and then I'll hand over to Mr Gilmore. So, we're bound by the Treasurer's instructions about how we have to procure and there are dollar limits in that and then typically we would go out to an open procurement for those things.

Mrs PENTLAND - Sorry, with the dollar limits, dollars per metre squared?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No, it's a total dollar amount and it's actually less than the cost of the house. Normally, we are doing multi-unit developments, so we need to go out to tender. What we have been doing and talking to industry about is how can we streamline that because if you have to do an open procurement every time you spend a long time in procurement. Is there a way to streamline that so that we can ensure that we are sort of doing the first step of a procurement in a way where you only have to do that once so that contractors don't have to tell us every single time the same thing? I might hand over to Mr Gilmore to explain the process that we're about to go through.

Mr GILMOUR - Through the minister, as Eleri has indicated, we're bound by the *Financial Management Act*, which means that we must comply with the Treasurer's instructions. A lot of our procurements occur in the building and construction space. In terms of other residential or institutional construction, though they're done through either open market design or construct tenders. That's where the contracting party will bring the design and the construction component to the table as part of the service. Others would be through where we've already got a design, so we've gone out to an architectural service, designed a development for a particular parcel of land and then we go out to open tender pre-qualified builders to do that, that construction piece. And again, as Eleri has indicated, that's on a documented design. Each tendering party through that tender would be submitting their price to deliver the project as it's documented.

The other type of procurements that we do are real property. They effectively use the Valuer-General to determine if we buy a development off the plan or a unit off the plan, does that reflect market value in terms of is its acceptable value for us in terms of, since we are going to go and buy it so we are not paying above what market would reasonably dictate is acceptable. So, that's the other means by which we secure sites where we might have a private developer or a vendor of land who can say, 'Look, I can deliver a unit development here' and you know, we do that from time to time, but not too much.

Mrs PENTLAND - Just a second question. Additionally, could the minister provide a breakdown of the contracts awarded in the last financial year, including who won these jobs?

Mr ELLIS - I'll just take advice on what we can make available.

Mr GILMOUR - That's the 2023-24 financial year.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to take that on notice.

Mr FAIRS - Thank you, Chair, the Tasmanian Housing Strategy provides a number of key actions for measuring the successful implementation of the strategy. Can you advise the committee on the progress of this important work, please minister?

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. Thank you, Mr Fairs, the government's record investment to deliver social and affordable housing is continuing to provide safe, secure and affordable homes for Tasmanians in need. Under Tasmania's first 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy, our government has committed to delivering more quality homes faster. Every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head, and our plan to deliver more homes faster is critical to achieving our vision to address homelessness in Tasmania and deliver a well-functioning housing system that provides safe, appropriate and affordable housing for all Tasmanians.

There are three key actions associated with measuring the success of the housing strategy outlined in the Action Plan 2023-27: establishing the governance for the plan, delivering a new housing dashboard to support analysis and transparency of data, and delivering an outcomes framework to support monitoring the strategy's vision and outcomes. The governance for the implementation of the strategy and action plan have been agreed, with coordination being overseen by the Department of Premier and Cabinet through the Deputy Secretary's policy and intergovernmental subcommittee.

Responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the strategy and the action plan will, however, transition to the Department of State Growth (DSG) in November 2024, and DPAC will continue to chair the Deputy Secretary's Commission and be heavily involved in supporting DSG to coordinate the delivery of the action plan.

A new user-friendly housing dashboard was released in the first week of September 2024, and obviously we have referred to it extensively here today. The updated dashboard features a new format with additional information, including detailed reporting on completed homes, land packages, funding models and the success of the pipeline projects. The Department of Premier and Cabinet is currently developing the draft outcomes framework, which is on track for finalising by December 2024 as outlined in the current action plan.

Dr BROAD - How many of the Homes Tasmania board are Tasmanian residents?

Mr ELLIS - Two.

Dr BROAD - How many FTEs does Homes Tasmania have?

Mr ELLIS - Correct me if I'm wrong, but at 30 June 2024, Homes Tasmania had a total of 186 full-time equivalent staff, of which 167 are permanent, 16 are fixed-term, 2 are state executive service and one is the CEO.

Dr BROAD - How many staff have left the organisation since its inception in December 2022?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I might have to take that on notice.

Dr BROAD - Is there a high turnover?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No.

Dr BROAD - You will take that on notice. My understanding is that it is a reasonably high turnover. What measures -

Mr ELLIS - Based on what evidence, Dr Broad?

Dr BROAD - Based on the question that I'm asking. What strategic initiatives and improvements to Homes Tasmania has the board implemented?

Mr ELLIS - Are we talking in terms of staffing retention?

Dr BROAD - Onto the board. The organisation itself.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of staffing retention, or?

Dr BROAD - In terms of what strategic initiatives and improvements to Homes Tasmania has the board implemented?

Mr ELLIS - We just talked about the housing strategy and the range of different opportunities there, but I'm not sure if you want to provide anything else?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Obviously the board has worked a lot on the strategy for the organisation and is very concerned about whether staff understand the strategy and are they on board. What I saw out of the Tasmanian state service survey that was done earlier this year is that we have positively increased on most of those metrics.

The board is keen on doing those sorts of initiatives of making sure that we're supported with the tools we need to be able to do the job. Sorry, it's a very broad question. I am not entirely sure what you're asking me.

Dr BROAD - I mean the organisation trying to improve itself. It has been there since 2022. I can move on if you like.

Can you confirm that in the process for Housing Connect 2.0, the organisations were directly appointed and there wasn't a tender required?

Mr ELLIS - Housing Connect commenced on July 1 2024, and it follows a significant reform project to improve services for Tasmanians seeking housing assistance. We've already provided some information in this space, but a key change to the Housing Connect service model was the introduction of a statewide front door with connection coaches who provide integrated support for people with low to moderate support needs. Service improvements to the Housing Connect front door includes comprehensive assessments for people seeking assistance and targeted intervention to connect people to resources and community networks to help them find and keep a home.

In terms of the approach to market, I've got some information here and I'm happy for the team to add to my answer in a tick. The new Housing Connect services were procured through a closed request for grant proposal process in August 2023. The five existing Housing Connect

service providers, Anglicare, CatholicCare, Colony 47, Hobart City Mission and the Salvation Army were invited to tender for a statewide front door service and regional personalised support service. Winteringham continues to provide support to older people in the south and has also commenced supporting older people in the north-west.

Anglicare was successful in their submission to provide a statewide front door. The contracts for personalised support were awarded to CatholicCare for young people statewide, single adults north and north-west, and couples and families state-wide. Hobart City Mission were also given a contract for single adults in the south. Wyndarra continues to provide housing connect services for people in the Circular Head Area in our neck of the woods, but I'll look to the Homes Tasmania team if there's anything further to provide.

Ms STONE - That's correct, minister. It was a closed tender process; it was a co-design process. We were working with the organisations who delivered Housing Connect 1.0 to deliver Housing Connect 2.0, but under a restructure.

Dr BROAD - Does that direct appointment align with the government tendering guidelines?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, we're very confident about that. We received procurement advice before doing it, and it was a competitive process. Under the market sounding, and prior to that a market analysis, there were no other providers who were likely to come in and provide that service, so we did a closed tender in line with the procurement process.

Dr BROAD - So, can you advise the total sum inclusive of capital costs spent and allocated to Winteringham, and confirm that they didn't need a tender either - they were part of that closed process?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I don't think we have the funding amounts here for Winteringham specifically, no.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to take advice and take that on notice.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, you're very good at articulating the fact that we're a third of the way through our time period to 2032 and we're a third of the way to meeting our 10,000 home target. But when it comes to social housing, the most recent dashboard shows that 370 new social homes have been built so far. That's 19 per cent of the 2000 social homes target, which is to be reached by mid-2027.

Mr ELLIS - When you say the dashboard, are we talking about the same data? Unless I'm confusing the data dashboard, on page 8 it says social housing completed 1417, with a pipeline of 443.

Mr BAYLEY - No, I think it's 370 from Homes Tasmania.

Mr ELLIS - As in specifically broken down by providers?

Mr BAYLEY - That's right. The 2000 social homes are across all providers, not just Homes Tasmania. Is that why Homes Tasmania is only at 19 per cent of the 2000 target?

Mr ELLIS - We're continuing to make significant investments in this space, and we're going to have to continue to work with, for example, the Commonwealth. We've had some discussions here around the Housing Australia Future Fund and the decisions that the Commonwealth have made, and the various different counting treatments that we have for those particular homes.

The main goal is 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032. We have a range of different sub-targets as part of that, and we're continuing to get an understanding of what the federal government process will now mean for us in terms of what we'll need to be doing in the future with social homes.

Mr BAYLEY - If the federal government doesn't come to the party to, you know, build the capacity to meet that need, will your government step up and invest more to make sure that we meet it?

Mr ELLIS - We'll always try and get an understanding of what this means for Tasmania. We've been really clear we want to deliver on our main target of 10,000 social affordable homes by 2032, and of course we look to other sub-targets as well around what opportunities are available there.

Mr BAYLEY - Just going back to the detailed budget statements, we're talking about debt and paying debt and the grants you get to pay for debt and so forth. I want to make the observation, as was made earlier, that borrowing costs according to the Budget escalate significantly over the forward Estimates from a bit over \$11 million up to almost \$40 million.

Mr ELLIS - That is because we are building more homes, Mr Bayley.

Mr BAYLEY - That's great. You say that you get grants to pay for that from the Tasmanian government, which is great, but that grants income significantly reduces across that same period. It peaks at \$147 million and then it drops down to \$120 million in the forward Estimates at 2027-2028, so there's ultimately a net loss there for Homes Tasmania, because you are getting less grant money. I don't understand. Could you talk me through how this works?

Mr ELLIS - I think you've misunderstood there. The grant money is not all borrowing cost servicing grants. There's a range of different grants that are available that the government provides to Homes Tasmania for different services. In terms of the debt service funds provided, there's \$71.3 million total over the forward Estimates to support borrowings, and the total funds provided are as follows: 2024-25 is 24.923 million; 2025-26 is \$28.675 million, 2026-27 is \$31.145 million; and 2027-28 is \$39.974 million.

Mr BAYLEY - I can see that in the Budget. I'm assuming that's reflected in the grants line item at the very start with those escalating costs, and yet that grant figure comes down to \$120 million. That clearly means that Homes Tasmania is getting less grant money overall from the Tasmanian government in the forward Estimates back out to 2027-28.

Mr ELLIS - Footnote 1 says that the variation in grants primarily reflects a profile of funding for the 2024 election commitments and funding from the Australian Government for the Social Housing Accelerator and Housing Support Program. Of course, we'll continue to work with the federal government and future federal governments around what opportunities

might be available there. Certainly, Tasmania was successful through Homes Tasmania for the housing accelerator program.

Ms Morgan-Thomas and I spent a very windy afternoon at a beautiful property in Chigwell where we're looking to deliver 15 new properties in partnership with the federal government. We'll continue to work with the federal government. As we noted in a previous Estimates, we can't count grant money from the feds that hasn't yet been delivered and that we'll need to work through a competitive process for, but certainly we'll continue to work together on ensuring that those opportunities are available.

We want to make sure that we're putting our best foot forward when it comes to leveraging federal Commonwealth funding. I know that nationally the Commonwealth are quite exercised because they are yet to deliver a single home despite making a \$10-billion commitment nationally, so we know that they want to do more and work with the states, who have a track record.

Mr BAYLEY - Up to which point are our federal government contributions reflected in these Budget figures in the forward Estimates? Is it just 2024-25, the \$147 million figure?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I can speak to some of that. The way the accelerator funding that the minister was talking about, which was a \$50-million grant, comes to us - Commonwealth payments are made to Treasury, not to statutory authorities. They can't just deal straight with us. That's coming in over a couple of years. We also are partnering with the Commonwealth Government on the Social Housing Energy Efficiency Program. That also comes in over three years, so those funds are coming into the revenue line.

Mr BAYLEY - How far forward?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We're delivering that over three years.

Mr BAYLEY - So, up to 2026-27?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Some of those things finish and some of the election commitments also finish.

Mr BAYLEY - I guess I still see the figures here speaking for themselves in that Homes Tasmania is getting less in grant revenue and ending up needing to pay more in borrowing costs. More of that grant revenue is being soaked up by borrowing costs.

Mr ELLIS - No. The grant revenue we get from the Commonwealth has nothing to do with the grants that are provided for servicing borrowing costs at the state level. As far as I know, they don't take that into account. I would be pretty disappointed if they do. We'll continue to work with the Commonwealth Government into the future, particularly in those out years. There are some big opportunities, I think, if state and Commonwealth governments are working together in terms of the housing challenge. Certainly, a lot of Australia's housing affordability challenge is driven by federal government policy settings that are driving up interest rates and things like that. We welcome the federal government's interest in investing in more housing around our country and we'd be looking to grow that engagement in the out years.

We mentioned as well that we made some election commitments that this Budget delivers on. Matters for those future budgets will be addressed at the time.

Ms JOHNSTON - My constituents have been experiencing significant issues when getting social housing providers to do basic maintenance, let alone emergency and urgent repairs. How does your government ensure that social housing providers meet their maintenance obligations?

Mr ELLIS - This is a really important area and one that I've been quite exercised in, that we want to make sure that we're providing better housing maintenance for people and providing comfortable homes. Homes Tasmania provides maintenance for about 6846 assets. The 2023-24 budget commits \$24.57 million for the provision of maintenance services for Homes Tasmania and property maintenance provided statewide through two regional head contractors. Homes Tasmania is currently considering future contracting models for the property and procurement services.

We think there's also an important role for us to play in terms of community housing providers. I'm not sure whether you're referring to Homes Tasmania or community housing?

Ms JOHNSTON - Community.

Mr ELLIS - In Tasmania, we have tier 1 community housing providers Centacare Evolve, Mission Australia, Housing Tasmania, Community Housing Tasmania Ltd and Housing Choices Tasmania. They manage half of Tasmania's social housing stock under the Community Housing Growth Program. These providers deliver tenancy and property management within their resource allocations. They manage both responsive and plan maintenance, prioritising upgrades based on need and available resources. Their 2024-25 asset management plans focus on maximising planned maintenance opportunities. That enables them to get ahead of the game.

We've just recently had some quite encouraging data from community housing providers on their satisfaction rates in terms of maintenance from their tenants - a big increase, which is encouraging because community housing providers are implementing strategies that extend property lifespan and reduce maintenance costs long term, while maintaining quality and service. The renewal and modification opportunities throughout the property's life cycle, particularly between tenancies, is important to increasing housing diversity as well.

I might pass over to the team from Homes Tasmania with regards CHP maintenance provision and some of the work that's been done there.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Maintenance is always a rub point where people want things and want it now. We know, as a provider of maintenance to the portfolio we manage, that lining up some of that can be difficult. All of us have faced issues over the last couple of years with supply of trades and being able to coordinate trades, some of them turning up on time and all of those sorts of things. We're all battling with that but I appreciate it's difficult for people. Community housing providers are tier 1 providers, there is a registrar of community housing and they are required to report to them on a lot of their metrics and turnarounds. My understanding is all of them are currently at or above their requirements for maintenance and other client service.

Mr ELLIS - Some of those metrics I mentioned before are quite encouraging. If you look at our performance metrics that have been provided recently, there's been a significant increase in tenant and maintenance satisfaction from 2022-23 to 2023-24, and a movement in Tasmanian CHP performance from being below all the other CHPs, so the national category average in 2022-23, to being above the average in 2023-24. In terms of tenant satisfaction, we've increased our sector performance for the financial year we've just had to 85.6 per cent. That's above the national average of 83.2 per cent and it's also above the sector performance in Tasmania from the year before, which was 79.5 per cent, which, as I said when I came in, was quite concerned about we clearly had some opportunities to do things better.

In terms of maintenance satisfaction for Tasmanian CHPS this last financial year, sector performance satisfaction is now at 80.3 per cent. That's above the national average of 75.9 per cent and it's significantly above our performance in 2022-23, which was 75.7 per cent.

We recognise that there's more that needs to be done. We need to continue to invest in these assets. That's part of the reason why, from a Homes Tasmania perspective, we committed to an additional \$20 million for additional maintenance services as part of our election commitments over and above what we currently spend. We recognise that when you're able to get on top of maintenance and start being proactive, it enables you to provide a better service and save money in the long run.

Ms JOHNSTON - Whilst I welcome the 'meanwhile' use of the old Bethlehem House, and recognise the government's contribution there, has the government started to make plans for the replacement of those 36-plus, or thereabouts, accommodation places for women when the site will be used for its permanent purpose in approximately three years. Rather than waiting until we get to the three years, are you starting to make plans now?

Mr ELLIS - We need to continue to invest. And you're right, it is a 'meanwhile' use. That's important, it means that we're able to address that service need over coming years, but we need to continue to grow our services to replace that. The 2024-25 Tasmanian Budget commits an additional \$2.7 million over two years to expand critical housing and homelessness services for women, including \$1.5 million over the next two years to contribute towards an additional 100 rapid rehousing properties. That's up from 50, trebling the number. And more support for women and children experiencing family violence who are at risk of homelessness. There's \$150 000 per annum over two years to provide additional support workers and crisis accommodation services at Jireh House following the addition of three units under the Commonwealth-funded Safe Places program. I thank them for that contribution,. There is \$450,000 per annum over two-year payment to provide additional support workers and crisis accommodation services at McCombe House following the addition of six units under the Commonwealth-funded Safe Spaces program.

Providing safe and appropriate housing and homelessness services for women and children is one of the top priorities for the Tasmanian government's housing strategy across 20 years. In addition to the social housing and private rental assistance, women can access 14 of the 20 homelessness shelters in Tasmania. There's brokerage services which provide access to alternative accommodation when shelters are at capacity, and 50 homes currently secured under the Rapid Family Violence Rapid Rehousing program.

Some of the recently completed projects as well for women: 15 additional units at Launceston at the women's shelter, which doubles their capacity; there's 25 additional units at the Hobart women's shelter, in your electorate, eight additional units at the CatholicCare women's shelter in the south; and two additional units at Jirah House. I might look to the team from Homes Tasmania in terms of any further work we're doing around future provision of service.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - A key part of that is also delivering more housing that women can live in permanently, rather than have temporary accommodation. We know in most of our women's services that you can get the equivalent of bed block because there is nowhere to go, so it's really important to focus on where women can go afterwards. Women are a higher proportion of the people who are housed in social housing.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, I know we've touched on this already, but I'd still like to find out more about it because I know it's got plenty of interest. That's around the Fountainside hotel for key worker accommodation. Can you let us know what the proposed use of that is going to be and how it fits within the government's housing priorities?

Mr ELLIS - I think it's important that we put some more information on the record regarding this important property purchase and part of our strategy. Our government, through Homes Tasmania, is progressing a key worker accommodation model to support Tasmanians working in key sectors including health care and tourism, and across critical industries. A 50-unit Fountainside hotel is just one example, and will house key healthcare workers from the Royal Hobart Hospital, supporting our frontline services with housing options that would otherwise need to be sourced from the private rental market.

Securing Fountainside comes just months after our government, through Homes Tasmania, secured a new 24-unit complex at Punchbowl to house essential staff for the Launceston General Hospital in the beautiful electorate of Bass. Providing accommodation for key workers will relieve pressure on the private rental market and assist government departments and other businesses to attract and retain essential staff for the operation of their services.

We make no secrets about this being part of our full-spectrum approach to housing in Tasmania. Key workers are listed as a priority within both the Tasmanian Housing Strategy and the Action Plan. In taking the Homes Tasmania bill through parliament, the then minister named up key worker accommodation on the first page of his second reading speech. Our government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future shows that we are committed to delivering more key worker accommodation to grow Tasmanian frontline services and developing innovative housing solutions to deliver more housing across the full spectrum in our state.

Dr BROAD - How many properties has Homes Tasmania purchased that have existing tenants?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In what timeframe?

Dr BROAD - What timeframe can you provide? The other question is how many of these tenants are at risk of homelessness or rental stress if they are evicted?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly, in knowing some of the properties that Homes Tasmania has purchased, they're often quite fit for purpose and have been providing that secure long-term accommodation for Tasmanians doing it tough already. They've often been supported to be delivered by governments in the past, and this locks that in in terms of long-term security for those homes and those tenants who might otherwise have been eligible but haven't put themselves on the register. By being able to secure those homes, we can secure their tenancy in their future. I'll pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We're just looking for the numbers, but the properties that we bought with sitting tenants were largely properties that were exiting the national rental affordability scheme, so the subsidy had ended. Those tenants had started off on what the Commonwealth calls an affordable rent - 74.9 per cent of market with an income cap. When we did a review of those properties, we discovered that all of those people bar two were eligible for social housing, so we shifted them into social housing leases. They went through the process and did it.

One person didn't want to live in social housing and wouldn't give us any details and chose to leave. Another family had two high-end cars - can't remember the model - and owned a couple of restaurants and were away above our eligibility limit. Everybody else was secured and put onto a social housing lease, so actually provided with more security of tenure. A lot of those people were old. When we were approached to buy those properties, we were approached by vendors who knew what the outcome would be for people in those properties. We decided prevention was better than cure and decided to purchase those properties. Have we got the data?

Ms STONE -. We have the data. In 2022-23, we have the information that is more than Tom described. There are 81 in total for that year, and 70 of them were through the NRAS scheme.

Dr BROAD - You don't have figures for 2023-24?

Ms STONE - Not here.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We can look, but I don't recall buying any. We can double check that.

Dr BROAD - What is the strategy for repaying Homes Tasmania's housing debt?

Mr ELLIS - I'm not sure you've been listening for the last couple of hours, Dr Broad, but we've quite clearly said that there are some opportunities to develop additional revenue. Things like the sale of affordable land, the growth in the government's equity as part of the MyHome shared equity program and other opportunities when it comes to affordable housing in Tasmania. There are also opportunities too in terms of key worker accommodations. We provide those services on a commercial lease, but with the security that comes with Homes Tasmania.

We're looking at all of those options, and obviously the Tasmanian government contributes to ensure that the debt servicing costs are also taken care of. I'll pass to Ms Morgan-Thomas to provide an update on affordable home ownership.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We know that people who purchase in the shared home ownership products that we've had over a number of years - at the moment about \$4 million to \$5 million is what we predict will come back in this year where people choose to sell the property, in which case they buy and pay our share out at the time or they refinance.

The rate of refinancing has slowed down a little bit, probably because of interest rates. That will pick up over time, and if you look at KPI 6, the growth in housing, I think around about 5 or 6 years is when people start to think, 'Can I refinance?', or something like that. That's a fairly standard time for people turning over properties that will pick up over time. Most shared equity programs - once they're not in a growth phase and when they're in a stasis phase - actually pay for themselves.

It'll be a while before we get to that because it's going through considerable growth at the moment, but we know that when we do that my board has a policy setting that if you bring in capital or something like that, then you seek to retire debt with it or you spend it on more capital, but you don't use it for operational expenses. They're very clear on the difference between CapEx and OpEx.

Dr BROAD - Has the minister provided Homes Tasmania with any direction regarding an appropriate capital structure and debt level as per Homes Tasmania's Ministerial Statement of Expectations?

Mr ELLIS - Revising the Ministerial Statement of Expectations - there hasn't been one provided currently and we haven't finalised that ministerial statement of expectations yet, but we'll be working through those matters.

Dr BROAD - Are you saying you don't have a view on the appropriate capital structure and debt levels?

Mr ELLIS - We mentioned before we've got a commitment of around \$1.5 billion to deliver our target of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032. Broadly speaking, those are the parameters that we work to, and then there are opportunities within that for Homes Tasmania to be delivering their own-source revenue through the sale of affordable land, through the MyHome shared equity program and other affordable housing options. We're working through that process.

That \$1.5 billion for our 10,000 homes target is a longstanding commitment, and that's, broadly speaking, the framework that we operate in.

Mr BAYLEY - On that, minister, I'm sure Dr Broad was listening, it's just that your answers aren't particularly convincing in terms of paying down that debt, and it's writ large in the Budget - \$720 million by the end of the forward Estimates. Am I hearing in your answer that you're willing for Homes Tasmania to go \$1.5 billion into debt in order to deliver services?

Mr ELLIS - Didn't you want to deliver a billion dollars over the forward Estimates as part of your alternative budget?

Mr BAYLEY - The question is for you, minister. Is that what you are telling us?

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Mr ELLIS - Our plan is around half-a-billion dollars over the forward Estimates. Your plan is for a billion. I'm not sure you should be complaining about the debt that we might be taking on when you want to double it, so -

Mr BAYLEY - Are you going to limit the debt to \$1.5 billion?

CHAIR - Order. If we can get the question without an interjection and the answer without an interjection as well, that will make things a lot easier, and then we will go to a break after that.

Mr BAYLEY - I don't think we're going to get any answers in that space anyway and I'm not sure that you really necessarily know. When it comes to homelessness, obviously the Housing First model is incredibly important - wrap-around services and having that integrated in the social housing that we provide to people.

The strategy states that Homes Tasmania will develop a housing-first approach to homelessness by the end of the year. How is progress going on that strategy? When can we expect to see it and what can we expect to see in it?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. The Tasmanian Budget commits considerable funding to support homelessness services of about \$45 million, and within that an additional \$2.1 million over two years to expand critical homelessness services, including \$150,000 per annum over two years to provide additional support workers at Jireh House, which I mentioned before; \$450,000 from McCombe, \$450,000 per annum over two years to provide key development coaches at each safe space site across Tasmania, which will provide intensive support to those people sleeping rough who access safe spaces and, indeed, our goal is to see homelessness reach functional zero, where homelessness is virtually non-existent and any instances are rare, brief and non-recurring.

The key priorities and actions in the 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy and Action Plan are focused on achieving that vision, and preventing early intervention will be crucial, together with our strong support for the homelessness service sector and the workforce.

New supply of social and affordable homes is also critical as part of that work and in addition to the substantial investment of more than \$45 million annually is provided to Homes Tasmania to support specialist homelessness services, and there are 20 homelessness shelters, and I'll pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas to add to my remarks there.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thank you, minister. Housing First has a worldwide evidence base around it. It's a very hard thing to deliver when you've got a lot of people on the housing register, because it requires you to have a house first and then provide the services around it. It requires a significant reorganisation of the service system. So, it's not a thing you can do overnight, but we know that we want to start working towards how we can do that, and are considering at the moment whether we will do a pilot and what that would look like and where it would be. Because, when you have a lot of large institutional type settings, where you have shelters and things like that, you can't just suddenly decommission those and say, 'No everybody's in a house and we'll just wrap the supports around it.'

But we know in our own portfolio of social housing that actually keeping people in tenancies is a really important thing. We have four positions now who are dedicated to working

with tenants to keep them in their tenancies. That's the first thing that we can do. Some of our tenants have a hoarding problem, particularly in our older and disability client groups. So, we work with people so they can keep their tenancies, so that they don't become homeless. That's a key part of Housing First as well.

Mr BAYLEY - In terms of the action plan and the Housing First approach being developed by the end of the year, what can we expect to see in relation to that? Do you envisage publishing something articulates your approach to Housing First and homelessness when it comes to this? Or were you just going to start to see it being integrated into the services you provide?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I'm not expecting we'll have a glossy document. I'm expecting that it's actually the intellectual work about how we do it and how we could start moving towards it that we are working on in Homes Tasmania.

Mr BAYLEY - And do you envisage measuring reporting against that and setting yourselves targets and reporting on it in the dashboard?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I don't know whether we'd be reporting in the dashboard. I'll take that one on notice. But I do know that we need to pilot it. You can't just go broad scale with something like this. I've been involved in Housing First pilots before, about doing it in a small area, small group of people and knowing what works.

It's actually very intensive work, particularly when you're working with people who have chronic homelessness. Some of it will be about picking the client group that you start with. But we want it to succeed. We don't want it to fail. So, I think it's important that we spend a big time on it.

Mr BAYLEY - I appreciate that it's challenging -

Mr ELLIS - Probably some of our expanded data that we've got on our dashboard is helpful in terms of that as well, so that we can get a sense of, for example, there's a living situation that's now outlined which only has slightly under 500 people in the homeless category when they're on the register, then with others in temporary and secure accommodation. We're already starting to report on some of the data that might help to better inform the community about the challenge.

CHAIR - All right, your time being 4.35 p.m., we'll take a short break. As time taken for breaks must be made up, I'll encourage members to be as quick as they can. There'll be no more than 10 minutes. We'll finish off. Thank you.

The Committee suspended from 4.34 p.m. to 4.46 p.m.

CHAIR - We are back on. We'll start off with Mrs Pentland, thank you.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, I refer to the building and construction industry forecast for Tasmania, September 2024, released by the Master Builders Australia. Given the alarming 23.3 per cent decline in new home starts over the past year, how does the government plan to boost housing development to meet the growing demand and address the housing shortfall in Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mrs Pentland. Certainly this is a key concern for Tasmania and other jurisdictions where we're seeing a slowdown in the building and construction industry, particularly with persistently high interest rates and, and federal government policy settings that are driving that. We're very committed to taking action in Tasmania so that we can address that and ensure we continue to bolster the housing and construction industry.

We're looking to bring more housing options to Tasmanians, more supply online and allow more Tasmanians to realise their dreams of home ownership. We've mentioned a lot today, obviously, delivering on the commitment for 10 000 more social and affordable homes by 2032 and that's increasing supply for the construction market and driving the Tasmanian economy. We also need to continue to work with the private sector and obviously homes, we've been able to deliver a large number of dwellings. In 2022-23 for example, there was a record high number of social housing dwellings being constructed. That's 769 and that's approximately 25 per cent of the new housing developed in all of Tasmania in that year.

You mentioned before, that in the year to June 2024, there's about 2574 residential dwellings approved. That's the 16 per cent decrease in the number of approvals to the year June 2023. It's a national trend, but we need to act here to stimulate development and so some of the things that I talked about earlier, things like having the stamp duty for new apartments, that's important in driving construction in that medium density or higher density market. We have expanded the residential land rebate which is another one of the areas that we committed to at the election, offering density incentive grants and also providing short-term interest-free loans for medium density projects. So that combination of incentives that meet private demand as well as acting directly to increase the number of social affordable homes provided by Homes Tasmania is a key part of the strategy.

Mrs PENTLAND - Thanks for that. You may have answered this, but with a 56.1 per cent drop in higher density housing developments, how does the government intend to remove barriers and incentivise the construction of more affordable, well-located homes in urban areas?

Mr ELLIS - I mentioned a few there and the higher density construction market can be quite lumpy, particularly in a small state like Tasmania where you know we get a development that comes through and it's completed and that all counts to a particular month or quarter and then it's a little while and then we see another big increase in other projects comes on. I spoke about the halving stamp duty for new apartments that's in that space, residential land rebates are probably going to be more focused on the, you know, the broader lower density area, the density incentive grants are going to be important and the providing short-term interest-free loans for medium density projects. Those are in the incentive space. The other area that we need to look strongly at is around planning and we'll be talking planning later as part of this committee or I'm happy to discuss now.

A key part of what we're looking to do as a government is take the politics out of planning. We've seen, for example, an important medium density development in Hobart in Argyle St was going to be delivered that would provide unit accommodation for over-55 women at risk of homelessness. Despite the Hobart City Council supporting that proposal in that planning level, their elected councillors voted against it. That has set that project back significantly and they're working through the appeals process to continue to deliver it.

What we're looking to bring into parliament is legislation with development assessment panels that take that local politics out. We noted that the local council planning department proposed that it be accepted. As far as a development assessment panel, it would be much more certain in terms of the outcome. The rules would be clearer because it's based on actual objective facts as opposed to the vagaries of local politics. So, expect to see that legislation coming into parliament in coming weeks and months.

It's a really exciting area and it's one that I know the construction industry is very strongly supportive of because, sadly, Mr Bayley and his NIMBY friends have been blocking construction projects around Tasmania and this will take some of the politics out of planning.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, there's much interest in the government's MyHome shared equity scheme. Can you explain to the committee the success of it please?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. Our government's MyHome shared equity program supports more Tasmanians to realise their dream of home ownership. MyHome provides not only housing security for program participants but reduces pressure on the broader housing system.

As at 30 August 2024, 501 MyHome mortgages have been entered into and that's now assisting over 1300 Tasmanians into home ownership since the program's expansion/inception on 1 July 2022. These figures far exceed the ambitious initial targets of 150 per financial year, with 270 of these taken up in the last financial year. This demonstrates strong growth and support for the program. Our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, importantly, raises the government's shared equity contribution from \$200,000 to \$300,000 or 40 per cent, whichever is the lesser amount for the purchase price of the new home.

It's further supported by an increase to income limits for purchases. This equity contribution is interest free for the life of the mortgage and repayable when the property is sold or the mortgage is refinanced by the owner.

In summary, more support for more Tasmanians, and, aligning with the changes to stamp duty caps, the purchase price caps for existing homes through MyHome has increased to \$750 000. Importantly, MyHome supports our building and construction industry by assisting Tasmanians to contract for the construction of over 140 new homes since 1 July 2021, and our MyHome shared equity program is a significant success story and can't wait to assist even more Tasmanians to realise their dream of home ownership.

Dr BROAD - Thank you. Looking at the criteria for selection for tenders for Homes Tasmania's apartment development purchase program and they seem quite restrictive. I think the minimum criteria is 25 apartments, with Homes Tasmania purchasing 10 per cent, which at the minimum is three apartments, leaving the developer with 22 apartments to sell at great financial risk to this construction company. Why has this program been developed in this restrictive way?

Mr ELLIS - You know that the alternative would then be selling 100 per cent rather than 90 per cent. Well, this it's supposed to be risky. They wouldn't go into apartment development at all.

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Dr BROAD - Well, they aren't, that's the problem. The industry is saying that at the moment they can't make things stack up with apartments simply because the cost of a new apartment is more than the market can bear.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, Dr Broad, obviously we're talking about apartment developers. That's what they do. They develop apartments and we're looking for opportunities to provide additional support for them, whether that's private incentives to increase demand or that's, say, being potentially a key anchor tenet for them with the 10 per cent commitment. We think that that's a good incentive that will help some of those developers with the marginal utility in terms of that decision to invest in those properties and help get some more projects over the line.

I might pass to the team from Homes Tasmania in terms of what that opportunity represents for those developers.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's currently under procurement and we're in the middle of a procurement.

Dr BROAD - So, there's nobody successfully gotten through the other end yet?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No, because we haven't completed the procurement process yet.

Dr BROAD - So, there's no successful tenderers at the moment. How many have you got in the pipeline?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We're still in a procurement process, so I don't really want to talk about that, but there was a commitment for three, ideally one in each region, but we're in the process of reviewing the applications.

Dr BROAD - Reviewing the actual applications? How many applications have you received?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - I'm uncomfortable talking about a procurement that's currently underway -

Dr BROAD - Not even the number?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - No.

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to provide further information when we come closer to the end of that process. It's a live procurement process at the moment. It's important to respect that process.

Dr BROAD - To what programs have the housing debt waiver funds - the \$157 million, I think - been allocated?

Mr ELLIS - I will refer you to our previous answer on that, Dr Broad.

Mr BAYLEY - I've got some planning questions, specifically about Chambroad and Kangaroo Bay. Chambroad's hotel development proposal in Kangaroo Bay is still before the

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Supreme Court over a land ownership dispute. The minister, Michael Ferguson, ruled out a major project status for this project because he believed it didn't have the grounds. Given that the legal matter is still not yet resolved, do you agree any move towards an assessment as a major project is inappropriate?

Mr ELLIS - There's a statutory process underway as well as a legal process underway. I'll provide some information that I can. On 9 August 2024, Chambroad lodged a revised proposal for the Kangaroo Bay Hotel development to be declared as a major project. This follows an early request made in 2023 that my predecessor determined did not meet the relevant criteria for declaring a major project. It was determined that the earlier proposal did not have at least two of the three eligibility attributes for it to be declared a major project. Specifically, the proposal did not demonstrate that:

The project will have a significant impact on or make a significant contribution to a region's economy, environment or social fabric.

The project was considered to lack strategic importance to the region and was not of significant scale and complexity. This decision in no way reflects the merits of the proposal. This was about protecting the intent of the major projects assessment pathway, which is specifically designed to assess large, regionally significant, and complex projects. Consultation on the revised declaration request is currently occurring with neighbouring owners and occupiers, state agencies and regulators. I can advise Mr Bayley that a decision on declaration is due in October 2024.

Mr BAYLEY - What would have changed, then, if minister Ferguson ruled it out and said there weren't grounds? Is it a different proposal or have they just rewritten it to try to meet those eligibility criteria?

Mr ELLIS - Mr Bayley, out of respect for the statutory process which is underway, I think I've outlined the information that's available. We're obviously working through that process. A decision on declaration is due in October 2024.

Mr BAYLEY - Is there a public consultation process, or are you just selecting neighbours and key stakeholders? Surely this is of significance and community concern? You've got the council that is deeply concerned and want their land back. You've got the community that doesn't support this proposal. Surely there needs to be a public process if we're going to go through this all again.

Mr ELLIS - I will introduce to the table Mr Sean McPhail, acting director at the State Planning Office, to provide some information around major projects, assessments, and the consultation process that's held within that statutory process.

Mr McPHAIL - I will be general around the process. This is the declaration phase part of the process in which there's a consultation process with neighbouring owners and occupiers, and also relevant state agencies and regulators. That's the process which is legislated for. The public consultation process actually happens when there is a declaration made and that gets into the assessment process. There are various stages in which there are assessment criteria created, in which that is publicly consulted on.

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Mr BAYLEY - Is there no option in this declaration phase for it to go out to public consultation? This is an issue of significant public concern. We've been around this merry-go-round once already. The council wants its land back. Are there mechanisms within the major projects declaration to go out to wider public consultation? Is there anything that precludes that?

Mr McPHAIL - There's nothing that precludes that. We're just following the legislative requirements of the major projects.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, would you make a commitment to go out to public consultation over the declaration of this as a major project? You've got the capacity clearly, as we heard from the officer.

Mr ELLIS - The decision around declaration is only the beginning of a process.

Mr BAYLEY - Sure, but it's a process that removes -

Mr ELLIS - If we choose to begin the process, hypothetically - or let's speak in general. If we begin any process in terms of major projects by declaring that, as Mr McFarlane's clearly outlined, that's then when you start the consultation process. An assessment for major projects is potentially a 12-month process. You're asking whether we should have consultation to begin a process to start consulting. There are processes that we'll work through.

Mr BAYLEY - The public has an interest in this, because the major projects process doesn't have a third-party merits-based reviews to it. There is no capacity for the community to appeal an assessment or an approval that's done under a major project declaration. The community have an important stake here in that. If this major projects declaration is accepted, they are having a significant piece of their third-party rights of appeal taken away from them. I would have thought it would be entirely reasonable for the community to be consulted about whether or not this project should go into a major project assessment. They'll lose rights. Have you met with the developer this year?

Mr ELLIS - I have.

Mr BAYLEY - When did you meet them?

Mr ELLIS - We met before we received any application. We regularly meet with people that are looking to invest in Tasmania in general. That doesn't necessarily reflect on the project. As I mentioned before, there is a statutory process that's outlined in legislation around consultation. If a project is declared a major project, then that's when consultation happens.

Mr BAYLEY - How many times have you met with them? When did you meet with them?

Mr ELLIS - I met once. As I mentioned, it was before receiving the information, and not long prior to that information being provided. I'm happy to follow up in terms of an exact date. It's part of our regular routine disclosure of our ministerial schedules.

Ms BESWICK - I thought Kristie was going.

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Ms JOHNSTON - I'm happy to, if that's okay. Thank you, Chair.

Mr ELLIS - This is very polite.

Ms JOHNSTON - It's collaboration between the independents. We're very polite.

Minister, you mentioned before in a Dorothy Dixier from Mr Fairs about the MyHome equity program. Questions have been raised in parliament about the delays in processing applications. I've also been made aware of delays in processing applications for the stamp duty concession. Do you accept that this has meant that many first home buyers had their offers rejected, because vendors are refusing to accept offers from anyone who has to go through this process, because of this lengthy delays?

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to refer the question in regards to stamp duty perhaps to the Minister for Finance, that would be the appropriate place. In terms of the MyHome shared equity program, it is supporting more Tasmanians to realise their dream of home ownership. As I mentioned before, as at 30 August 2024, 501 MyHome mortgages had been entered into. That's assisting over 1,300 Tasmanians into a home since the program's conception.

Ms JOHNSTON - You deny that there are any delays in processing the application?

Mr ELLIS - There are different things that we need to consider. Because we've expanded the scheme to take into account purchases of existing properties, we then need to ensure that we're undergoing due diligence as far as the property's condition. That's an important consumer protection for those people. New homes are obviously required to be built to a certain standard, whereas existing properties not necessarily so. Inspections need to take place. That's an important consumer protection.

The growth in the MyHome shared equity program clearly demonstrates that it's a strong program. Where there are opportunities for us to continue to improve it, we always look to those. An example that occurred recently was around the parameters for insurance providers. Homes Tasmania worked with the Bank of us as the provider to ensure that there was good access to more options and choices for providing home insurance. We think that's improved the opportunities that are available to people.

There are, of course, opportunities for us to improve in terms of time frames, noting that we wouldn't want to throw the baby out with the bath water for important consumer protections. These are often lower income Tasmanians and buying a home with a lower deposit, so, it is important that responsible lending is a key part of what we look to do. I will pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas and the team to outline some of that work that is underway.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thanks, minister. We will show that graph again where in in less than two years we have gone from 200 to 600. That's massive growth in any program. We met with Bank of Us in the first diverse areas of quarterly meetings. Looking at now, we are in establishment phase where we do have some growth pains, where are the things that we can trim down, and there are three parties in this and with a fourth off to the side. So, there is a tripartite agreement between ourselves, the Bank of Us and the co-purchaser in order to do it.

Co-purchasers typically have not bought something before so they are very keen to get things done, but do not always follow the right path. There are a number of people who have

entered into contracts without having got pre-approval first. Some of those things can be harder for us to fix. We can certainly fix things like times in our processing and the Bank of Us processing. So, we have made a commitment to do that and look at how we can bring those things down.

As the minister said, we did have a requirement in the clause around a particular type of domestic worker insurance. We have removed that requirement and are in the process of writing to existing co-purchasers to say if you want out of this you can. One of the effects of having that requirement in there was that not all home and contents insurers will insure for that. So, that reduced the pool of insurers that they could go to, but we have removed that because we heard the customer feedback.

I was really interested last week to meet a mortgage broker firm that has done 20 per cent to 25 per cent of the mortgages through My Home - they really like it. I just happened to run into them at a function and I was saying, 'What do you think of My Home?' and they said, 'We love this program'. And, yes, it takes a bit longer, but we work with our co-purchasers to manage them through the process, explain to them that they are having their consumer protections enforced by us because we know how to do this and we are also protecting the value of our assets.

So, we make sure it's valued properly, we make sure there's a property inspection and, importantly, we also check the title information because, when you are buying an existing house, you need to know that that extension on the back that you really like has actually got a certificate in place.

Some of the delays come through getting the certificates from councils. Some of those things we can't control, but we know that there are things that we can streamline and some that we can overlap, so, we are working through those. It is hugely successful and these are growing pains of a very successful program.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of some of those protections, we have been made aware that there have been several that have been rejected because of major structural issues, maintenance issues or council permit issues. Ms Morgan-Thomas outlined, say, that with extensions or have been accepted conditional on maintenance work being completed by the vendor before settlement. So, there are always opportunities to do things better, but these protections exist for very good reason, as part of the nature of the transaction that we are now undertaking as part of this expanded program, and I am sure, as a member of parliament, you would be very supportive of those protections too.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, minister. My constituents in Glenorchy continue to be frustrated that the development at Nagle Place in Glenorchy, which I believe was under construction by Multi-Res on behalf of, I am not sure if it was Homes Tasmania or another social housing provider - has not continued to work on that particular site. There are brick walls in the ground and not much else, some foundation work. Can you give an update on that housing development and when can we expect there to be a resolution to that particular issue when Multi-Res collapsed?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I can tell you that this morning I signed a contract to complete that development.

Ms JOHNSTON - Excellent. Is there more that you wanted to add to that?

Mr GILMOUR - Through you, minister. Effectively, with the collapse of the previous contractor, we've had to go and redocument the projects so that we were comfortable with the design documents and we held all of the insurance and liability from the architects perspective. We went through a retendering process and it's one of our first construction tenders under the new format tender. We've been in negotiation with the successful tendering party through that process and it's just about to be announced effectively now that the contract has been agreed.

Ms JOHNSTON - When do we expect those homes to be ready? A number of people are waiting for them.

Mr GILMOUR - Probably looking at about 12 months.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's been incredibly frustrating for us.

Ms JOHNSTON - And our residents too.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I get that the government is a model contractor, so we can't just go, 'oh, you've collapsed, forget it and just go and do something else'. We have to go through a very lengthy legal process, which we did in good faith. So I'm confident very few builders want to take over something that's half done because they have to warrant it.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, going on from Ms Pentland's question about medium density developments, I know the government has made commitments on planning framework that supports greater density housing across Tasmania. What are we doing to advance this work?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. Our government continues to provide a planning framework that supports growth, investment and more housing for our state. This includes a greater focus on appropriate densification in areas of our towns and cities to support Tasmanians to have access to housing, including proximity to infrastructure and services within their community. The first five-yearly review of the state planning provisions or SPPs has prioritised a number of projects to respond to the current housing pressures.

The improving residential standards in Tasmania project is one of these projects that will deliver improvements to the planning requirements for housing. With background analysis and technical input, the project is providing recommendations for improvements to the urban residential zones in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, ensuring that we can provide a greater range of quality housing types including medium density housing departments, developments like apartments in well-located areas.

The project is also considering improvements to the subdivision requirements for residential areas, focusing on layout and liveability for new neighbourhoods and promoting greater uptake of zones that can deliver more density and housing diversity. Draft recommendations were recently made available for public comment. These suggest a set of new parameters for assessing housing development, including improved requirements for assessing apartments in the business and mixed-use zones, and several options for the implementation in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme. I'm aware that the State Planning Office

has undertaken several briefings with stakeholders on the draft recommendations including a broad online presentation and question and answer session.

Feedback from those who work closely with the planning scheme in council's community and industry will help shape the final recommendations for the project. Recommendations from the project will be used to prepare amendments to the SPPs. We're getting on with this important work to provide a framework that supports greater densification for housing from all Tasmanians.

Dr BROAD - Minister, what do you think is a reasonable time frame for you to respond to housing correspondence from members of parliament?

Mr ELLIS - It would depend on the query. Sometimes, they're simple matters, sometimes they're more complex. It is not a one-size-fits-all. In my office, we like to work around a four to six-week process. We like to work closely with the housing providers, whether that's Homes Tasmania or community housing providers before I write a letter back so that we can do all of our due diligence. I'm providing correspondence that provides someone with a meaningful update rather than simply 'thank you for contacting me'.

We like to work closely with those housing providers in that process, for example, have maintenance issues resolved or someone provided with a transfer and then write back confirming that. The letter is the formal part of the process but the work is much more involved in an interpersonal level between my staff, between Homes Tasmania staff, Housing Connect staff and the community housing providers as well.

Dr BROAD - The reason I'm asking is because my colleagues and I have noted that there's been a lengthening of time in receiving correspondence from you as minister compared to previous ministers. I think we've got about a dozen issues that are outstanding, some from July. I have some that are quite urgent that have been waiting.

I'll give you an example, one from 9 August. I won't identify the constituent, but this constituent has obtained a Housing Choices property and is waiting for modifications to be completed before they are able to move in. The modifications have been approved by her occupational therapist and funded by the NDIS. However, this constituent is waiting for the go-ahead from Housing Choices and is currently paying two rents, the current property and the Housing Choices property. Obviously paying two rents is a significant burden. I was seeking your assistance in rectifying the situation as soon as possible. We haven't received a response that was sent 9 August.

Mr ELLIS - We are happy to follow up about that individual matter. Again, we prefer to look to these matters in-depth and sometimes that can take time. But it's important I think that we're actually taking action rather than providing the quickest response that's not necessarily delivering an outcome. So, we look to work with constituents of yours. Maybe you don't receive the response back, but we're actively working with them with Housing Connect and Homes Tasmania and the housing providers. That's, generally speaking, the way that I prefer to do correspondence with members of parliament, that we be proactive around the issue and work towards making progress and then provide correspondence back. But that's -

Dr BROAD - I'd imagine that particular issue is one that's quite urgent. This constituent has been paying rent in two properties for six weeks, so there should be some level of urgency

in getting a response, especially if it's as simple as Housing Choices needing to give permission for modifications to take place.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and as I said, I'm happy to look into that matter with depth and obviously, sometimes that can take time, but very happy to follow up in terms of where we're at with that current one.

Dr BROAD - But I mean - I can go through each of the instances or I'm just seeking a commitment that you'll actually respond as soon as possible. We've got constituents with -

Mr ELLIS - We always look to respond as soon as possible, and as I say -

Dr BROAD - Well, in some instances you haven't. One from July, for example. What I'm saying is we're putting you on notice in effect because we're not getting timely responses and some of these cases are particularly urgent.

Mr ELLIS - What I'm saying is that we actually prefer to work directly with the tenant, with Housing Choices - sorry, I should say Housing Connect, community housing providers or Homes Tasmania. We're actually engaging with people on the depth of their inquiry. That kind of in-depth tailored approach to all those constituent inquiries that come across my desk is the approach that we prefer to take, that we work closely with those people so that we're getting the highest possible chance of a meaningful result.

Sometimes people don't get the response that they're looking for. For example, they're allocated a house immediately but certainly, I'm noticing that as a minister's office and myself, we take now a high degree of ownership of that process that helps to drive better outcomes.

CHAIR - Last question, then we'll go to Mr Bayley.

Dr BROAD - For example, and this is one that Ms Johnston would be familiar with too. A 70-year-old female pensioner placed in units in the northern suburbs which Centacare acknowledges they know has consistent antisocial and criminal behaviour. She does not have family visit as they are fearful from previous incidents occurring there. She has also been advised that Centacare staff cannot visit due to safety concerns. The resident has reported prostitution, drug use, violence, and stealing occurring frequently in the units. The resident is a priority status for placement and has listed seven suburbs. Her application has been ongoing for 12 months. She's merely told that there's nothing available; to report incidents to police and so on. She's even provided a doctor's certificate outlining her anxiety, fear and post-traumatic stress. We've sent a letter - Ms Haddad in this case - on 16 July, 6 August and 9 September, and still you have not bothered to respond.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I'm aware of the particular case and it's important where we've got that cross-over with housing and police, that we're taking meaningful action on both because, obviously, we want to make sure there are safe neighbourhoods. There's the transfer process, but that doesn't help that broader community as well, so we need to be taking action with local police on those matters.

That is one of the good benefits of being Housing and Police minister, that we can actually expect a response from both agencies in terms of what they're doing to address both those matters. Are we talking along the road? Is that the particular matter?

Dr BROAD - I don't want to go into any more details, but the letter's sitting on your desk, so you could refer to that.

Mr ELLIS - There are obviously strategies. Rather than going into detail, I know that there are certain matters that you probably referred to where Homes Tasmania is currently working with CHPs around that process. That engagement is where we look to deliver outcomes for constituents. Obviously, the letter that I provide back at the end of that process is an important signpost along that way, but we really want to be engaging with people on an individual level and in the most meaningful, in-depth way possible, rather than providing a response back that doesn't necessarily deliver better outcomes for those people.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, on the State of the Environment report, obviously it was well over a decade late and your government missed two statutory reporting cycles before getting this one going and tabled. The Planning Commission asked for an extra two months to finish the State of the Environment report from June to the end of August. What was the reason for the delay and does it point to the fact that the Planning Commission needs additional funding for staff to continue its role reporting on the State of the Environment report functions and requirements into the future?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Bayley. Yes, we delivered the State of the Environment report and that was tabled in parliament on 17 September. Part of our obligations is to deliver one in five years' time. The Tasmanian Planning Commission was originally allocated \$400,000 in the 2023-24 state Budget to complete the 2024 State of the Environment report, and as the project scope was developed, additional resources were drawn upon. We continue to work with the Tasmanian Planning Commission and other parts of government that were required to provide their part for it.

In terms of the extension that was requested by the Tasmanian Planning Commission, that request was made in June 2024 and I consented to a short extension of time for the submission of the report until 30 August 2024.

Mr BAYLEY - Was that a resource issue? What was the reason?

Mr ELLIS - The extension was to allow the Planning Commission sufficient time to finalise the 2024 State of the Environment report, including completion of its quality processes. There is significant data aggregation that needs to be done, and it is important to streamline the process for all that different data that's held by different agencies and bodies into one readable and digestible format. I was happy to provide that extension so that they could work through that and, obviously, we've delivered the report now.

Mr BAYLEY - Can you give a commitment to commission and adequately fund the August 2029 version of the State of the Environment report? Is it your intention to meet the next statutory deadline and fund it adequately?

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. I am very much looking forward to being in government in 2029, Mr Bayley -

Mr BAYLEY - You have to get it going well before then.

Mr ELLIS - We'll be very keen to deliver that report. It's an extensive report. Quite clearly, the Tasmanian Planning Commission has done significant work - more than 600 pages as part of that report and consulting broadly across government, the university sector and other organisations in our community and in our economy -

Mr BAYLEY - It is extensive and we've put on record our thanks to those people involved, but it also had a number of holes in it. There were a number of indicators where the State of the Environment report couldn't report because it didn't have enough data to determine their status. These are things like water, wetlands, rice grass and land use intensification. What will be done between now and commissioning the next State of the Environment report to ensure that there's enough data to understand those environmental trends?

Mr ELLIS - We have Claire Hynes, the Acting Commissioner of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. We are talking about the data that wasn't available on certain key indicators that were provided.

Mr BAYLEY - The question is - was that a resourcing issue? The question was really to the minister about a commitment to provide the commission with adequate resources to start the data collection now so that those indicators can be formed into the next State of the Environment report. That is something you have control over as minister.

Mr ELLIS - As I said, Mr Bayley, it's not a resourcing matter, but where there's a lack of data extant in different agencies, that's something for us to look at. I'll look to Ms Hynes to see whether there's a further update that you can provide about the particular indicators that didn't have much data.

Ms HYNES - As you can appreciate, it was a very complex project, led by a great team and a great steering committee within the commission. We worked very hard to make sure we could complete that within the timeframe provided by the direction of the minister.

The report speaks to itself and the comprehensive nature of the report. Volume 1 and volume 2 with the technical findings are all backed up by all the technical reports in volume 2. It's a result of extensive consultation that the team undertook with government departments; we utilised all relevant data that was available not just within government but outside. All that data went through a rigorous process of checking and making sure that where there wasn't data available, that was simply stated as fact.

Mr BAYLEY - Have you made a request to government, or have you had any indication to government about those data holes and the need to fill them for future reports?

Ms HYNES - Yes. Certainly, our focus was getting the report done. As you spoke about before, we sought that two-month extension and that was to go through our quality assurance processes, and we absolutely needed that time to complete that. Moving forward, we're already undertaking a further audit review process looking at what we did, what we did well, what we could have done to improve, and moving towards how we are going to produce the next report within the five-year time frame.

Mr BAYLEY - Do you make recommendations around those holes in data?

CHAIR - That is the last question, Mr Bayley, and we will move on.

Ms HYNES - I believe it would be premature for me to discuss that at this point in time because that work is still ongoing. We're working through the finding and what it looks like from here on.

Mr ELLIS - I might make a point as well around these point-in-time snapshot reports. For example, I have experience in terms of delivering the State of the Forests report as well last year. They're interesting reports, but it does beg the question in the modern age in which we live, are there opportunities to, a bit like we do with our dashboards, provide a regular update. It would be a little bit like providing the State of the Housing report every five years where I randomly dump a whole bunch of data together.

It's actually more useful being able to provide information in a continuous disclosure space so that you have not necessarily real-time reporting, but more contemporaneous reporting. That helps to provide an ongoing picture of what our forests or our environment more broadly look like.

There are some challenges because in the State of the Environment report we deal with a lot of external agencies around their data. Some of that data provision might be a little bit more complicated, but certainly I know that it's an area in which we're going to have some big opportunities available to us over the next five years to better deliver those data so that we're not waiting for a one in every five-year kind of comet to fly past us. Instead -

Mr BAYLEY - More regular reporting would be very welcome, provided it was credible and authentic.

Mr ELLIS - On recommendation 3, to develop an environmental data strategy, we have some information here that the Australian Government's allocated \$1.5 million over three years to each state and territory through the Digital Environmental Assessment Program initiative to enhance the capability of the Tasmanian Natural Values Atlas to exchange biodiversity data with a national biodiversity data repository that's being developed.

The Natural Values Atlas is a web-based platform managed by NRE Tasmania that holds and delivers high-quality Tasmanian natural values information relied on for the development, assessment and approvals process. This enhancement will support better environmental assessment and decision-making. Through the interjurisdictional environment data and information oversight committee we're also engaging with the Australian Government on the establishment of Environment Information Australia and the development of a national environmental standard on data and information standards. We also collect reserve estate data feeding into the national Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database.

There are some big opportunities coming up in the next five years and some of that technology-facilitated data provision will be a really exciting space for those of us nerdy enough to be interested in it.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Beswick, I know you're nerdy enough to be interested in this as well.

Ms BESWICK - Thanks. I'm very interested in strategic planning and how we are making sure that we're forward-thinking. Recently on the northwest coast, we've had the Homemaker Centre project knocked back, apparently due to the fact that the regional planning

document has not been updated and apparently we're in a declining population plan. Given that we've reached our population expectations about 10 years ago, 10 years early two years ago, why has that not triggered an update of that document? What is it that triggers updates of things like that where we're planning and in how we're thinking ahead and making our strategies?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Beswick, I hope I answer the question as best I can; just let me know if we're on the mark or not. We're committed to ensuring the Tasmanian planning system remains contemporary and fit for purpose. It's a system that backs in appropriate development and attracts investment and sustainable growth across the state.

The government is currently in the process of significant work to review all the regional land use strategies across Tasmania, including the Cradle Coast Regional Land Use Strategy in the northwest to ensure that these strategies and subordinate documents drafted and managed by our local councils support economic growth, support the supply of much-needed housing stock and incentivise development within our state.

In the 2021-22 budget, the government allocated \$3.45 million over three years to undertake comprehensive reviews of each of the regional strategies. The reviews are now well advanced with significant background work to prepare and inform the reviews completed in the last 12 months, including comprehensive residential demand and supply analysis in each region and a statewide industrial land strategy.

Importantly, the 2024-25 Budget provides an additional \$300,000, part of which will be used to support the oversight of the regional strategy reviews. I hope that answers your question.

Ms BESWICK - Obviously we're looking at this in a historical sense, going 'Oh, crap, we need to do that, why are we always in on the back foot?' Why are we not forward?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly, we need to take action in this space. What we've done strategically is, when we came to government there was no statewide planning scheme. Tasmania was a basket case; our regional planning was a labyrinth of inconsistencies. The foundation work that needed to be done was the statewide planning scheme.

Now that's coming to fruition, most of the councils in our electorate in the northwest are on line and we are working with the remaining five councils to complete that work. Broadly speaking, we have been able to make significant progress with all the other 24 councils in Tasmania. It is disappointing, I have to say, that we still have some of our largest councils that have not yet delivered their part for the statewide planning scheme, but we expect those to be coming on line very soon.

Now that we have, broadly speaking, completed that work around the statewide planning scheme, the next steps in the strategy are to provide an updated fit-for-purpose regional land use strategy for each region and then, beyond that, the Tasmanian planning policies as well that will sit as a kind of overarching strategy document above those documents.

We've completed significant work and now the next steps are to put that strategic piece together so that we can have that more integrated approach with regulation, policy and strategy.

Ms BESWICK - If you are saying the councils are holding that back, what have you incentivised? How have you supported them in that?

Mr ELLIS - Some are great. For example, Burnie has been in on the statewide planning scheme for four years. I don't blame small councils. For example, King Island is one of the later ones to come on line. It's a tiny council and with maybe 1200 ratepayers.

Sadly though, some of them have no excuse. Hobart, Derwent Valley and Kingborough, not to name names, but there is a very direct correlation with electing a Labor or Greens mayor with regard to finalising those processes, but we are continuing to work with them. We don't think that there is much of an excuse for delay. Certainly, Burnie was delivered four years ago but -

Ms BUTLER - You're not really into being a stately, are you, minister?

Mr ELLIS - We like to encourage people to step up because it is important that if some councils can do it, including quite small councils, then some of our largest councils need to get on board. There is a process that we are working through and we are looking to resolve that reasonably soon.

Where we are working really closely with councils on delivering those regional land use strategies, that process has been good. It has had its challenges at times because we are talking about regional documents and there can be a bit of inter-council competition as far as where we want to see investment and where we want to see homes built and all that sort of stuff, but, in general, councils have been pretty collegial. I appreciate the opportunity to work with them.

We expect next year those will have new strategies and that will help provide a clearer framework for people looking to build houses or commercial-industrial opportunities in our state as well.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can you update the committee on the status of the rollout of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme?

Mr ELLIS - It is a great question, Mr Fairs. I refer to part of my last answer. We are fully committed to ensuring that Tasmania has the most effective, strategically well-informed and efficient land use planning system in the country. It is a great contrast to the basket case that our government inherited with a state full of disparate schemes and that created confusion for business and investors across Tasmania.

Our consistent statewide planning scheme is well progressed, with 24 of the 29 councils now operating under a single planning scheme, the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, including some of our smallest like the beautiful West Coast, Flinders, Central Coast and Tasman. Some councils like Burnie, Devonport too, Ms Beswick, have been operating under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme for around four years, and Central Coast.

As we have clearly demonstrated, there are no really good excuses for the councils that are lagging behind. They are being outdone by their partner councils or competitive councils potentially and I know that developers that are looking to do business in some of those remaining areas really want to see their council getting into gear because they typically invest based on - they want some certainty.

The uniformity is helpful as well. The remaining five councils will be operating under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme in 2025 once their local provision schedules are approved by the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission. All remaining draft local provision schedules are now with the commission. That's an important update as part of the statutory assessment process, which involved public consultation and public hearings. It has taken our government longer than we'd hoped, but this incredible improvement will provide benefits for Tasmanians for many years to come.

Dr BROAD - If we look at the State Planning Office, the budget allocation is dropping significantly over the forward Estimates. Is the government actually planning for planning reform? It looks like that it's dropping off significantly at the moment. It's more than halving over the forward Estimates.

Mr ELLIS - Interestingly enough, there was no State Planning Office when we came to government -

Dr BROAD - That's not the question.

Mr ELLIS - because Labor didn't fund it. We have introduced it because we think that there are big opportunities for Tasmania as we continue to work to fix the basketcase that we inherited from your predecessors, Dr Broad.

Our government values the significant work of the State Planning Office, and it undertakes in relation to both statutory planning and strategic planning reform. In 2024-25, the Budget continues the evolution of the government's role in land use planning, from reforming and building a fit-for-purpose planning system to operating it and maintaining its relevance going forward. The Budget provides the ongoing core funding for the State Planning Office in supporting the planning system and working with key stakeholders, especially local government.

Included in the core funding is \$385,000 in 2024-25 and 2025-26 for planning systems reforms which were originally announced in the 2021-22 state Budget. It provides a rollover of \$180,000 to continue support for the regional land use strategy work that we mentioned before, and processing major project applications. The Budget also provides an additional \$300,000 as far as supporting major projects and strategic regional development.

Full implementation of the Tasmanian planning scheme, which is establishing a consistent set of planning requirements statewide, is now nearing completion, as I've mentioned. The State Planning Office, as a result, has shifted to maintaining the currency of these reforms through the statutory review of the state planning provisions - the planning scheme rules originally approved in 2017, which were completed in 2023.

The work program for the SPP review is both comprehensive and it's inclusive. The high level of engagement with the local government sector is being very well received. The review of the SPPs identified various projects that are now being progressed to improve the planning rules. This includes the improving residential standards in Tasmania project, to implement improvements for delivering Tasmania's housing needs. The government has also taken a large stake in the planning system through the SPPs. It's vital that these are kept up to date and relevant to the changing issues that we need to address.

We're also working to finalise Tasmania's first suite of bespoke planning policies, which I mentioned before in the Tasmanian planning policies. This will be a significant achievement for Tasmania, and fill a long-standing gap in the planning system. Our government's also taking time to ensure that the TPPs are suitable to guide the comprehensive reviews of the regional land use strategy and the future direction of Tasmania. The SPO and -

Dr BROAD - Sorry, the question was about why the budget allocation is dropping by more than half over the forward Estimates. Last year it was it \$3.6 million. It's dropping to \$1.489 million in 2026-27. That doesn't sound like there is much room there for new programs. It seems like all the programs are dropping off.

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned before, we've completed a big range of project work. That's now work that's moving from standing up a new process entirely to maintenance. We can attribute the decrease to the completion of the 2021-22 budget initiative of regional land use strategies, which had \$1.5 million allocated, and a decrease of \$200,000 for funding allocated to the planning system reforms, which provides \$385,000 in 2024-25. There is new funding for new areas that are being stood up in terms of the critical major projects and the strategic regional development. I mentioned the rollover of \$108,000 for the State Planning Office subdivision review.

Broadly speaking, the work that the StatePlanning Office is doing had significant project focus as we were developing an entirely new statewide planning scheme. Those projects are coming off and we are moving to a different set of smaller projects as well as maintaining it. Your government did not even have a state planning office and we have still -

Dr BROAD - Don't get into that, seriously. You are wasting our time. Chair, you have to be relevant to the question. What happened to iPlan? I went to have a look at it today and it hasn't been online for about 12 months and there's no replacement. What's going on?

Mr ELLIS - I will look to - Ross, sorry, what's your current position?

Mr SMITH - Deputy Secretary, Regulation and Service Delivery.

Mr ELLIS - Alright, iPlan, I assume you heard the question?

CHAIR - For the benefit of Hansard, can we have names of the people?

Mr ELLIS - Ross, what is your last name again?

Mr SMITH - Smith.

Mr ELLIS - That's what I was forgetting it. Ross Smith, Deputy Secretary in the Department of Justice, which is where the commission sits. So, iPlan?

Dr BROAD - Yes. What happened to it?

Mr SMITH - Claire, do you want to cover from -

Ms HYNES - I can. In short, iPlan - the shortest description I can give is, the software became outdated and it was no longer supported by the - there's lots of technical explanations. We've moved on.

The government has a project called PlanBuild, and Ross will be able to speak through you, minister, about that more. At the moment, all the planning schemes are provided through the commission's website in a PDF form, and that includes archived planning schemes as well as the current versions. That's the remaining interim planning schemes, also the state planning provisions and all the local provision schedules of those that already have the Tasmanian planning scheme approved in those municipalities.

Very soon, the commission's website will link live to the PlanBuild, like a mechanism to their website, and there's a new software platform where these planning schemes will be available. So it's essentially a replacement of what iPlan did offer.

Dr BROAD - I have an issue around a zoning problem. It relates to the rural and agricultural zones. In the rural zone, community and entertainment are a permitted use, yet in the agricultural zone, they are not a permitted use. To give you an example, The Berry Patch is in the rural zone and they can hold events. They can have a band or put on some community event and it's permitted use. Whereas if it was across the road in the agricultural zone, they can't. We know there has been a lot of confusion, like with Mount Gnomon Farm, for example, having a big battle with council about what they're permitted to do.

This is a significant issue. It means that if there's a vineyard, for example, that establishes in the agricultural zone, they won't be able to hold any events - major events, like getting a band or a singer to help promote their brand. It seems like a bit of an oversight and I'm just after -

Mr ELLIS - Ms Hynes?

Ms HYNES - Might be best coming from Mr McPhail.

Mr McPHAIL - Sure. Through you, minister, this reflects the difference between the two zones. The rural zone is land which is probably lesser quality agricultural land, where the agriculture zone is more about the higher quality agriculture land. So there is a difference between the requirements. In terms of the state planning provisions review, we have identified some improvements that we can make, particularly around the types of agritourism and things that can occur across both of those zones. Obviously, that's an element which has been raised with us through the SPP review. Obviously, there are different requirements and different needs in terms of compliance with the state policy on protection of agricultural land. So we'd need to adhere to those requirements and any changes to the planning regulations on that.

The other key point, too, is there are some exemptions for infrequent or irregular events as well. That allows for irregular and infrequent events to occur on properties like that. Obviously, when they become more entrenched, then they would need to apply for a particular use. The difference between the two zones is, they're very different in the way they operate and they have different roles and responsibilities under the planning scheme.

Dr BROAD - Yes, but that creates the problem, along with the exemption for irregular events. The definition of what is an 'irregular event' can lead to, in the case of Mount Gnomon,

having to go to the Planning Commission to sort it out. It is a significant problem, and holding an entertainment event on prime agricultural land in the agricultural zone does not necessarily fetter it. It seems like it's a bit of an oversight because what it actually does is restrict what you can do as a business. We're not talking about converting a property in the agricultural zone permanently to an entertainment venue. It seems like there's a bit more to it than just you can grow potatoes on this one and you can't on that one.

Mr McPHAIL - Through you, minister, yes, I think there are improvements that could be made across the state planning provisions in how it deals with the variety of things. What we have to remember is, the state planning provisions are a combination of what was there in a lot of planning schemes before and, obviously, every five years we get an opportunity to review that. This is a huge improvement on the system that was there before because there was no obligation to review every five years. This time, we have a review and this item has been identified as part of that scope.

Dr BROAD - I see. Also, in the previous planning scheme, it was permitted. It was a discretionary use. Now it's not permitted.

Mr McPHAIL - That may have been under some planning schemes, yes.

Dr BROAD - That's the actual issue. We have ones like the beautiful vineyards in Braddon can hold concerts, but if they were to apply now, they wouldn't be permitted. Ghost Rock, for example, it's agricultural zone. They would not be able to hold community events, and the only reason they can is because of existing use.

Mr ELLIS - Well, infrequent, as Mr McPhail mentioned.

Mr McPHAIL - That's correct, and it really depends on the type of use and its scale, and how it fits in with the agriculture use as well. That's, I guess, the key - things can be ancillary to a use as well and still take on that same use class as well.

It really depends on the scale and the nature of it. There are a few different ways that something could be approved or even meet the exemption. I think that's a key part of it. It's not just because it's an event, it fits a particular category. It needs to be looked at in terms of its scale and the nature of it and how it fits in with the primary use on the site which, in this case, is agriculture or it might be resource processing, so a vineyard in itself.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I have a couple of questions about your attempt to move planning out of council processes into so-called development assessment panels. I know you have a healthy slogan for this, and the example you gave recently I don't think was a very good one. It was a development that was opposed, I think, or voted against by the council members, not because it's a development, because they were all pro-development councillors that voted against it. I think they voted against it because of the type of development.

Putting that aside, is it true that under this process, minister, the Minister for Planning, so yourself, can take a development assessment away from councils midway through their development assessment process if the developer doesn't like the way it's heading? Do you think that's fair? Obviously, councils will expend a significant amount of resources, only for an application to be stripped away from them, and would you rule something like this out?

Mr ELLIS - Mr Bayley, I absolutely reject your characterisation of the Argyle Street development not being a good example of it. I would have thought that's exactly the kind of example that's important. Opposing something because of the kind of development that it is, when that kind of development is providing houses for women at risk of homelessness, clearly demonstrates that we need to take the politics out of planning. I thought that would be something we would agree on, but nevertheless we're working to finalise the legislation that we will put out for consultation on the development assessment panels and then we will bring it into parliament and we will all have an opportunity to debate the ins and outs.

I would say absolutely that this will mean that development applications will be assessed on their merits without interference from matters of local government politics, because all too often we have seen proposals that meet the requirements of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and recommended by expert planners being rejected by local government politicians. It's something that's holding back our state.

Mr BAYLEY - The question was whether the proposal for you as minister is to be able to strip an assessment out of a council process if a developer requests it because they're not satisfied with that process?

Mr ELLIS - As I just said, we're working to finalise the legislation and will put it out for consultation and then this House can have the debate on it, but certainly we think that matters that meet the requirements of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and are recommended by expert planners should be the kind of things that get approved rather than being rejected by petty local government politics.

The proposed DAP framework will provide an objective independent assessment of development proposals against the Tasmanian Planning Scheme criteria by a panel appointed by the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission. The process will still include critical community consultation as exists in the current processes, but with the panel appointed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission making the final decision, not the council. The DAP model is strongly supported by industry backing developers and economic activity, despite potential localised NIMBYism who don't want to see our state progress. I look forward to providing the bill for consultation at the earliest opportunity.

Mr BAYLEY - In the example you've given around the North Hobart property, obviously the proponent had the right to appeal and that's currently going through the appeal process at the moment. It's true, isn't it, that this proposal will take away third-party rights of appeal, merit-based rights of appeal, as currently proposed?

Mr ELLIS - We're working through the legislation, Mr Bayley.

Mr BAYLEY - That's the proposal, though.

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned, we're working through the legislation. Obviously that process was one that was driven by local politics. It was recommended for approval by the expert planners as it related to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and that has delayed that work on that project significantly, so we think that having a Development Assessment Panel process will provide clearer, simpler and more predictable outcomes for people looking to get things done in our state, including building homes for vulnerable Tasmanian women.

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Ms JOHNSTON - Clearly the assessment of the Macquarie Point stadium through the Project of State Significance process is going to take significant resources from the TPC. What will it cost the TPC and has the additional funding been provided, or is it expected to do it within its existing budget?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to Ms Hynes to provide an update on the funding side of things.

Ms HYNES - Under the *State Policies and Projects Act*, which the stadium is being assessed under as a project of state significance, the fees payable by the proponent will pay for the commission staff to assess the proposal, so that's built in within that legislation.

Ms JOHNSTON - What are those costs expected to be?

Ms HYNES - I haven't got that.

Mr ELLIS - It's a complex process.

Ms JOHNSTON - Surely the proponents have an indication of the likely costs - it's not just a blank cheque.

Mr ELLIS - It is probably best to ask the proponents as far as that is concerned. In terms of the Planning Commission, they're able to receive the fees payable for proponent costs and we do something similar when it comes to major projects, for example, but in terms of the complexity of it, it's also the first time it has been used since the pulp mill. There wouldn't have been too many other examples of projects of state significance in that time. There was also Lauderdale Quays.

Ms JOHNSTON - So the TPC haven't provided indicative costs to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation? Are we talking hundreds of thousands, millions? What's the scale?

Ms HYNES - I haven't got that.

Mr SMITH - I would also note that the commission's only just received the submission, so it needs to work through it to work out the extent of work it needs to do to be able to assess that application.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can you advise the committee on the use of modular housing as part of the government's plan to provide more housing?

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely; thank you, Mr Fairs. Modular housing has been integrated as a key element of Homes Tasmania's delivery program for new social and affordable homes. Homes Tasmania has delivered more than 200 modular homes, with a further 200 in the pipeline. Modular housing provides a flexible and responsive way to increase housing supply and get Tasmanians into homes that meet their needs sooner. Modular housing complements the traditional on-site builds to give a greater range of product options that can be tailored to suit individual projects. Modular construction has numerous efficiencies over traditional on-site building methods, as the units are built in a factory, allowing different trades to work simultaneously and greatly reducing weather-related delays in construction time.

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Homes Tasmania uses modular housing in a range of situations, from standalone dwellings to bespoke disability accommodation, emergency accommodation and ancillary dwellings. Through the development of the ModHomes modular housing program, an integrated training component will see 12 young people complete nationally recognised construction certificates in partnership with TasTAFE. This is an innovative and responsive program that integrates modular construction in the delivery of new housing, allowing Homes Tasmania to build more homes faster and get Tasmanians into homes sooner.

Dr BROAD - In the Budget the Tasmanian Planning Commission's funding is flat across the forward Estimates. It's come down a little bit since the State of the Environment report was published and as the member for Clark, Ms Johnston, pointed out, the TPC has some work to do with the Macquarie Point stadium. The State Planning Office also sees a significant reduction in funding across the forward Estimates as programs are ending. Does that mean there will be fewer staff in the State Planning Office? I don't believe you can reduce the funding from \$3.6 million to \$1.5 million without any impact on staff.

Mr ELLIS - Dr Broad, I'm trying to be helpful but we literally just said to Ms Johnston that proponents pay for their development assessments as part of projects of state significance.

Dr BROAD - I'm talking about the State Planning Office, I just referenced that.

Mr ELLIS - You asked me where the money is coming from. It comes from the proponents like we've talked about. I don't understand why we keep having questions like this, Dr Broad.

Dr BROAD - I'm talking about the State Planning Office.

Mr ELLIS - The State Planning Office has nothing to do with the project of state significance assessment.

Dr BROAD - Can I restate the question? I referenced that the TPC has flat funding but the actual question was around the State Planning Office. The State Planning Office has a reduction in the Budget from \$3.6 million last year to \$1.5 million in 2026-27. Does that mean that the number of staff allocated in the State Planning Office will be reduced?

Mr ELLIS - We mentioned that there was significant project work as part of the funding that was provided to the State Planning Office, with budget initiatives like regional land use strategies, which had \$1.5 million allocated in 2023-24, decreasing \$200,000 for funding allocated planning systems reform, which provides \$385,000 in 2024-25. There is new funding for critical major projects and strategic regional development and a rollover for the State Planning Office subdivision review. I'll pass to Mr McPhail regarding staffing.

Mr McPHAIL - The Budget reflects a bit of a transition for us, as the minister mentioned, from building the system to more maintenance and implementation. There's also a transition to the Department of State Growth as well, which we will be able to integrate with a number of areas that we work with as well. There are lot of changes that will happen in the future around our staffing and how things will integrate with State Growth as well.

Dr BROAD - I suppose it's pretty hard to argue that there's going to be significant planning reform when the State Planning Officer's budget is declining so rapidly.

Mr ELLIS - I think we've just mentioned that we've done the most significant planning reform and so -

Dr BROAD - So, no more reforms, that is what I'm getting at. It does not look like there is more reform.

Mr ELLIS - No, there will be more reform, for example, development assessment panels, which we've been talking about, the regional land use strategies, the Tasmanian planning policies. Mr McPhail also mentioned the transition to State Growth. We think there's really strong opportunities when it comes to better functional alignment with key parts of government delivery. That's things like infrastructure, planning, housing, skills and population. Being able to bring together all of those elements is really best practice in terms of being able to grow our economy, grow our regions, and grow our population and opportunities. That functional alignment will streamline some of the work the team will be doing there.

We've gone from a system where there's a hodgepodge of different planning schemes to a statewide planning scheme and that's the most significant planning reform that's happened in a generation. As that work comes to a conclusion, we'll look to other opportunities but you only do a statewide planning scheme once.

Dr BROAD - It doesn't seem like there's going to be any sort of major projects then, because the budget allocation is more than halving.

Mr ELLIS - We mentioned before around what those different changes are about and where we see the future opportunities, so development panels, regional land use strategies, Tasmanian planning policies.

Dr BROAD - Where were they funded from?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work through those with the State Planning Office and we think we can deliver that quite well. The statewide planning scheme -

Dr BROAD - Where's the money coming from?

Mr ELLIS - There is money in the Budget, so I think what you're -

Dr BROAD - There's a declining budget. You talk about those -

Mr ELLIS - Yes, because we've had to deliver a statewide planning scheme and now, broadly speaking, that's delivered and we're now in the maintenance phase of it. I'm just not sure for someone that complains about debt on one hand but then complaints that we should have more spending on planning bureaucracies, I just don't quite see the logical consistency emanating from someone who used to think he wanted to be Treasurer.

Mr BAYLEY - Regarding state planning provisions, the Tasmanian Planning Commission announced as recently as 5 August a process to amend the state planning provisions in relation to hazards codes. The draft SPP amendment 1 2024 proposes to clarify the interpretation of an exemption in the landslip hazard code and the relationship between the

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SPPs and the *Building Act 2016*, those parts relevant to the landslip hazard code, the coastal erosion hazard code and the coastal inundation hazard code.

Can you explain the motivation for this assessment, and did your government request it? This seems like a pre-emptive strike, whereas previously you've had to retrospectively change things in relation to the State Coastal Policy. Looking at this information and the fact that it relates to hazard codes and erosion codes, it does smack of trying to get ahead of the curve and change the rules to facilitate development on coastal strips. What's the motivation and did you and your government request it?

Mr ELLIS - The work we do around hazard mapping is an important part of what we do in Tasmania in general. We've got quite a strong process for planning well when it comes to hazards. A lot of other jurisdictions recognise that in Tasmania. We spoke earlier, in the Police Fire and Emergency Management space, around the flood mapping we do here in Tasmania. That's really come along in leaps and bounds. Our bushfire planning and other matters are also really important. Sadly, we've seen from other jurisdictions interstate where they haven't planned communities well. We've seen significant tragedies and some very tough decisions having to be made in those places. Continuing to work proactively around risk-based assessments is really important.

In terms of the State Coastal Policy, it is a matter we pass through parliament. We're strongly supportive of ensuring that development can happen in our state, including renewable energy, and also ensuring we can continue to enjoy the Tasmanian way of life through different recreational facilities that provide access to our water, as well as access to those kinds of coastal areas. I will pass over to -

CHAIR - Before you do that, minister, time for scrutiny has expired.

The Committee adjourned at 6.12 p.m.



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Guy Barnett MP

Tuesday 24 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Behrakis MP (Chair)
Ms Ella Haddad MP (Deputy Chair)
Mr Vica Bayley MP
Ms Kristie Johnston MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Jen Butler MP
Mr Rob Fairs MP
Mr Craig Garland MP
Ms Helen Burnet MP
Mr David O'Byrne MP
Dr Rosalie Woodruff MP
Ms Rebecca White MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP

IN ATTENDANCE

IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. GUY BARNETT MP

Attorney-General, Minister for Justice, Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing,
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

Kristy Bourne

Acting Secretary, Department of Justice

Pauline van Adrichem

Deputy Secretary, Justice and Reform, Department of Justice

Julia Hickey

Acting CEO, Integrity Commission

Melissa Gray

Deputy Secretary Policy and Reform, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Rebecca Pinto

Executive Director Community Partnerships and Priorities, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Dale Webster

Acting Secretary, Department of Health

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The Committee met at 8.31 a.m

DIVISION 5

(Department of Justice)

CHAIR (Mr Behrakis) - I welcome the Attorney-General and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the Attorney-General to introduce persons at the table from left to right, including names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Chair. It's a pleasure to be here today with your committee. I look forward to the day ahead. I'm very pleased to introduce Kristy Bourne, my Acting Secretary of the Department of Justice, and the Deputy Secretary, Pauline van Adrichem. I am pleased to let you know also, we have other members of the department here that support the committee, as appropriate, when required.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice is 2.5 hours. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask that question to the minister, and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence for the minister to answer.

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

My intention is to hopefully follow how the proceedings went yesterday. It seemed to work quite well. There are only two members here currently, but I imagine they'll fill up and we'll just go around that to keep that proportion to three Labor, two Greens, two Independents, and we will go around that -

Dr Woodruff - I am fine if it stays as it is.

CHAIR - I'm sure. With that, would the Attorney-General like to make an opening statement.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Chair. I am very pleased to be here and to be back in the 2024-25 State Budget. It contains a range of additional funding measures for the Department of Justice, much of which is focused on progressing the government's response to the commission of inquiry. Across the department, \$42.8 million has been allocated to a wide range of important initiatives for my portfolio, Attorney-General and Justice, recognising the Tasmanian justice system is a critically important institution for our thriving democracy.

This includes the Just Healthy Families program - it's been expanded with an additional \$1.2 million over four years to provide easier access to legal advice for those impacted by family violence. Tasmanian Legal Aid will receive \$1.4 million in additional funding to establish dedicated resources to provide legal advice and services to Tasmanians who are impacted by child sexual abuse. We recognise that there's been increase in demand for services

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delivered by the Victims Support Service, particularly as a result of the government's various initiatives to address family and sexual violence. That is why we're increasing resources with \$2.8 million over four years being made available for the Victims of Crime Counselling Service. We're also increasing the resourcing - an additional \$1.2 million over four years - for our Victims of Crime Assistance Scheme and enable engagement of additional sessional commissioners to make compensation decisions.

We know that following the commission of inquiry, there's been an increased demand for support services, and this additional funding will ensure recommendations of the commission of inquiry will be met.

- \$1.4 million over years to continue the rollout of the audiovisual communications equipment in the supreme and magistrates courts of Tasmania, particularly in regional areas.
- \$4.2 million for the office of the independent regulator.
- \$700,000 over four years to the office of the ombudsman, to speed up the right to information investigation review and education processes.
- \$9.6 million over four years for the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to increase capacity to respond to COI recommendations and
- \$800,000 over four years for the Integrity Commission, to improve their ability to actively monitor and oversee notifications and investigations conducted by public authorities.
- \$4.8 million over four years to enable the State Litigation Office, to respond to increasingly complicated matters.

The Budget also delivers additional targeted funding of \$500,000 per annum for our magistrates courts to assist them in the court backlog and ensure they can manage the ongoing case complexity.

Certainly, that funding across the Attorney-General and Justice portfolios provides further evidence of our government's commitment to ensuring the efficient and effective operation of our justice system.

In conclusion, the range of initiatives I've outlined here will enable the department to progress a range of reforms which address the recommendations of the commission of inquiry and ensure that all Tasmanians, particularly our most vulnerable, have access to justice. I thank the Chair, and I thank the committee.

Dr WOODRUFF - Attorney-General, we can all agree that access to justice is critical for justice to be done fairly and in the manner in which we want the justice system to perform. The Commonwealth Budget has recently allocated \$44.1 million, an announcement by the Treasurer, to provide an immediate funding boost to the legal assistance sector. Can you tell me how much of that \$44.1 million is coming to us, and when the payments will flow?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much. It's a really good question and it's at the forefront of my mind, and the mind of my department and the government, because we want our fair share in Tasmania. You are right, that agreement has been announced at a federal level, but in terms of the rollout to Tasmania and the various jurisdictions, that's to be worked through, you would say. I will ask my acting secretary to speak to that, because it is a very important matter.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Attorney-General. As has been noted, I think the announcement around the commitment to ongoing funding from the Commonwealth to the sector has been very much welcomed. Importantly, it also includes statements around ensuring pay parity for workers, particularly from community legal centres, to make sure that they better align with the remainder of the sector and other legal practitioners in the market. Also to make sure that the salaries of those professionals are in line with wage cost inflation. That detail regarding the particular allocation for Tasmanian services is still to be worked through, as the Attorney-General has noted. Ms van Adrichem -

Dr WOODRUFF - Sorry, what does that mean?

Ms BOURNE - We have the public announcement from the Commonwealth coming out of National Cabinet around the overall quantum. There's a breakdown that's been provided for the country wide per sector. So, legal aid commissions, community legal centres, ATSILS - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Services - and women's services. However, states and territories are yet to receive a breakdown, as I understand it, of explicit funding. Through you, Attorney-General, Ms van Adrichem can elaborate on that.

Ms van ADRICHEM - I may clarify. The agreements that the Attorney-General and Kristy were speaking to as the heads of agreement, and that was announced for the next successor agreement - but I understand your question relates to the bilateral amendment for this financial year. Is that correct?

Dr WOODRUFF - It's the announcement of the \$44.1 million by the federal Treasurer in the Commonwealth Budget. There's another announcement I was going to ask about, which is an extra \$800 million for the legal assistance sector for five years for 2025-26. I also wanted to know what percentage of that is going to be split between the Legal Aid Commission, community legal centres (CLCs) and Aboriginal legal services (ALSs). Could you please separate those two things - what you know and what the split is going to be, and what you know is going to flow to Tasmania. That's really what we all want to understand.

Ms van ADRICHEM - For this financial year, the additional funding announced by the Commonwealth for a one-off indexation supplementation, the amount to go to Legal Aid Commission is \$319,000; \$79,000 to CLCs; \$119,000 to ATSILS. That's \$517,000 in total.

The workforce stabilisation contribution for this financial year is specific to community legal centres and ATSILS, which is \$231,000 for community legal centres and \$373,000 for ATSILS, which is the Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service in Tasmania as the provider.

Dr WOODRUFF - That will be money this year that will be going for this budget year, to the CLCs, who will get an extra \$231,000, and ATSILS will get an extra \$371,000, in addition to what they would already be expecting. Those other buckets of money - the \$319,000 to Legal Aid, the \$79,000 to CLCs and the - what was the third?

Ms van ADRICHEM - \$119,000 for -

Dr WOODRUFF - They're also coming this financial year?

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Ms van ADRICHEM - Yes. That's part of the additional funding from the Commonwealth for this financial year, which requires an amendment to the existing national legal partnership agreement for that money to be provided to Tasmania to then distribute to legal assistance providers.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, and through you, Attorney-General, is it your understanding then, that that split and that amount will continue on with that \$44.1 million?

Ms van ADRICHEM - We don't have the breakdown yet of the Tasmanian allocation under the National Access to Justice Partnership agreement. That's related to the heads of agreement that was announced through National Cabinet a number of weeks ago. The states and territories and the Commonwealth are still working through what that looks like.

Dr WOODRUFF - Attorney-General, what do you understand about that Commonwealth funding? How much will the state be contributing - is there going to be a matched amount? What is the contribution from Tasmania to the legal assistance sector - to Legal Aid, the CLCs and ALSs?

Mr BARNETT - First of all, I recognise their service and thank them for it across the board. It's very important. In terms of the CLCs, Legal Aid, Women's Legal Service, Aboriginal Legal Service and the like, they provide important access to justice. In terms of the detail, I will pass to the acting secretary.

Ms BOURNE - In terms of state contributions to the sector, the government permanently committed additional funding of \$640,000 per year to the sector in the 2021-22 state budget. That was effectively to provide certainty to baseline funding for the sector following the National Legal Assistance Partnership. That funding has been provided to Legal Aid and CLCs and has been indexed each year. The government also provided an additional \$2.2 million commitment over four years from 2021-22 to provide additional funding support to the sector, and the 2023-24 Budget extended that commitment until 30 June 2026.

As I mentioned, the majority of this funding has been directed to maintain core services for the sector. There's also the allocation in this year's Budget to continue the fantastic work from Legal Aid and the Women's Legal Service to expand the Just Healthy Families program. From time to time, the Solicitor's Guarantee Fund has been accessed by the sector, which was originally to pilot innovative programs and support the work that they do. Consideration of additional contributions to the sector continues to be considered in the context of the ongoing negotiations with the Commonwealth around the new National Access to Justice Partnership.

Ms JOHNSTON - Attorney-General, yesterday you made an announcement regarding the Public Trustee. Why is the government proposing to make changes to the Public Trustee that are inconsistent with the Bugg Review recommendations?

Mr BARNETT - We certainly are committed to ensuring that the services of the Public Trustee best serve the needs of the most vulnerable Tasmanians. I acknowledge the Bugg Review as you've just noted. There's also the Tasmanian Economic Regulators Review that was undertaken earlier this year, and that review was also very much at the forefront of our minds. It's been on the public record since yesterday, and it has now been released for the public to review as well.

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As a result of and after careful consideration of that, and in liaison with my department, we wanted to improve the services for vulnerable Tasmanians. The commercial will, estate and trustee services will be transferred to the private sector. Those services that will be transferred to the private sector are commercial services that are also undertaken by the private sector, but we want to ensure the provision of quality services at an appropriate cost to the Tasmanian community, particularly vulnerable Tasmanians.

In saying that, I put on record my thanks to the Public Trustee for their important work. I put on record my thanks to the Board of the Public Trustee for undertaking much reform since the Bugg Review, which you made mention of, and there will be a 12- to 18-month transition period as we progress to a design and structure that will better meet the needs of vulnerable Tasmanians.

Ms JOHNSTON - Your announcement yesterday certainly seemed to come as a surprise to the Public Trustee Board and they made media statements to that effect. No doubt the surprise was because your predecessor, Ms Archer, committed to implementing all the recommendations of the Bugg Review. Can you go back to my original question? Why has the government decided to go against the Bugg Review and implement this change?

Mr BARNETT - We're certainly pleased to advise that most of the recommendations of the Bugg Review have been implemented. We acknowledge that and we thank Mr Bugg for his work. We also acknowledge the work of the economic regulator, and that report and recommendation, as I say, is a public document. I draw it to your attention if you haven't already perused it. It made very important reflections on the work of the Public Trustee and recommendations on how we can improve the work of the Public Trustee to provide better, more effective and more cost-effective access for vulnerable Tasmanians to those services.

You mentioned the surprise. I met with the chair of the Public Trustee and the CEO last week with my secretary in terms of the communication. It was announced yesterday; that's correct.

Ms JOHNSTON - Are there any other recommendations from the Bugg Review that the government intends to not follow through with?

Mr BARNETT - No, we've committed to following through on all those recommendations of the Bugg Review. That's my understanding.

Ms FINLAY - In 2021, the government made an election commitment for a children and young people legal representation fund for the north and the north-west. The funding allocation for TLA was \$80,000 per annum and concludes this financial year. There's nothing provided in the forward Estimates, which will leave TLA with an additional shortfall of \$80,000. Since this service covers after-hours duty lawyer services for children and young people across the state, if this funding is not renewed after 30 June 2025, that service risks being stopped. Do you therefore accept that, without continued funding, any children and young people arrested after hours will be detained without access to legal advice?

Mr BARNETT - That's clearly an operational question, so I'll pass to my acting secretary.

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Ms BOURNE - Yes, the additional funding provided as a result of the government's election commitment has seen the ability for Tasmania Legal Aid to continue to provide legal services to children and young people in the north and north-west of the state.

In the south of the state, an existing partnership exists between Hobart Community Legal Service and Legal Aid, which sees a lawyer from the Hobart Community Legal Service rostered to appear for people, including young people, before after-hours courts in Hobart. The service expanded in line with the commitment in December 2022. The service is still provided by the Hobart Community Legal Service, so they appear on behalf of young people in the north and north-west of the state from Friday to Sunday.

There have been a number of discussions about how that service could be expanded beyond its current provision to days during the week, not just Friday to Sunday. We have been working quite actively with the Magistrates Court, Legal Aid and Tasmania Police, as well as the Hobart Community Legal Service, about what would be required to give effect to that extension of after-hours representation, whether that's via telephone, Teams or in person, and what additional resources would be required to implement that in light of the cessation of this funding at the end of this current financial year.

This is to ensure that we can help prepare, as required, a request to government for any further additional resources to continue what has been a really successful service, albeit not utilised particularly frequently given the low numbers of young people appearing before courts in the north and north-west. However, it certainly has had an impact in terms of ensuring that they're represented where they might not otherwise have been.

Ms FINLAY - At the moment the gap remains and there's no plan to cover that, but there's consideration happening?

Ms BOURNE - That's right. There is consideration beyond 2024-25, but also whether there is a way that we can expand the existing service in a way that works particularly for the court, Tasmania Police and the legal assistance sector.

Ms FINLAY - Thanks for clarifying. Yesterday, Attorney-General, you acknowledged that the Magistrates Court was provided an additional \$500,000 per annum to address increasing demand in case complexity, in an effort to reduce the backlog. However, the Tasmanian Legal Aid (TLA) duty lawyers are usually representing people on remand and also have to deal with the acknowledged growth in demand and case complexity. Why has the duty lawyer service at TLA not only remained underfunded by \$470,000 per annum but remains without indexation and with TLA now subject to a budget efficiency?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for that. We certainly respect and appreciate the work of Tasmania Legal Aid. I'm very pleased to indicate that the support for the Magistrates Court, the \$500,000 a year which you've referred to, will be well appreciated at the Magistrates Court. I'll pass to my acting secretary for the detail to add to that answer.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Attorney-General. The additional funding provided by the Magistrates Court is to be allocated across all the court services and to assist meet the increasing demand for services, including in the Coronial Division. Legal Aid, as members would be aware, receives both state and Commonwealth appropriation; the state appropriation in this financial year is just over \$10 million. That amount of state appropriation is to be indexed in

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line with the increased community sector indexing allocation provided for in the Budget. I certainly appreciate the impact that the budget savings target that Legal Aid have been set, at \$104,000, is a compounding factor in increasingly high demand for legal aid services.

The duty lawyer funding commenced some years ago as a funding allocation from the Solicitors' Guarantee Fund and that's something that we continue to work with Legal Aid on in terms of how we can make that funding for what is a core service that we cannot do without, not reliant on one-off funding, but something that's funded in the out-years to meet that demand for service, noting it includes mental health duty lawyers as well and there's some separate funding that TLA receives to provide separate representative services within the Tasmanian Civil and Administrative Tribunal. It's a priority for us to ensure that those services continue to be provided.

Ms FINLAY - Additionally, Chair, it's my third question.

CHAIR - You've had three.

Ms FINLAY - I've had two questions.

CHAIR - She had three.

Ms FINLAY - I had a north-west coast question. I just had that question.

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes, you asked two more questions.

Ms FINLAY - I didn't. I confirmed whether the gap remains. That wasn't an additional question.

Dr WOODRUFF - It was an additional question.

Ms FINLAY - I have a third question, thank you, Chair.

Additionally, on Monday you suggested that the Commonwealth government funding for the National Legal Assistance Partnership (NLAP) should or could be used to fund the duty lawyer service. Has the government made a formal approach to the Commonwealth to seek funding for state criminal duty lawyer services, and if so, what was their response?

Ms BOURNE - Thank you for the question. I think the Commonwealth funding has not traditionally been used to be allocated for state duty lawyer services. That's always been a state-funded commitment.

As Ms van Adrichem indicated this morning, discussions with the Commonwealth around our funding allocations as part of the new NLAP, which is the National Access to Justice Partnership, are still ongoing. We're lobbying fairly hard to make sure Tasmania gets its fair share. Traditionally, this sector in Tasmania based on the funding allocation model has not always received, in the department's view, an allocation based on demand for services and our unique factors that impact demand for services. We are lobbying very hard to make sure that we receive the Commonwealth funding that we need to deliver Commonwealth services. Duty lawyer services is something that is traditionally state-funded and we continue to work with Legal Aid to make sure that they can provide those within their existing state allocation.

Mr FAIRS - Chair, I'd love to ask the Attorney-General and Minister for Justice to update the committee on services for victims of crime and improving access, and how that is going.

Mr BARNETT - It's going very well. It's a really important question because we recognise, with the commission of inquiry, the impact on victims of crime is high, and we've seen that. As to the support of access to justice for those victims of crime. We had the victims of crime support service and they do provide support for family and sexual violence, indeed child abuse related matters as well. It provides personal and practical support for those victims of crime and the impact of the crime. It allows them to regain their control of their lives. That's so important. We've provided \$1.2 million over the four-year period to administer the Victims of Crime Assistance Scheme. We've also got additional sessional commissioners to make compensation decisions for those victims and I think that'll add access to justice and more fast access to justice. We've also got \$2.8 million over four years for the Victims of Crime Counselling Service. That's additional funding. It is a counselling, support, referral service for those self-identified victims of crime, providing personal support, counselling information, referral to appropriate community services that they might require, information on the criminal justice system and how it works, and assistance for providing victim impact statements and completing victims of crime assistance applications.

All that additional funding will enable my department to meet that increased demand that I've mentioned in my opening remarks about the commission of inquiry. Specifically, it addresses the recommendations 17.6 and 21.5 of the commission of inquiry. We are committed to meeting all 191 recommendations from the commission of inquiry. I'm very pleased and proud with those initiatives. Thanks for the question.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, the acting Secretary made some comments about indexation for Legal Aid previously. The base grant for Legal Aid in 2023-24 was set at 1.63 per cent indexation, significantly lower than the 3 per cent of the increase in salaries in the Tasmanian State Service and significantly lower than CPI. I think the acting Secretary has just said that they've been funded now with an indexation commensurate to that provided to the community sector, also insufficient to match our CPI. I want to talk about the 2024-25 Legal Aid funding for state-based serious cases, children and young people, legal representation and acting judges that totals \$9.725 million. Legal Aid calculates that indexation for that funding will only be 1.48 per cent.

You're looking confused at what I'm talking about, minister.

Mr BARNETT - I would appreciate a little bit of clarity around that question. You talked about acting judges.

Dr WOODRUFF - As I understand from the budget papers, there is funding for state-based serious cases, children and young people, legal representation and acting judges, an amount totalling \$9.725 million, but Legal Aid calculates that is only indexed at a 1.48 per cent. Is the government planning to fix this substantial shortfall in funding for Legal Aid, meaning the organisation is not able to fulfil the services it's established to do? Despite all the extra money coming in, in reality they're going backwards in many areas.

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Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much. Again, I really appreciate the work of Legal Aid. I hosted the 50-year anniversary of Legal Aid and heard a wonderful address from the director, Kristen Wiley, just a few months ago in Parliament House. I know many members around this table were there to recognise that, together with the 200-year anniversary of the Supreme Court. I think the acting Secretary outlined the funding support we provide to Tasmanian Legal Aid and the indexation arrangements, which I thought were reasonably clear. I will ask the acting Secretary to respond in more detail and add to the answer. I would make the comment which I think it will provide some interest to the members and that is that the Solicitors Guarantee Fund will be advertised shortly for expressions of interest from a range of stakeholders, community groups, potentially Tasmanian Legal Aid. They are entitled to do that. I'm very pleased to advise those organisations and stakeholders of their opportunity to seek funding support for various initiatives. Having said that, I'll pass to the -

Dr WOODRUFF - It is not the core funding they need.

Mr BARNETT - True, it's not core funding, but it's for specific projects for which they have a special interest. So, back to the acting Secretary.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Attorney-General, through you. So, as Ms Woodruff noted, Legal Aid is provided with additional funding to support the increased workload with the acting judges until 30 June 2025. That's additional funding of \$380,000. Traditionally, the grant funding provided to Legal Aid for duty lawyer services and mental health services, as has been noted by the committee, receives no indexation. The general allocation provided from appropriation for state funding does and that indexation will be at 3.5 per cent in this financial year with 3 per cent indexation across the forward Estimates. The indexation and the overheads provided on Legal Aid's general state allocation -

Dr WOODRUFF - Through you, just to draw you to the specifics of this funding bucket that was allocated in the budget, not the generalities of Legal Aid, but the specific funding of \$9.725 million for state-based serious cases, children and young people, legal representation and acting judges, it is indexed according to them at only 1.48 per cent. Can you explain why that is the case?

Ms BOURNE - Through you, Attorney-General. As Mr Wailes clarifies any comments I've previously made, I do believe that it's higher than that.

Mr WAILES - So the short-term funding arrangements are often not indexed.

Ms BOURNE - Thank you, Attorney-General, through you. As Ms Woodruff has noted, the short-term funding including acting judges, the duty lawyer grant funding and other election commitment funding is not indexed. That is something that we have continued to talk with Legal Aid and CLCs about in terms of the impact that that lack of indexation has. The current court legal aid funding is indexed at between 1.6 and 2 per cent - levels less than CPI. On top of that, the TLA (Tasmania Legal Aid) will benefit from the commitment. The election commitment around additional community sector organisation funding, noting, however, balanced up against increased demand, particularly for criminal law services, which has seen the number of grants of aid provided to the private profession significantly exceed the budget. Very mindful and Ms van Andrichem and I continue to have discussions with the director about how they manage that budget with the demand for their services to make sure that people are represented.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, well, they're very clearly saying that they're not able to manage it. You should hear that loud and clear. My second question is about the *Dangerous Criminals and High Risk Offenders Act 2021*. When it was proclaimed, Legal Aid did not get any funding to handle matters under that legislation. That's even though the office of the DPP received funding for two additional level 3 practitioners. So, what's happened now is that there are no level 3 or 4 practitioners working for Legal Aid and funded for Legal Aid, allocated to those complex cases even though the government has recognised that there's a need for that at the DPP.

Can you understand that what's happening is that you're recognising the need for that for those cases but not providing that public access to justice for them through Legal Aid?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question and also acknowledging the recent law reform in terms of dangerous criminals and the flow-on effect into the community and specifically Legal Aid. I will ask the Acting Secretary to speak to that matter.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Attorney-General. Through you, this is something that we engage with Legal Aid about at the inception of the legislative change, noting the need for additional resources, that was indicative at the time based on what we thought the workload would be to defend individuals who were the subject to a high-risk offender order. The DPP did receive additional funding. In the short time that that legislation has been operating the role of the DPP in engaging in the requirements under the act around the assessment to make a decision to apply for an order has been fairly consistent.

At this stage, noting that we anticipate there will be a need for additional resources, I believe we continue to work with Legal Aid as the demand for defence of those types of orders becomes more known. The scheme is still at an early stage, but it's not lost on the agency that there is a role for Legal Aid to defend people who are subject to those orders. That is something that we continue to talk to government about to make sure that they're appropriately resourced.

Dr WOODRUFF - The governments deliberately made a choice here to put money into prosecuting, but no commensurate amount of money into defence. That is a pretty shameful situation for a government to do in this matter. I'm shocked. Have you got anything to say, Attorney-General?

Mr BARNETT - It is an important reform - dangerous criminals and high-risk offenders' reforms.

Dr WOODRUFF - We voted to support it; there is no doubt about it.

Mr BARNETT - Yes and I appreciate your reflections on that, thank you.

Dr WOODRUFF - Everyone has a right to justice - no matter what the crime.

CHAIR - Order. You have asked the question if you could let the minister answer.

Mr BARNETT - I think there's an acknowledgement, vis-a-vis the support for the Director of Public Prosecutions Office and their important work and of course the DPP will be here shortly who can speak to that and answer any questions. We recognise as a government

and likewise other jurisdictions around Australia in terms of the criminal justice system and defence counsel. It is very challenging. It has been for some time and there's no surprise in that.

I've already indicated that we have a range of reforms in place to try to increase the number of young graduates coming through. We have a program in the Department of Justice that supports the graduates being trained and working within our Department of Justice and then building up that support into the private sector so that those young lawyers can then operate in Tasmania, including the rural and regional areas.

In terms of support for the Tasmania Legal Aid, I've always had a very high regard for them across my political career, federal and state, and wanted to acknowledge that again today. I'll ask the Acting Secretary to add to that answer.

Ms BOURNE - The only thing I'd add is for the committee's benefit to note that as at 25 July 2024, there were five offenders in the community on high risk offender orders and another prisoner in prison having breached the conditions of their HRO. That's not in any way to diminish the need for Legal Aid to be resourced to provide defence counsel for these matters but to indicate, at this stage, the relatively low level of offenders - noting the role of the DPP across a number of related aspects of the legislation, but particularly in making applications to the Supreme Court for those orders and an active role on the Risk Management and Assessment Committee that I Chair to review eligible prisoners across the state - is fairly significant. The additional resources allocated to Mr Coates's office reflect that additional workload.

Ms JOHNSTON - Attorney-General, the *Guardianship and Administration Amendment Act 2023* has only recently commenced, which gives effect to a second tranche for recommendations. What impact will the announcement regarding the Public Trustee and restructure have on service delivery and the implementation of recommendations already underway?

Mr BARNETT - In terms of the *Guardianship and Administration Act*, and we've got tranche 1 and then tranche 2, I believe you're making reference to tranche 2 in particular.

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes.

Mr BARNETT - I can give you - to support yourself and the committee - that went through and received Royal assent in September and came into effect as scheduled on 1 September, in recent weeks. For everyone who's involved in the guardianship system, including guardians and administrators who are appointed to make decisions on behalf of persons with a decision-making impairment, those under guardianship and administration orders, those who are considering making an application for a guardianship or administration order, service providers who interact with or provide care for persons under a guardianship or administration order, and doctors and healthcare professionals, health and medical researchers and the like.

The changes impact guardianship and administration systems for all of those concerned in the following ways. The Public Guardian or the Public Trustee will only be appointed where no other person can fulfil the role. People under guardianship and administration will be encouraged to make their own decisions, with support where it is needed -

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Ms JOHNSTON - I'm interested to clarify the question, Attorney-General, on what the impact will be of the changes on the Public Trustee to the implementation of that act. How will the changes you announced yesterday impact on the -

Mr BARNETT - The Public Trustee reforms are not expected to impact in any way on the guardianship and administration reforms. We're working through those matters and in terms of the Public Trustee, those core functions will still be completed in an effective, efficient and cost-effective way through the Department of Justice, and as I've indicated earlier, wills and estates and other relevant services will be briefed to the private sector.

Ms THOMAS - Thank you. If the current structure of the Public Trustee allows for non-commercial services to be funded by the profit raised by its commercial services arm, how will the government ensure that the Public Trustee has the resources it needs to implement much-needed reforms when proposing to transfer its profit-making commercial services to the private sector?

Mr BARNETT - I think you've raised some good points there in terms of profit-making and some of those reflections were set out in the Economic Regulator's report. We as a government want to ensure that vulnerable Tasmanians get a cost-effective, efficient service and I think that's reflected well in the Economic Regulator's report. I will ask the acting secretary to speak in terms of the process and how it will be restructured. I indicate there will be an independent review over the next six to eight weeks in terms of ensuring that we achieve best practice for the Public Trustee and it's fit for purpose. I'll ask the acting secretary to add to the answer.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Attorney-General. We're lucky that we have a very strong collaborative working relationship existing with the Public Trustee, both the CEO and the board, particularly in light of the Bugg review and the huge amount of work they have done to turn their service delivery to a much more client-focused, client-at-the-core decision-making model. We'll continue to work with them very closely as the independent review is undertaken and when a government decision is confirmed about a potential restructure to make sure that the services that transition to the Department of Justice continue to be client-focused with the interests of the person at the centre.

I think we have a number of protective jurisdictions already under the Justice umbrella that do amazing work every day to safeguard and protect vulnerable Tasmanians and certainly the discussions I've had with Mr Kennedy and the chair of the board to date have been very pragmatic about how we can make sure that during this process we don't lose sight of the experience of the represented persons that the Public Trustee currently services.

Ms JOHNSTON - Does that mean that the government, if necessary, will add additional funding to Public Trustee to ensure that those services that don't make a profit, those services provided to vulnerable Tasmanians, will be able to continue even though the profit-making services have been effectively transferred to the private sector and so no longer coming through to the Public Trustee?

Ms BOURNE - I note that the CSO funding for the Public Trustee has been committed across the forward Estimates. That's detail that we still need to work through, but our understanding at this stage is that the funding attached to the delivery of those critical services that has been allocated should come across to the Department of Justice when those services

transfer, noting that as we work through that transition process, which will be a fairly large undertaking, we'll continue to talk to government about what we see as areas for potential additional investment or, I guess, adapting service delivery to fit within the agency. I really don't anticipate, subject to further discussions, of course, with the CEO and government, changing how the Public Trustee delivers their services to vulnerable Tasmanians at this point because of the work they've done to make sure that service delivery model reflects the Bugg review and the changes to the *Guardianship Act*. I think it works really well.

Ms WHITE - Attorney-General, I'll continue with the line of questioning around the Public Trustee. In your announcement yesterday that you plan to privatise part of the Public Trustee and bring some of it back into government, you mentioned there'd be a six to eight-week review. Who will be deciding the terms of reference for that review? Will the board of the Public Trustee have any input into those and when will you release them publicly?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. As the acting secretary's indicated, we're having ongoing consultation with both the board and the CEO of the Public Trustee. I really appreciate that relationship and that will be ongoing. In terms of the appointment of that independent reviewer or reviewer entity, that will be decided in coming weeks, as soon as possible, through Treasury and the Department of Justice and absolutely there'll be consultation with the Public Trustee.

Ms WHITE - So the terms of reference will be shared with them before they're agreed upon?

Mr BARNETT - I expect that the terms of reference will be certainly decided and consulted with in the usual way.

Ms WHITE - I think the order of this is important. You'll decide on them and then tell them what they are, or you'll consult with them on the terms of reference and then decide what they look like?

Mr BARNETT - They will be informed of the terms of reference and I'm sure we'll seek feedback from the Public Trustee and the board on the terms of reference, and we look forward to that feedback in the usual way.

Ms WHITE - They've announced publicly that they've been surprised by this statement from your government to privatise parts of the Public Trustee, so I guess a 'no surprises going forward' approach would be helpful, particularly when we're talking about some of the most vulnerable people relying on their services. Can you tell the committee, if you're aware, how many wills are contained within the Public Trustee's will bank?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, we can hopefully assist you in that regard potentially. I'll double-check on that through the acting secretary, but you've used the word 'surprise' so I'd like to address that. We've been working with the Public Trustee during the course of both the recent reviews. We'll continue to work with the Public Trustee. The government met with the board and senior management on 12 September to discuss our plans and the Department of Treasury and Finance also met with senior management on 17 September.

Ms WHITE - After the fact.

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Mr BARNETT - No, it was -

Ms WHITE - You made a decision, announced it in the Budget and then you informed them.

Mr BARNETT - It wasn't in the Budget. I think it was announced yesterday at 10.30 a.m. The Treasurer and I have also -

Ms WHITE - A media release after -

Mr BARNETT - I'm just saying we've had communication with them before yesterday's announcement and I think you might have been suggesting that was the surprise. We wrote to the Public Trustee and we appreciate the support of the board and management.

Ms WHITE - Can I get an answer to the question on how many wills are in the will bank, please?

Mr BARNETT - I'll just see if we can assist. This is the Department of Justice. The Public Trustee will come to scrutiny hearings later in the year. I haven't got the date for that but in the usual way, the Public Trustee will be here. I'll just check with the acting secretary.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Attorney-General. We don't have numbers at this stage but certainly can indicate that in discussions with the CEO over the past week or so, the will bank and the process as to how we work through the details about the transfer of those assets and the like is forefront of mind, and I know it's a significant amount but I don't have the exact numbers before me.

Ms WHITE - Is this the sort of information you expect to garner through a review, because they also have a number of investments that they manage in trust? Do you have any understanding at this stage of the quantum of assets that might be held by the Public Trustee?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, it's certainly not just the Department of Justice, but Treasury have a very good understanding of that. There are regular meetings between the Public Trustee and the government. I think they're monthly meetings, is my understanding.

The Economic Regulator's report was quite comprehensive and made a whole range of findings and recommendations, and I draw it to your attention if you have not already perused it. It has been public since yesterday. Those findings will absolutely be addressed in the review, and the review will be focused on getting best practice for the Public Trustee and on how we can better provide services to vulnerable Tasmanians. When I say better, I mean more efficient, more effective, and more cost-effective services for our vulnerable Tasmanians.

Ms WHITE - I'm interested to understand why the government has taken this move, because the Public Trustee board and executive had that report from February. They have completed nine of the 18 recommendations and implemented them already, which you should be aware of. I'm curious to know whether the government, noting how interested Treasury is in this, is most keen to get their hand on this so that they can privatise and make money out of the Public Trustee.

You have not been able to share with the committee what the quantum of the assets belonging to the Public Trustee or held in trust by the Public Trustee is worth. Is the reason for the government moving to privatise the Public Trustee simply to prop up your Budget black hole?

Mr BARNETT - We certainly reject those allegations. I'll just note some of the findings of the Economic Regulator. The regulator was unable to assess whether the Public Trustee's fees and charges reflect the efficient cost of service delivery for individuals. It found that the Public Trustee's operating costs are too high and that the average cost of providing services to represented persons in Tasmania was amongst the highest in the country and more than three times higher than in Victoria, where a supported decision-making model has already been implemented.

Current fees and charges are unlikely to reflect the cost of delivering services and can in some instances place a financial burden on clients, requiring clients to sell assets in order to pay the Public Trustee's fees. The Public Trustee is not transparent with its clients on all the fees and charges that are applicable, and client representatives raised concerns about the difficulties associated with obtaining financial reports from the business.

Also, the information provided by the Public Trustee on its fees and charges would not meet the requirements placed on private sector trustees under the *Corporations Act*, and it goes on. There are a very long list of findings in that report, and that has been taken very seriously. There will be a restructure, and the review that I've referred to is to look at the design of that restructure and how it would operate in fit for purpose and best practice.

Mr FAIRS - Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, can you please update the committee on how you're providing access to justice for victim/survivors of family violence?

Mr BARNETT - In terms of responding to support victim/survivors of family violence, there's a whole range of initiatives that we've undertaken, and I'm pleased to advise \$1.2 million of support for the Just Healthy Families program, which is very good. It supports the Health Justice Partnership with the Women's Legal Service and Tasmania Legal Aid. I was able to stand with them just a week or so ago to make that announcement.

It provides critical, free legal help, with the aim of reducing family violence for all Tasmanians. Since the launch of our nation-leading Family Violence Action Plan in 2015, we've continued to build on that commitment to continuously improve and implement legislative reforms to strengthen the state's legal responses to family and sexual violence.

I'm certainly pleased to say since 2015 when that was launched, there's been a total of 11 different bills to strengthen Tasmania's legal responses to family and sexual violence. In 2023-24 alone we introduced a total of 13 legislative amendments, which have since been implemented. The *Family Violence Reforms Act 2022* commenced on 1 July this year, and there are significant changes, meaning the courts may identify serial family violence perpetrators and make orders for mandatory behaviour change programs when making any family violence orders.

Likewise, the Serious Family Violence Perpetrator Declaration established in this bill is designed to identify perpetrators who repeatedly commit family violence offences against a single partner or multiple and excessive partners. This is an important reform introduced by

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our government, and I'm pleased to share with members that 13 serial family violence declarations have been made since that time. We'll continue to work on those reforms and implement them, and I appreciate the opportunity to share that with the committee.

Dr WOODRUFF - On the Public Trustee and the comments that you were talking about recently, the acting secretary said 'as we work through the process of responding to the Economic Regulator'. What Tasmanians who are listening don't understand is that the Economic Regulator has done an assessment and has found areas where efficiencies could be gained or where there are costs that are higher in Tasmania than there are in other states.

There are obviously a range of reasons why that can be the case. Some of them can be managed, obviously, and ought to be addressed by the Public Trustee. Some of them are particular factors in relation to Tasmania and the conditions and situation for people in Tasmania, so obviously there needs to be an investigation. What we don't understand, and what I want you to explain, is why has the department taken this and decided on the terms of reference for a review which, by the announcement yesterday, is clearly set up to look at privatising parts of, if not all of, the Public Trustee, instead of going back -

Mr BARNETT - That is wrong. Please don't say that. It is totally wrong.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, don't interrupt me. You can respond when I finish my question.

Mr BARNETT - It's a false allegation.

Dr WOODRUFF - We don't know where this is going. That's the point. You're not being open with Tasmanians -

Mr BARNETT - We have announced it.

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - about the fact that you're trying to privatise parts, or all of, the Public Trustee. Why did DOJ have an in-house discussion about what to do about this matter instead of first going to the Public Trustee and pointing to the Economic Regulator's issues that were raised, and then saying, 'We obviously need to review the activities of the Public Trustee. We want you to respond to that and then we are going to work with a process to review'. The fact it's a surprise says you've got a predetermined outcome that you're trying to drive here. Isn't that what's really happening? It's about privatising and taking money into the budget.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. This is about delivering more effective and cost-effective services for vulnerable Tasmanians. This is about building a fit-for-purpose entity that will deliver better and improved and cost-effective services to vulnerable Tasmania.

You've made reference to the Economic Regulator's report, which was completed earlier this year. The Public Trustee responded to that report, and the department and likewise Treasury have considered the response and have been working through the findings of that report. I've indicated to you some of those findings. It's on the public record; I draw it to your attention. If you have not already read the report, I'd encourage you to please do so. It makes some very strong findings.

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Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you for your patronising comments. I'm here to ask you about your government's motivation for drawing up a review of the Public Trustee without first going to the board and the CEO, drawing those concerns to their attention and asking them for an urgent response to it. That would seem to be the logical thing to do in this situation, unless you had an intention to privatise the Public Trustee with all the wealth of vulnerable Tasmanians sitting there in assets, and calling that a better outcome for vulnerable Tasmanians. We don't think that would be the case.

Mr BARNETT - I don't agree with the foundation of your questions and the allegations made. To be very clear, we have engaged with the Public Trustee since the Bugg review. They have acted on that, the government has implemented all the recommendations, and we've then had the Economic Regulator's report delivered - I think in around February this year.

We have engaged with the Public Trustee. The Public Trustee has responded to that report. We have then further engaged with the Public Trustee. There are regular meetings with the Public Trustee between the Department of Justice and indeed Treasury as appropriate for the responsible stakeholder minister. That is not unusual. We have engaged on an ongoing basis with the Public Trustee, and we are wanting to do what's best for vulnerable Tasmanians. I think the Economic Regulator's report is quite revealing and I'll ask the acting secretary to add to the answer.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, I think that's enough. My follow-up question is, will you take any change or expansion of the scope of terms of reference for this review from the Public Trustee on board and make those changes?

Mr BARNETT - We will absolutely be consulting with the Public Trustee.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's not the same thing.

Mr BARNETT - Well, if I can have the chance to answer the question.

CHAIR - Just in the interest of keeping the proceedings as orderly as possible, if the question is asked, let the minister answer the question. But likewise, and I might suggest to the minister, when the questions are being asked, don't interject while questions are being asked, and you'll have the opportunity to correct any misgivings you have about the pretext of the question as well. I'll let the minister answer the question and then I'll let Dr Woodruff ask a follow-up.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much, Chair, I absolutely respect your ruling and appreciate that. In response to the question, to make it clear, there will be a restructure. The question is the design of that restructure and what's best for vulnerable Tasmanians to ensure that they get not just effective but cost-effective services to support vulnerable Tasmanians. That's at the forefront of the government's mind. Having said that, there will be a review over the next six to eight weeks to help make that design.

Dr WOODRUFF - Excuse me, Chair, the Attorney-General is just not answering the question.

Mr BARNETT - Can I finish the question?

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Dr WOODRUFF - It's a very direct question. Will you take on board their terms and change them?

Mr BARNETT - Will you let me finish?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, I will let you ask a follow-up; can you let the Attorney-General finish the question.

Mr BARNETT - We will undertake a review over the next six to eight weeks with an independent reviewer, with the purpose of focusing on what is best practice for the new structure. The terms of reference for that review will be prepared and drafted by the Department of Justice with the support of Treasury and Department of Justice. There will be consultation with the Public Trustee on the terms of reference before it is finalised. I can give you that commitment.

In addition, this process will transition over a 12- to 18-month period so that vulnerable Tasmanians should not be concerned in any way, shape or form. The services will continue. We appreciate the good working relationship that we have with the Board of the Public Trustee and the CEO, the management and the staff of the Public Trustee. I want to put that on the record. I thank them for their service and we look forward to ongoing cooperation and collaboration with the Public Trustee.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, you have a six- to eight-week process, you've designed it, you've talked to Treasury about the outcome, you've already worked out what's going to happen over the next year, you've actually decided how you are going to reform the Public Trustee; Treasury and Justice, government have decided how you're going to reform the Public Trustee. You've decided on the process and you're going to do a sham public pretence of inviting the Public Trustee. Who is the reviewer? Who is doing the review, and you've obviously decided who is the person. Will you change the terms of reference if the Public Trustee has things to change about them, to make sure it's a fair scope? Will you do that?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. I think it's a very similar question that you've mentioned before. We've responded -

Dr WOODRUFF - Which, Chair, the Attorney-General refused to respond to. Just say you don't want to answer it if you don't want to answer it.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff.

Mr BARNETT - I've indicated that we've responded to the very comprehensive report and recommendations of both the Bugg review and the Economic Regulator, which was released yesterday, I draw it to your attention. We've responded to that, we've had ongoing consultation with the Public Trustee and going forward there'll be further ongoing consultation and work, cooperation and collaboration with the Public Trustee. We can give you that commitment. The transition will take 12 months.

Dr WOODRUFF - Who is the reviewer? That was the question. I mean, you don't want to answer it. It's happening now, so who is it?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, let the Attorney-General answer the question.

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Mr BARNETT - Through you, Chair, it'll take a 12- to 18-month transition in terms of the review of the next six to eight weeks. The reviewer -

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, this is an abuse of the process of Estimates. This is absolutely abusive. This is a critical issue that's happening in Tasmania, announced yesterday via media release as you finished upstairs to make sure that no-one could ask you those questions, and here we are today, you won't even tell us who the reviewer is, it has started now, six to eight weeks, six to eight weeks.

Mr BARNETT - They haven't been appointed yet.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's a review cooked up by Treasury and Justice to privatise the Public Trustee. Tell us who the independent reviewer is.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, order.

Mr BARNETT - The reviewer has not been appointed.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, how can that not be when you're saying it's going to happen within six weeks? You're talking about a process which you've designed, which is going to be finished and completed, a transition of the Public Trustee within one year. You expect us to believe you've got a six-week process for review - six weeks to review the whole Public Trustee and you haven't chosen that person. You've been repeatedly saying six to eight weeks. You haven't chosen that person and you haven't committed to the Public Trustee being able to make the appropriate changes to the scope of reference. This is about privatising a public asset.

CHAIR - Is there a question there, Dr Woodruff?

Dr WOODRUFF - I want him to tell us who the independent reviewer is.

CHAIR - Before this continues, the minister responded to the question and answered in the way that the minister saw fit. I can't direct the minister to answer a question in a particular way. If the member's not satisfied with the response, they can ask further questions and you've asked plenty of questions. You can come back to it on your next time around, or the member can raise it as a matter of concern in the committee's report. I can't tell the minister how to answer a question.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair, for your clarification, but you could at least save the minister from time-wasting for the committee as he is doing repeatedly with three-minute answers when he's not answering a question. Just say 'I won't answer the question'.

CHAIR - They were very long questions as well. I'm trying to keep this as proportional and fair as possible, but I can't put words in the minister's mouth.

I'll move on to Ms Johnston.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Attorney-General, vulnerable Tasmanians are extremely concerned by your announcement yesterday. Will Tasmanians on low incomes be forced to engage a private lawyer for an executor, will, estate or trustee services? How will the

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most vulnerable Tasmanians receive quality, efficient and effective services if they can't afford to pay for them privately?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. The whole focus of the reform and the restructure of the Public Trustee to be undertaken within the Department of Justice is to provide better, more effective and more cost-effective services for vulnerable Tasmanians. That's at the forefront of the government's mind. There will be a restructure. We're looking at a model for best practice and that transition will take place over the next 12 to 18 months. For detail, I'll ask the acting secretary to add to the answer.

Ms BOURNE - Following the announcement, there are a number of details that we need to work through with the Public Trustee, including how we ensure that people who access services that are supplemented by government funding can continue to do so. That's something that we remain engaged with the CEO and the board about, to work through that detail in light of the announcement.

Ms JOHNSTON - Attorney-General, do you give a commitment now that no vulnerable Tasmanian will pay more for their service than they're currently paying under a privatised system?

Mr BARNETT - The motivation of the restructure is to achieve a more cost-effective service for vulnerable Tasmanians. When I say cost-effective, cost-effective and efficient services, which addresses the Economic Regulator's findings and recommendations, and will be an improvement for vulnerable Tasmanians. It would not be undertaken but for that objective.

Ms JOHNSTON - Is that a commitment that no Tasmanian will pay more for these services than they were to pay now?

Mr BARNETT - I can confirm that the objective is to provide a more cost-effective and efficient service for our vulnerable Tasmanians.

Ms WHITE - To add to this line of questioning and to the points that have just been raised about those who are most vulnerable, who do rely upon this service: in your view, do you think that there are any private legal practitioners, or whatever private business might take on the Public Trustee's clients, who'd be willing to work with clients who have assets less than \$20,000?

Mr BARNETT - Could you please repeat the question?

Ms WHITE - Perhaps you could listen while I ask it next time. There is concern that the most vulnerable who rely upon the Public Trustee to be executors of their will and to support them are going to be transitioned across to the private sector who will only want to participate in this space if they can make money out of it. That is their reason for being. What guarantee can you give to those clients, who have very small amounts of assets, that they will be treated fairly and not have to pay a huge amounts of money to engage with the private sector to manage their wills?

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Mr BARNETT - As I say, there will be a transition period of 12 to 18 months. There's a lot that we'll need to work through with the Public Trustee and with the Department of Justice. In working through those details, that will take some time.

Ms WHITE - You can understand that as the Public Trustee is the executor of a number of these wills, there's no money in it. The Public Trustee doesn't make money out of these clients. They are providing a public service. What interest would there be for the private sector to take on the responsibilities of managing these estates for these clients? How can you guarantee they're not going to just be tossed aside?

Mr BARNETT - If I could make a comment in response to that, the Public Trustee does make money on their wills. That was one of the reflections of the Economic Regulator's report and recommendations, that they are charging too much for their wills.

Ms WHITE - Not for most vulnerable with very few assets. I think you might be right to identify that they make some money.

Mr BARNETT - Please read the report.

Ms WHITE - Please don't patronise me.

Mr BARNETT - That was one of the very serious criticisms of the Public Trustee, that they were charging too much.

Ms WHITE - Attorney-General, you would be able to realise that there's no money in some of the work the Public Trustee does, particularly for the most vulnerable with very few assets. Who in the private sector is going to want to continue to do that work?

Mr BARNETT - The point that the Economic Regulator has made is clear. In terms of wills and estates and the management of that, there was a very high cost for vulnerable Tasmanians. The government has taken on board that report and recommendation and wants to support vulnerable Tasmanians, and ensure that the core services of the Public Trustee will be undertaken in the Department of Justice, and that those services for wills in estate and the like will be undertaken in the private sector.

Ms WHITE - How can you guarantee the employment of the staff who are currently working at Public Trustee? I understand many of them are State Service employees, so they are within the Department of Justice. Will they all return to the department?

Ms BOURNE - In light of the announcement working through those details, the agency, as in Justice, initially indicated with the unions yesterday what was happening so that we could indicate that we're really keen to sit down and talk about how that transition will happen. Certainly ongoing discussions with the CEO are developing in terms of trying to identify, subject to the outcomes of the review, what staff are allocated to what work, and what of the services that the government's indicated will be removed from the scope of what the state provides, what staff are attached to those. I think the department has an overriding objective to absorb all state servants who are currently within the Public Trustee. It's very conscious of how this decision impacts on staff. I know that the CEO and the board have a lot of supports in place for staff to talk to EAP and the like, about the decision and how it may affect them.

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Our aim is to continue to work with the CEO to provide as much clarity as possible to staff to ensure to them that they will have a role when the services transition to the department. A lot of that detail still needs to be worked through in consultation with staff and the unions to make sure that's done in an informed and transparent way to avoid as much uncertainty as possible.

Ms WHITE - Can I take it from that that your expectation is that all of the state servants who are currently working at the Public Trustee will find a new role within the Department of Justice, and nobody will be facing the prospect of losing their job?

Mr BARNETT - I think the acting secretary has answered that. There will be a 12- to 18-month transition process. That will be worked through with the Department of Justice.

Ms WHITE - I'd like something a little surer than that. That was pretty wishy-washy. These people have only just found out about this significant change that's happening in their workplace. They deserve a bit more certainty from the minister who's driving this reform that they're not going to lose their job. Can you give them that guarantee?

Mr BARNETT - I think the acting secretary has answered that question.

Ms WHITE - What about you, though? I'd like to hear from you. You're the minister.

Mr BARNETT - The acting secretary's already indicated that she will work, through the department, with the Public Trustee and that those jobs over a period of time will absolutely be absorbed within the Department of Justice and that's where they will be based.

Ms WHITE - It'd be nice to hear you say that without so many caveats. What's becoming quite clear in unpicking this announcement from yesterday, minister, is that there'll be no savings on staff by the sound of that, if you're true to that commitment that the staff are going to stay within the Department of Justice, so this is not a cost-saving exercise in terms of reducing staff resourcing. What it appears to be is an opportunistic approach by Treasury that you've gone along with to privatise an asset base you haven't been able to quantify, which is the will bank, which I understand may have as many as 20,000 wills of vulnerable people held within it and the trust, which may have nearly \$200 million worth of value to it.

Isn't the case here not that you're trying to improve efficiencies by changing the way the staff work, but that you're going to privatise a public asset to make a significant amount of money with no real understanding of how many wills we're talking about, because you couldn't tell me how many wills are in the will bank?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question but I don't concur with those remarks.

Ms WHITE - Tell me what you don't believe is true.

Mr BARNETT - I don't concur with your remarks. In terms of the economic regulator's report, that made a number of findings and I draw your attention to further findings.

Ms WHITE - No, I'd like you to tell me what you think I got wrong.

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Mr BARNETT - This will assist you, I think. The Public Trustee charges both a commission and an hourly rate for estate administration, which is a practice that is not permitted in the private sector as it is considered to be double-dipping.

Ms WHITE - I'm not talking about the operation, I'm talking about their asset base that you intend to privatise.

Mr BARNETT - The Public Trustee should implement a more robust system for tracking costs at an individual service level and undertake an urgent review to ensure the clients required by legislation to use its services are not subsidising the fees of commercial clients.

Ms WHITE - You can do that without privatising the assets.

Mr BARNETT - That's why the restructure is important to protect the interests of vulnerable clients. That is the motivation for our government, to get better and more cost-effective services for vulnerable clients.

Ms WHITE - You can reform and make the improvements without privatising the assets of vulnerable Tasmanians. It's disappointing that you've taken this approach and let Treasury lead you along by the nose to privatise a public asset and done nothing to stand up for the Public Trustee and their vulnerable clients.

Dr WOODRUFF - Attorney-General, what we're really concerned about is the most vulnerable people. The difference between the Public Trustee in Tasmania and the Public Trustee, as I understand it, in most other states, is that we have a scaled capital commission structure that we use here with a flat rate, whereas other states have a flat rate for clients. The figures I have is that the Northern Territory, for example, has a rate of commission of 2.2 per cent over \$40,000.

In Tasmania we have a situation now under the Public Trustee where there is 0 per cent commission charged for assets less than \$100,000. That means that the Public Trustee, by an economic regulator's measure, is less efficient because we're not gouging money out of the most vulnerable Tasmanians. That is a problem we've got here when we have a situation where you and Treasury and Justice are deciding to privatise the Public Trustee and hand over the situation for the poorest Tasmanian people.

As Ms White said, you might only have \$20,000 but that \$20,000 for that person is so important. Every cent of that is critical to the circumstances of them and their loved ones and the idea that it would be handed over to a private sector who would then charge a commission on that is a big problem.

Is it your government's intention that the commissioning base rate at the moment, which is set by the Public Trustee, would be required to be taken up by the public sector? In other words, for people with less than \$100,000 the private sector would get 0 per cent commission? How would that work, or are the cases that the government's going to keep but they're going hand out the profit-making ones to the private sector so nothing's coming back to the public?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. As I've announced yesterday, and it was on the public record in terms of wills, estates and related matters, that will be outsourced to the private sector. I note the Law Society has expressed concerns about the Public

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Trustee in the past in terms of using government grant funding to support its commercial activities and the regulator noted that the Public Trustee should exercise caution to ensure it is not breaching competitive neutrality principles.

Having said that, the core services will be within the Department of Justice to ensure that we provide the services that vulnerable Tasmanians need in a cost-effective way. Other jurisdictions have different models of how they support vulnerable Tasmanians. You referred to the Northern Territory. I'm happy to pass to the acting secretary to add to the answer.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Attorney-General. The Northern Territory is certainly a model that I know the CEO and the board have considered. Mr Bugg referred to it in his review as well. Some of the matters that members have raised today are critical for ongoing discussions about advice that we can provide to government as part of the review and as the restructure is worked through about how to make sure that vulnerable Tasmanians aren't negatively impacted by any restructure. I know that's certainly at the forefront of my mind and also Mr Kennedy's and we'll continue to work through that detail.

Dr WOODRUFF - When a private contractor who has a contract with the government to provide services on behalf of the government has problems with their functioning and the government identifies those problems, what happens is that the government works with that private organisation and requires them to make changes. Why didn't the government, on the back of the Economic Regulator's report, go to the Public Trustee and require the Public Trustee to make those changes within the Public Trustee, instead of splitting an organisation in two, privatising the parts that will give money to the private sector, taking in the loss-making parts to the public sector into government and splitting an organisation with all the staff and all the review work that's just been undertaken and all the culture that's been developed? All the good work that's been done on changing the culture of the Public Trustee is going to be completely split up.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. First of all, I acknowledge the good work that the Public Trustee has undertaken, particularly since the Bugg review and since the Economic Regulator's report has come down. I acknowledge that but there's a lot more that needs to be done. There has been an opportunity for the Public Trustee to respond to the Economic Regulator's report, which landed earlier in the year. The Public Trustee has responded to that in part, but the findings are very comprehensive, so we have released that report and it's been a public document since yesterday.

There have been regular meetings, including with Treasury and the Department of Justice. We wanted to do what's best for vulnerable Tasmanians and that's why we've announced the restructure and in terms of the wills and those services, they will be outsourced to the private sector.

Dr WOODRUFF - Will you continue making a commitment that there will be zero dollars commission on assets less than \$100,000?

Mr BARNETT - In terms of the restructure and exactly how it's going to be shaped, we have a 12 to 18-month transition period. We will be taking expert advice over the next six to eight weeks from an independent reviewer.

Dr WOODRUFF - Who is that person?

Mr BARNETT - They haven't been appointed.

Dr WOODRUFF - Who will appoint them?

Mr BARNETT - The government.

Dr WOODRUFF - What's the process for that?

Ms WHITE - You or Treasury?

Mr BARNETT - It'll be in consultation, I'm sure. My understanding is that Treasury will make that appointment -

Dr WOODRUFF - Treasury will make an appointment. Right.

Mr BARNETT - in consultation with the Department of Justice and that will be undertaken swiftly. That will look at the model for best-practice and fit-for-purpose to provide those services going forward. There'll be a 12 to 18-month transition to ensure that we get the balance right and ensure that it is fit for purpose

Dr WOODRUFF - But will it be, will you continue with the zero dollars for people with assets under \$100,000?

Mr BARNETT - We will be putting the interests of vulnerable Tasmanians as a priority. We put value on that and exactly how that will roll out over the next 12 to 18 months. I will certainly be ensuring that the Department of Justice, in liaison with the Public Trustee, work through all those very important issues.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Attorney-General, can you confirm that represented persons under administration orders who are often in positions of immense vulnerability, will not be transferred to the private sector and remain the responsibility of government and the Public Trustee?

Ms BOURNE - Attorney-General, through you, that's certainly the advice that we'll be providing government in terms of those appointed - where the Public Trustee, rather, is appointed as administrator by TASCAT that that service continues to remain as part of this offering from the Department of Justice.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. Attorney-General, do you accept that your announcement has been extremely poorly communicated given the fact that all but clearly surprised clients of the Public Trustee are deeply concerned this morning to wake up and hear this news? The announcement was followed up by a stakeholder e-mail from the Public Trustee mid-afternoon, which seemed to come as a surprise to them and they have no answers to be able to give to stakeholders. Do you accept that what you've done has been poorly communicated?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. Major restructure is always a challenge and that's why there will be a 12- to 18-month transition period and the assurance of delivering better outcomes for vulnerable Tasmanians is at the front of our mind as a government - Department of Justice in particular. We look forward to an ongoing collaborative working

relationship with the Public Trustee. I put on the record my thanks to the Public Trustee, the board and the management and CEO for their collaboration. The acting secretary in the department has been working closely with the Public Trustee, particularly in recent times, to ensure that there's a smooth transition.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you accept that it's been poorly communicated? With restructures challenging, that's why communication is incredibly important and what you've announced yesterday and what you're telling us today, there are very little detail meat to put on the bones of these. There's no frequently asked questions and answers to questions that ordinary Tasmanians want to know. Indeed, I'm sure the Public Trustee would like to know. You haven't been able to provide substance to those concerns and questions. Surely you should have had that information before you made the announcement.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. I do think that the details in and around the announcement are quite clear, but there's always opportunity to ensure that the communication is expanded to the relevant stakeholders and made available. Certainly, the Department of Justice, that would be my expectation that the communication is fulsome, comprehensive and if people have questions and concerns, they can ask those. The Public Trustee will continue to operate over the next 12 to 18 months as there's a transition process. It will take time and in terms of that assurance, that's certainly a commitment that I can provide.

Mr FAIRS - Chair, could the Attorney-General update the committee on the Department of Justice's work to implement the recommendations of the commission of inquiry and how the budget responds to the COI's recommendations?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Chair. It's very important that there's an assurance in the community that the government will commit to implementing the 191 recommendations of the commission of inquiry in terms of the Department of Justice and my responsibilities. We're responsible for implementing the implementation of 36 of those. These include 10 recommendations in phase 2 and six in phase 3. I'm pleased to announce today that the department has completed 12 of its 36 recommendations with substantial progress underway on the remaining recommendations. The department was responsible for implementing 10 recommendations in phase 1 and nine of those 10 recommendations were implemented by the commission's deadline of 1 July 2024.

The remaining recommendation 18.13 was delayed so that it could be included in the TASCAT (Additional Jurisdictions) Bill, which has now been tabled in the parliament. The government's legislative priority is implementing all recommendations of the commission of inquiry and in all, 54 recommendations require creation of new legislation. So, it's a very big agenda for the Department of Justice. I'm very pleased and proud of the department in undertaking and rolling out that agenda. They're doing a terrific job.

In terms of the legislative initiatives, of course, we've had the Child Safety Reform Implementation Monitor Bill 2024, which has passed, the Justice Miscellaneous Commission of Inquiry Bill 2024, which is passed, and the Evidence (Children and Special Witnesses) Amendment Bill (No 24), which has passed, and the consultation draft of the Commission for Children and Young People Bill was tabled last week, with time following the consultation, including with Aboriginal people and children and young people.

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The TASCAT (Additional Jurisdictions) Bill has been tabled and amends the appeals process for administrative reviews of registration to work with vulnerable people decisions from the Magistrates Court to TASCAT and then phase two, we're responsible for implementing 20 recommendations. I'm pleased to announce two of those recommendations have already been complete and substantial progress is made on the remaining.

The budget includes a range of initiatives, and I won't go through all of those. They're in the budget papers, through you, Chair, but we're very pleased with the progress so far.

CHAIR - Before I go to Ms White, I'll just let the committee know that now it's past 10.00 a.m. We do have the DPP available now and the others, the Integrity Commission, so they're available now.

Ms WHITE - Attorney-General, I wanted to ask about Community Corrections. I understand there are some critical staff shortages in Community Corrections. Can you give an update on the number of employees by head count and the establishment figure so we can understand what the vacancies look like? Can you break that down by region please?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. That would be relevant to the minister for Corrections, Madeleine Ogilvie.

Ms WHITE - We asked those ones there. I will ask you about the Burnie Court then. Can you provide an update on whether you understand the Family Circuit Court or Federal Circuit Family Court of Australia will be accommodated within that new complex at Burnie?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I can give you feedback on that and the answer is yes.

Ms WHITE - Okay. Have you been able to provide information to the sector or publicly? I've asked for a briefing a number of times through your office and not be provided one actually about the design of that facility.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, thanks very much for the question. In terms of the progress of the Burnie Court, the current facility is obviously no longer fit for purpose. That's why the government has committed the \$86.5 million developing the new courts complex, there at 100-106 Wilson St. We've listened to the stakeholders and the community and heard their desire for that new courthouse and that's progressing. There's a request for tender with Xsquared Architects awarded that contract. Those concept designs are well advanced to include four courts and we're still working through those designs.

In terms of the Commonwealth, to confirm again that would be a design to ensure that the Commonwealth delivers a permanent Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia presence in Burnie as part of the new Burnie Court complex and we're still working that through at the moment. I'm happy for the acting secretary to add to that answer to assist the member.

Ms BOURNE - Attorney-General, through you, I think you've summarised the status of the project well. As the Attorney-General indicated, we are moving into that detailed design phase and have been working with key stakeholders and court users since June this year around those design elements and also with the Federal Circuit and Family Court and the

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Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department to make sure that the design accommodates their purposes in due course, once the courts complex is constructed.

Ms WHITE - Is the construction of the facility fully state funded? Did you end up going to the Commonwealth to ask for additional funds to assist with that?

Ms BOURNE - Attorney-General, through you, in the main, fully state funded. We have been negotiating with the Commonwealth for a small contribution to the fit-out of the space that they will use. A minimal amount with discussions to be confirmed at this stage but wouldn't anticipate that ask is any more than \$1 million and that is to make sure that they have the services that they need, movable furniture, and additional chambers for their judges to use.

I should stress, though, that's still being worked through. We, at an official level, have also made a commitment to senior officials that it's to be negotiated, but it's a cost that also could be explored through the ongoing leasing arrangements, very similar to the fee that the Commonwealth Federal Circuit Court pays to the Supreme Court now for the usage of the Supreme Court room in Burnie. We're trying to make sure that we work constructively so that cost isn't a barrier. We're constructing the site anyway.

We want to make sure that we provide a fit-for-purpose space for the Federal Circuit Court, which might require some adjustment that the court site would not need if we weren't providing space dedicated for the Federal Circuit Court, but keep that at a minimum, noting that we'd be outlaying per square-metreage cost for the building in any event, so, not seeking to be compensated for expenditure that we would already make by constructing the building.

Ms WHITE - That is a very useful answer, thank you. Attorney-General, can you explain why prior to the state election this year you were demanding that the federal government provide \$15 million to accommodate an additional court to deal with the family law matters and claiming that you would not be able to deliver that service for the north-west community unless the federal attorney-general provided you \$15 million. Obviously, you've been able to proceed and fund it entirely from the state budget after all. Why did you make such claims before the state election?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I think the acting secretary indicated there would be a contribution from the federal government -

Ms WHITE - About a million dollars, not 15.

Mr BARNETT - You said zero.

Ms WHITE - I did not.

Mr BARNETT - And, just clarifying the record, and at all times we're focused on getting a solution for the north-west part of Tasmania and the Burnie court, and we've found a solution. We've had to work through that. It hasn't been easy. There are challenges and there remain challenges in terms of progressing this within the Budget.

We are determined to deliver on that four-court plan within the budget and that's why those concept plans and the designs are still being worked through. We have a high expectation that we'll achieve that result, which can ensure that we deliver for the north-west coast, to

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deliver the services that the Supreme Court and the Magistrates Court deserve and the people of Tasmania deserve, with access to the Federal Circuit and the Family Court of Australia.

It's not exactly what was envisaged last year in terms of having their own separate court. They will have to have what's called a common use area where they will be able to use this particular part of the court complex together with the Supreme Court and the Magistrates Court. We've had to be innovative and to think creatively to get a mutually agreeable outcome.

Ms WHITE - Would you acknowledge that your communication around this matter has caused unnecessary anxiety for the legal fraternity in the north-west? Legal Aid has been very public in their communication around their fear that this would not be provided for in the facility even after June, which is, I believe you said, was when you decided that you could accommodate it within the build.

Why haven't you been clear in your communication with those who are directly supporting members of our community who need access to family law court services that you would be able to support them to access in Burnie so they wouldn't have to travel to Launceston?

Mr BARNETT - All the stakeholders in the north-west and across Tasmania know that they have a fierce advocate in the Attorney-General who fights for them and their interests and a better justice system.

Ms WHITE - They didn't know you were doing anything actually.

Mr BARNETT - And they know that we will continue to do that. There had to be some compromises by us and the federal government and the Federal Circuit and the Family Court and we've all had to compromise to get outcomes that are mutually beneficial.

We think it's very important that those legal services are made available and the court services are made available to the north-west coast. We're committed to that, we've got funding in the Budget, we've got a contribution from the federal government subject to further work, and we've had to have some compromises in the design of the of that four-court complex.

Ms WHITE - I want to go on to a different line of questioning, so it might not work. Just quickly, if I could ask about similar - because it talks about how the federal government has made some commitments. The federal government recently announced an extra \$800 million for their legal assistance sector for five years from 2025 to 2026. What percentage of this will be provided to Tasmania? Can you provide the split between the Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania, community legal centres and the Aboriginal Legal Service?

Did you? I'm sorry, that was when I was dropping my daughter off at school.

Mr BARNETT - That's all right. No problem.

Ms WHITE - Have you dealt with those other questions that were from that pack?

Dr WOODRUFF - Yes.

Ms WHITE - Okay. I'll pass on to Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. Attorney-General, this question relates to a coronial inquest finding in 2017 in relation to seven Tasmanians who died from quad bike accidents and the coroner made eight recommendations. Since that time, there have been five additional coronial investigations for five other Tasmanians who have died from quad bike accidents, and the most recent of those reiterates the recommendations made in 2017.

Mr BARNETT - Can I give you a heads-up? It's WorkSafe.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, it's not, actually. I've checked because we've been here before. In fact, we were here last Estimates and WorkSafe said, 'No, we can't deal with that'. I've looked at where this falls. It's definitely a question for you, Attorney-General, and I really don't want your government to keep dodging this question. The Greens have been asking about this for years.

The coronial investigation in the five additional coronial inquests, two of them have recommended the Law Reform Institute and the Attorney-General consider introducing legislation requiring mandatory training and licensing of all persons using quad bikes within your bailiwick, and that the Law Reform Institute and the Attorney-General consider legislation to prohibit the carrying of passengers on Type 1 quad bikes and no more than one passenger on Type 2 quad bikes.

Will you be investigating and progressing those reforms?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. I'll certainly do my level best to answer it to the extent that we can in the Department of Justice, noting that, in terms of WorkSafe, that is a matter for the minister responsible, minister Ferguson. I'm aware of the coroner's report that you make reference to. I know the acting secretary has some information on that that she can provide the committee.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Attorney-General. The government remains committed, as does WorkSafe, to assessing the coronial recommendations that you've outlined and implementing changes where reasonably practicable.

Coroner Cooper's findings on 21 June this year, which have been referred to, looked at improving legislation and that's certainly something that - and, without speaking for the Work Health Safety Regulator and executive director of WorkSafe, is something that we are looking at.

I note that there have been a range of initiatives that WorkSafe have progressed, including additional training and resources, and a public awareness campaign. There have been some amendments made to the relevant regulatory framework and there is the Quad Bike Safety and Rebate Scheme and the Primary Producer's Safety Rebate Scheme to assist primarily business operators to purchase safety devices, including rollover bars and the like.

There were some changes introduced in the Work Health and Safety Regulations in 2021 to require a person conducting a business that has management or control of a quad bike to ensure a few things, including that a helmet is available for use, that any person using the quad bike has had appropriate training, and passengers are not carried unless appropriate.

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So, a very short summary but noting the work, particularly under the carriage of WorkSafe, that is being pursued in this space, noting the number of coronal findings in relation to this really important matter.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you. Through you, to the acting secretary, none of those things that you've mentioned answers my question. The question was about the fact that 13 Tasmanians have died now and there's been seven years since the initial recommendations that changes to the law are needed to prohibit people from as I mentioned before.

What you've mentioned is very good stuff. They're all individualised. They're not changes to the law that are required, repeated again by Coroner Cooper from the 2017, seven years prior, recommendations. Will you be progressing those particular law reforms and working with the Law Reform Institute on them?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. I draw to your attention that the *Workplace Health and Safety Act* is a responsibility of minister Ferguson, the Minister for Small Business and Consumer Affairs and CBOS, Consumer Building and Occupational Services. As Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, we have an interest in this matter as outlined by the acting secretary, but we're not the responsible minister in this regard.

Dr WOODRUFF - Will you speak to the responsible minister about doing this?

Mr BARNETT - I am more than happy to follow up.

Dr WOODRUFF - You can make a recommendation to the TLRI, though, as Attorney-General, which is what the coroner proposed you do.

Mr BARNETT - I'm more than happy to give an undertaking to follow up on the questions that you've raised and raise those with the relevant minister. As a former minister for primary industries and water, in terms of rolling out the safe farming program, I want to indicate it is incredibly sad and tragic when there is a death to those concerned and their families. I certainly offer my condolences, and the grief and suffering is severe. It is taken seriously by our government. I will follow up on this matter and check with the relevant minister, Mr Ferguson.

I should say that with respect to the traffic and vehicles legislation, there is a role for the minister for Police as well. I'd be interested in the minister's view on that as well. I indicate that if you had the opportunity to ask Mr Ferguson, that would be useful.

Dr WOODRUFF - I've asked. The Greens have been fobbed off so many times on this and you're the Attorney-General. Let us remind you that the status quo means that year on year, more Tasmanians are dying. These are avoidable deaths, and your government's choosing not to act. Will you make a referral to the TLRI on this matter as Attorney-General? Over all those departments, as you've just indicated, there are at least three ministers, but you can do that. Will you do that?

Mr BARNETT - The responsible minister for the work health and safety legislation is minister Ferguson.

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Dr WOODRUFF - Last year that minister said they were not responsible. We were told in Estimates last year that it's your responsibility. That's why we're here today.

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Mr BARNETT - I can take on board your questions. I give a commitment to follow up, and I am more than happy to report back in due course on progress. I am not the responsible minister for the *Work Health and Safety Act*, but I'm more than happy to follow up with the relevant minister and any other relevant ministers and provide a report back.

To your question regarding the TLRI, I'm more than happy to follow up on that as well to see what options are available. I take this very seriously as a former minister responsible for safe farming, ensuring that the tragedy of deaths from quad bikes is reduced to the absolute minimum.

Ms JOHNSTON - On 13 September, the day after the Budget, the Tasmanian National Preventative Mechanism Office issued an extraordinary statement:

I wish to communicate my disappointment that the Tasmanian government has decided not to carry through with its commitment to appropriately resource the Office of the Tasmanian National Preventative Mechanism. The announced funding of \$300,000 will make it impossible to establish this new office and exercise any of its statutory functions. Not resourcing the office jeopardises Tasmania's newly acquired status as a leader in preventing the abuse of the most vulnerable people in our community by ensuring that they are treated humanely, appropriately and in accordance with international law.

I understand that the office requested funding of \$2.8 million but only received \$300,000. Can you please explain why this office has been so under-resourced and underfunded that it can't function?

Mr BARNETT - I appreciate the question. In terms of the OPCAT support, the government provided that commitment some time ago. It's certainly relevant to the Ombudsman, who is here if you wanted him to come forward to the table. It covers a range of areas, including the corrections area. I'm not the minister for Corrections, so in that regard I'm not the responsible minister. I am aware of that and I'm happy to see what more we can share with you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Attorney-General, your predecessor back in 2021 gave assurances at the time that the *OPCAT Implementation Act* was passed that the office would be appropriately resourced. That was an assurance given by the Attorney-General at the time, and you're the Attorney-General now. I don't need the office's response. I'd like your advice to the committee as to why this has been significantly underfunded by \$2.5 million?

Mr BARNETT - I think you're talking about the minister who was likewise Minister for Justice and Corrections at the time in 2021, but certainly as Attorney-General and Minister for Justice, I can advise that as at 30 June 2024, the implementation of the OPCAT in Tasmania has cost in the vicinity of \$1.2 million. The Commonwealth has provided a small contribution of \$155,000 to the implementation of OPCAT in Tasmania. The government has had

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continuous engagement with the Commonwealth government in terms of seeking ongoing co-funding with the NPM, as you've made reference to.

The state Budget provides \$200,000 in 2024-25 for increased monitoring at AYDC, and \$300,000 for the implementation of the Tasmanian National Preventative Mechanism. In 2025-26 there is \$200,000 for increased monitoring at AYDC and \$300,000 for the implementation of the Tasmanian National Preventative Mechanism, then in 2026-27, \$300,000 for the Tasmanian National Preventative Mechanism, noting the government's commitment to close AYDC prior to that financial year. In 2027-28, there is \$300,000 for the Tasmanian National Preventative Mechanism. Those investments are in the Budget and I hope that supports you and the committee.

Ms JOHNSTON - It falls far short of what is required by the office. The office clearly indicates that they undertook comprehensive implementation work, and from that it was understood that \$2.8 million was required for it to be able to perform its statutory functions. I note too that in the statement issued by the office they indicated that they hadn't received a response to the recommendations or been asked to provide further details. It seems to me that a decision was made by the government in isolation from the office to significantly underfund the statutory functions of this really important office.

Mr BARNETT - As I've indicated, we've had ongoing discussions with the federal government in terms of support from the federal government for the implementation of the optional protocol, and I'm sure that will be ongoing. We do take that seriously. I appreciate your feedback and we will consider what other options we have to progress the support for that, for and on behalf of the government.

Having said that, I indicate that the United Nations had representatives here in 2022, I'm advised. They visited and we got feedback from them, including in the corrections facilities for which I am not the relevant minister.

Ms JOHNSTON - In the absence of that funding, do you accept that this office cannot function and cannot perform its statutory functions? What do you intend to do in the meantime?

Mr BARNETT - It is funded, as I've just outlined to you in terms of the Budget -

Dr WOODRUFF - 10 per cent of what's needed.

Mr BARNETT - I've provided some of that feedback for you -

Dr WOODRUFF - 90 per cent underfunded.

Mr BARNETT - I'll pass to the acting secretary to add to the answer.

Ms BOURNE - As the Attorney-General has outlined, a significant investment has been made in the implementation of the National Preventative Mechanism in Tasmania, noting that there are still some jurisdictions that haven't taken that step. Tasmania was the first jurisdiction to pass the relevant legislation and the statutory framework to make that happen.

I understand that the additional operational funding provided for the purpose of that office in this Budget and over the forward Estimates will enable the Ombudsman to create a

permanent senior officer to oversee that work. We'll continue to, in the corrections space, work with that office to make sure that we can facilitate those visits as his resources enable him to do, noting the significant amount of work that the facility undertakes to prepare for those visits.

Ms JOHNSTON - To clarify, the government has invested significantly in implementation work, but when it actually comes to the crunch of establishing the office and it functioning, performing its statutory functions, they're significantly underfunded. This office is basically neutered because it can't function properly despite the fact that we've invested significantly in its implementation and understanding what's required of the office. When it actually comes to the rubber hitting the road, there's no funding for it.

Mr BARNETT - As the acting secretary has indicated, relative to other jurisdictions, we did take a leadership role in terms of the implementation. I think that's been recognised. To confirm, my advice is that the state Budget provides \$500,000 for the implementation of the National Preventative Mechanism (NPM) and increased monitoring at Ashley. The government is also considering the alignment of the NPM's recommendations and the commission of inquiry recommendations. The commission of inquiry recommended the appointment of a new Commission for Children and Young People as a child-specific NPM. Alternatively, the NPM recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be delegated NPM functions. My department's working through this through the misalignment to ensure that the most appropriate structure for Tasmania's NPM is in place. It's critical that the structure is set up to ensure successful oversight while maintaining the spirit of the commission of inquiry's recommendations.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, how is the state government supporting Tasmanian courts and what is it doing to work to address the court backlogs?

Mr BARNETT - There's a range of measures in place to address the court backlog. We do want an efficient and effective criminal and civil justice system in Tasmania. It is vital to that that court proceedings be delivered in a timely manner. I acknowledge the court backlogs remain a concern for the community am committed to work with the courts to reduce the backlog.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognise the important work of the courts and the tribunals, TASCAT included, including our judicial officers and the staff of those organisations. They undertake a critical role in our justice system and I thank them for their work.

I'd also like to take a moment to acknowledge the bicentenary of the Supreme Court, the oldest supreme court in Australia. We celebrated that just a short time ago. It was established in 1824. We also hosted judges of the High Court on 9 September. It was wonderful to have them in Tasmania.

We have support for the Supreme and Magistrates courts to review their case management and listing procedures to ensure the efficient use of court resources. We have a range of legislative reforms in place as well. The Budget provides \$1.4 million over four years to continue the rollout of audio-visual communications equipment in the Supreme and Magistrates courts of Tasmania. We have ongoing operational funding commencing at \$4.1 million in 2024-25 for the Astria project to address the cost of operating the system, in addition to providing support for users of the new system. There is \$9.6 million over four years

for additional funding for the Office of Director of Public Prosecutions to increase capacity to respond to the commission of inquiry recommendations. There is also additional funding of \$500,000 per year for our Magistrates Courts to assist them in the court backlog and ensure they can manage the ongoing case complexity.

Our government continues to implement a range of other backlog initiatives, including procedural and technological reform across the courts and increased resourcing. We appointed the seventh Supreme Court judge in 2021 and additional magistrates in 2022. We've appointed acting judges as appropriate and new associate judge Michael Daly on 29 April earlier this year to provide for case management of criminal matters. That is certainly appreciated. I mentioned TASCAT. That's been one of the best reforms in our justice system in the last decade, in my view. That commenced three years ago and is streamlining the process, cutting the red tape and making it easier and more efficient for Tasmanians and relevant stakeholders to get access to justice sooner.

Ms WHITE - Can you confirm that two probation officers who used to be stationed in the Magistrates Court to give immediate answers to magistrates have been removed?

Mr BARNETT - I note that you made reference to the probation officers. That's, again, in Community Corrections.

Ms WHITE - Yes, I thought you might say that but it's actually impacting on the operation of the court, and you just spoke about the backlog at the court and the difficulty people have accessing justice. Are you aware that the removal of these probation officers is leading to a delay in court processes? The only way to access information the probation officers used to be able to give the magistrate immediately is for them to formally request it. They have to write a report and provide it and it does delay court proceedings. Are you aware that this is happening?

Mr BARNETT - I'm aware that the acting secretary is aware and can give you an update.

Ms BOURNE - I am aware of the concern that's been expressed by court users and it's something I'm talking about with my colleague, the director of Corrective Services. I note that, historically, the probation officers have been placed at the Hobart Magistrates Court for some time. For a range of factors I'm still being briefed on, an operational decision was made to remove those, noting that other Magistrate Court locations around the state don't have an in-person probation officer presence. I respect the decision that was made to remove them, noting that it appears to have had an impact on the access to that advice.

It's something I continue to talk with my colleague about to work out whether there's either further information we can provide to magistrates about the reason for that decision and to make sure the service is not being diminished because of that decision, or whether we need to re-look at the physical presence. It's certainly something I'm aware of and looking into.

Ms WHITE - Thank you for that answer. Minister, given the evidence that court processes have slowed because the probation officers aren't physically present, would you agree that it might even make the case for placing them physically in all magistrates courts locations across the state if it speeds up the process of justice?

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Mr BARNETT - Thanks for the question and looking at options to improve efficiency and address backlog. I appreciate the motivation behind that. That's why I take advice from the department and want to work with the courts to deliver a more efficient and streamlined process. I'll just see if the acting secretary has anything else to add.

Ms BOURNE - As part of the discussions we will be having, and have been having with the director of Corrective Services and the director of Community Corrections, who's doing a great deal of work around the structure, and making sure those services are delivered where they're needed and to the most benefit of people on those community-based orders, that is something we can continue to consider in light of the feedback received.

Ms WHITE - Further to that, I understand that a number of programs that have been delivered by Community Corrections aren't staffed because of chronic staff shortages, which means that magistrates are making decisions about orders for people to participate in programs that aren't operational. Are your magistrates aware of this?

Mr BARNETT - I have regular meetings with the chief magistrate and my department has regular meetings with the administrator of the Magistrates Court. We work very cooperatively and collaboratively with the Magistrates Court. I'll see if there's anything further the acting secretary can add to the answer.

Ms BOURNE - As the Attorney-General has said, the Attorney-General, Ms van Adrichem and I meet regularly with the Administrator of Courts and the Chief Magistrate. The director of Community Corrections also has a fairly regular series of meetings with magistrates to make sure they're aware of the services Community Corrections is delivering and also any changes to that. I'm certainly aware of a good working relationship between the two so they can maximise the benefit for persons coming before the court.

Ms WHITE - Do you think it's reasonable that somebody might be placed on an order then released with no supervision because there aren't appropriate numbers of staff in Community Corrections to provide that? That's not an element funded within your budget but, obviously, the courts are making decisions, and your magistrates are making decisions that may mean somebody is released into the community with no monitoring, which I don't believe the community would feel comfortable with.

What are you doing to make sure you're advocating for appropriate resourcing so that we don't see backlogs continue in the court because the probation officers aren't there, that we don't see magistrates making orders for people who are going back into the community with no supervisions and, thereby, community safety is potentially at risk. How are you making sure you're doing your job well so that the court system is functioning well and that justice is being served?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. Again, I acknowledge, I think, the motivation behind it to deliver a more streamlined, effective justice system so I appreciate that. I will say two things, again, I'm not the minister for Corrections, but as Minister for Justice -

Dr WOODRUFF - Perhaps you should be. Perhaps breaking up this portfolio has been a massive mistake.

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Mr BARNETT - If I could continue. I am very interested with those concerns. I'm aware of the acting secretary's knowledge and understanding of that. In my regular meetings with the Chief Magistrate, this has not been raised with me, but now that you've raised it, it's something that I can raise with the Chief Magistrate. My expectation would be for my department to have further interaction with the courts accordingly and to follow up and to see what we can do to improve the arrangements.

Ms WHITE - One further question, what interaction is there between the Chief Magistrate and Community Corrections so that they can understand what resourcing pressures each might be facing?

Ms BOURNE - I'm mindful not to get too specific in case I make an error on the frequency of meetings, but I certainly understand that the executive director has regular engagement with the Chief Magistrate. Often Community Corrections representatives, whether they be the executive director or other staff, are fairly regularly invited to attend magistrates' conferences which happen, I think, around four times a year where all magistrates are able to get together, so there's a fairly consistent flow of information. I do understand that the Magistrates Court is aware of some of the staffing pressures that Community Corrections are facing, as is the agency generally in the executive across many of our areas. It's a tight labour market so finding and retaining staff is difficult, but we are taking those concerns very seriously to make sure that we are able to attract staff, but also support the staff that are there in a fairly demanding area of work and expertise.

Dr WOODRUFF - Attorney-General, earlier this year the House of Assembly passed the Justice and Related Legislation (Miscellaneous Amendments) Bill. Coroner Cooper warned, and the Greens raised this as an issue in the second reading, that the enactment of that bill would result in a doubling of coronial investigations, but you disputed his assessment. Clearly, however, you wouldn't disagree, I'd expect, that it must result in some increased workload. Are you able to listen to my question? In your second reading reply, you said:

We are working with the court on assessing charges to inquest numbers and we will deal appropriately with any necessary increase in resources as required.

Despite those assurances, there's no specific allocation to the Coroners Court in the Budget. Was there a budget request for more funding from the Coroners Court?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question and your interest in this matter. To my understanding, that bill still hasn't passed the Legislative Council as yet, that's my advice.

Dr WOODRUFF - That's why I mentioned the House of Assembly.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, thank you very much for noting that. The decision that's yet to be made about when the legislation will commence is subject to the upper House considering it and passing that. This has been based on advice and feedback from the department. That's why what I said in the second reading debate and in the summing up at the time was based on that advice.

Dr WOODRUFF - Attorney-General, just a simple answer to the question: did you receive a request for additional budget from the coroner's office?

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Mr BARNETT - You've asked quite a long question and I was responding to that question.

Dr WOODRUFF - I didn't actually. I made a statement and there was one question. It was about the Budget and the Budget we've got, which is what we're here to talk about. Did the coroner's office make a request for more money?

Mr BARNETT - We're still working through the department with the coroner's office. They've obviously, through the department, had ongoing engagement with the Magistrates Court and they have ongoing engagement with the coroner's office and the Chief Coroner. I've recently, within the last two months, met with the Chief Coroner as well and that was not a specific request raised with me at the time. In terms of those important matters, that's something that the department works through with the Magistrates Court and the Coroner's Office. My expectation is that those discussions will be had in due course.

Dr WOODRUFF - Can you please answer my question? In the preparation of this Budget, did the Coroner's Court make any request for additional funding?

Mr BARNETT - I'd have to take advice from the acting secretary.

Ms BOURNE - There was a general budget ask for the Magistrates Court in relation to general operating expenses and budget risks, including coronial but not specifically related to this proposed change in the legislation. I note that discussions have been ongoing between the department and the Magistrates Court and the Coronial Division. I note the concerns expressed by the Coronial Division around the impact of these amendments. I note that the particular part of the act commences on proclamation, whereas the remainder of the act commences on Royal Assent. We are continuing to work with the court to assess the impact of the changes so that we can provide advice to government about any necessary increase in resources required. It's intended, or the amendment is designed to catch those rarer cases that may not currently go to inquest, or where criminal charges do not result in the public interest matters being addressed.

Dr WOODRUFF - I read in your answer that there was a request made, and a request was not given in the Budget, and the department is considering further funding. But a request was made and it was not funded. Can you confirm that there was a strategic review from the Coroners Court that was passed a year ago and that would have identified the issues of under-resourcing?

Mr BARNETT - First of all, we don't concur with your remarks. The acting secretary has outlined the process in terms of the Magistrates Court requesting funding support -

Dr WOODRUFF - Sorry to interrupt, can I just get clarity? I asked not about the Magistrates Court but the Coroners Court. The acting secretary did say, I understand, that there had been conversations from the Coroners Court. There was a request for extra money. I think we've got that. Now I'm talking about -

Mr BARNETT - You can't have words put into the mouths of either the Attorney-General or the acting secretary. I'd like the opportunity for the acting secretary to clarify the record so that the member in the committee can be very aware of the advice that the acting secretary has provided.

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CHAIR - For clarity, could we get what's been said?

Dr WOODRUFF - A simple yes or no.

Ms BOURENE - There was no specific request from the coronial division of the Magistrates Court for additional funding with respect to these legislative changes. The department, in consultation on behalf of the court, did put forward through the normal budget process budget risks related to the operations of the Magistrates Court general. I note that some additional funding has been provided to support the ongoing operations of the court as a whole. No specific request in relation to this specific legislative amendment.

Dr WOODRUFF - Okay, thank you. Following up on the strategic plan 12 months ago that the Coroners Court provided to the government, they made it clear they needed a new location with new courtrooms so that they could hear all the matters that are referred to them. You did not fund that in the budget. Why not?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. I appreciate the question. I'm not quite 12 months into the role as the Attorney-General. That will be in early October. I'm not aware of that specific plan that you make reference to. I know the acting secretary is aware of that, if I could refer to the acting secretary. Before I do so, I would like to say that in my meetings with the Chief Coroner, which were very cooperative and collaborative and positive, there was clearly an outlining of the challenges, opportunities, and workload of the Chief Coroner.

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, I point you to the time. I would really appreciate the answer. I'll ask it directly to the acting secretary, which I'm allowed to do if the minister can't answer it. Can he please hand it over to her?

CHAIR - One last question and then we'll have to move on. I can't instruct the minister on how to answer questions or what to say. It's going to be a lot more if we don't have interjections and it'll go a lot quicker if we don't have interjections.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, Chair. In past members of the committee have asked the Chair to move the minister on if the minister won't answer the question or won't pass it to the person at the table who can answer the question.

Ms WHITE - When will you respond to that business case that was put for the strategic plan?

Mr BARNETT - Can you hear from the acting secretary?

Dr WOODRUFF - That would be great. Stop talking.

Mr BARNETT - We're trying to help you.

Ms BOURNE - Attorney-General, through you. There is a coronial services plan that the Coronial Division prepared. In my substantive role I had a number of discussions with the administrator and the Chief Coroner in terms of the long-term evaluation and plan that they had put together around the strategic direction of the Court, including its future operation.

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Those discussions are ongoing and noting that at the time that the plan was provided to the agency, we were just shy of entering this current Budget or the budget process for the 2024-25 year. Certainly, something the department will continue to talk to government about, noting the work that's gone into the plan, recognising the Coronial Division's growth in workload and the other workload growths across the court so there is a coronial plan that has been prepared by that division which the agency is preparing advice for the Attorney-General on.

Dr WOODRUFF - When would a timeline for that decision be made do you think for the next budget process? Will that be happening?

CHAIR - The last question will go to Ms Johnston.

Ms BOURNE - Without pre-empting the further work that the agency will soon commence in earnest for the next budget process, this is an area of focus that I would like to include noting the range of priorities across the agency that we would also no doubt be seeking to put forward, but it's something that I've given an undertaking to the Court to put into the mix for the next budget process.

Mr BARNETT - I want to confirm what the acting secretary has said. It's at the forefront of my mind, the heavy workload for the Coronial Division of the Magistrates Court. I will absolutely be working with the Chief Coroner and the Magistrates Court and getting their feedback, in liaison with the Department of Justice. It's very much on my mind and I appreciate the work that they do.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Attorney-General, the Integrity Commission has a number of outstanding investigations from 2022 which are still underway. According to their website, one commenced on 4 May 2022, on 19 August 2022 and on 18 November 2022. We're coming up almost to the third-year anniversary of that latter one there. These are serious allegations relating to the fail to declare and manage conflict of interest of information, improper exercise of powers and conflicts of interest, and recruitment and failure to comply with policies and procedures, an improper expenditure of public funds and failure to declare and manage any conflicts of interest. Why is there such a significant delay in these matters that are serious and the community is very concerned about?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. First, as I've shared before and certainly appreciate the work of the Integrity Commission, we value their work and their independence. In terms of the Integrity Commission, I indicate that the acting CEO is here, if you'd like to speak to the acting CEO. I am more than happy for her to come to the table if you would like that? The acting CEO could come to the table because it's obviously an independent entity, and I can't speak for and on behalf of the Independent Integrity Commission. She is outside, apparently.

Ms JOHNSTON - Perhaps I can ask you while we're waiting for her to come, just to keep the time going.

Mr BARNETT - Sure.

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Ms JOHNSTON - Are you satisfied with the time delays? Do you find this acceptable? Is this an issue about resourcing to the Integrity Commission? Will you commit to increasing resourcing so that they can get investigations done in a timely manner?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. I have a very high regard for the Integrity Commission. I thank the Chief Commissioner, Greg Melick, and the commissioners for their work. We take it very seriously. We do have funding in our budget, as you know - \$800,000 over four years to respond to the commission of inquiry in terms of oversight and compliance program to actively monitor and oversee notifications and investigations conducted by public authorities.

Ms JOHNSTON - Could we get her to come to the table. We're very limited with time and I don't want to -

CHAIR - Do you want to restate that question?

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, yes. My question was regarding the outstanding investigations that are still underway from 4 May 2022, 19 August 2022 and 18 November 2022, and to seek an explanation for the reasons why these matters are taking in two cases, over three years, and almost one in my case almost three years to investigate.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. I introduce acting CEO Julie Hickey. Thank you for being at the table, and pass to the acting chief executive.

Ms HICKEY - Thank you, through the Attorney-General. Obviously, I'm not able to comment on individual investigations, but there are a number of factors that can affect the time that it takes to conduct an investigation. It's important that we put in place robust and thorough processes that allow for procedural fairness to be afforded to all participants, but ultimately, it's the resourcing of our operations unit is one of the main constraints on the amount of time that we're able to take to conduct investigations.

It's also possible, but in some cases, there might be subject to legal challenges as well which can affect the time taken to conclude investigations. The main point is that we have to ensure that we adhere to very proper process.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, and through you, Attorney-General, you indicated that resourcing is a significant constraint. Is there anything in the forward budget that would mean that you would be able to alleviate that constraint and you'd expect these kinds of investigations to be completed in a more timely manner?

Ms HICKEY - We have received a small additional amount of funding for our oversight and compliance program.

Ms JOHNSTON - Will that fix the problem of resources?

Ms HICKEY - Obviously, our overall funding is something that's always a constraint. Our funding is relatively low compared with sister agencies interstate, but everything that we do in many respects is discretionary, so we're always making choices about what matters we're able to investigate and in the same way we make choices about what kind of educative programs we're able to roll out. With everything we do, we work within the funding resources.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, and through you Attorney-General, you mentioned that legal challenges - I'm assuming they're from the respondents or the person complained about has made those legal challenges - is that the case with those three that I highlighted from 2022 that there's been legal challenges to those matters?

Ms HICKEY - As I said, I'm not able to comment on individual matters. It was more of an observation that there are cases where we can be subject to legal challenge or legal scrutiny and we need to be able to respond to those and allow those processes to play out appropriately.

CHAIR - Noting that while the acting CEO is at the table, we do need to stick to the topic. I'll break from the cycle. Were there any questions on the commission?

Ms WHITE - No, not for me, Chair.

Ms JOHNSTON - I have a few more if I may continue, although I'm very mindful of the time. Attorney-General, we've just heard that there are significant issues with resourcing. I'm completing the investigations. My understanding is that some of those outstanding matters in 2022 relate to a member of parliament. It is unacceptable to the community that these matters are still under investigation and haven't been resolved. Do you commit now to ensuring that the Integrity Commission has the funding available to at least complete as a matter of priority, those last three at Standing Management 2022?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. As you can understand, the Integrity Commission is a separate entity to government, although part of government. We value and respect its independence. That's not something that the government would be involved in or interfering with in any way, shape or form. We certainly have confidence, and I have confidence, in the Integrity Commission to undertake its work and we value its work.

I'm happy to also indicate that the Premier, following the stability and confidence agreement with the JLN earlier in the year, is and will be reviewing the Integrity Commission within that 12-month period with a report by April next year in terms of improving and increasing its capacity to undertake its work.

Ms WHITE - Thank you. I have different questions. The custody notification service delivered by Tasmanian Aboriginal Legal Service is crucial for ensuring legal rights and timely well-being supports for Aboriginal individuals in custody in Tasmania. It did not receive funding in the recent budget. What immediate actions will your government take to rectify this oversight and how will you address the risk of service gaps which could lead to preventable tragedies and legal repercussions for Aboriginal individuals in custody and in the court system?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. There's some detail in that question, various parts of it. Certainly, I appreciate the Aboriginal Legal Service's work and they operate on Custody Notification Services for Aboriginal Tasmanians.

The government has previously considered a request by the Commonwealth that states and territories create a statutory Custody Notification Service (CNS). The Commonwealth's offered an offer of funding of \$750,000 or \$250,000 over three years - came with a requirement that the states and territories would develop legislation to support the CNS and would provide ongoing funding support after the initial three-year period. In May last year, the

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Commonwealth Government advised my department that as part of the 2023-24 federal budget, the Commonwealth offer of startup funding for a legislated CNS in Tasmania had been withdrawn. The Commonwealth decided to transition the CNS to jurisdictions on the basis that states and territories are responsible for their own criminal justice system. An evaluation of CNS was undertaken by KPMG in May 2023 and Commonwealth funding for CNS ended in June 2023.

In Tasmania, we already have specific requirements in place that govern the conduct of Tasmania Police in relation to engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons. I'm happy for the Acting Secretary to add to that answer if that would assist the honourable member.

Ms WHITE - I'll just point out before you do that TALS is forced to divert Commonwealth Government funding for legal services to sustain the CNS program because Tasmania is just one of two states in Australia that does not contribute funds to their program.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for that. I'll just check if the Acting Secretary or Deputy Secretary can add to that answer.

Ms BOURNE - Thanks, Attorney-General, through you. I know this is an issue that certainly TALS continues to work with the agency about. They've seen a fairly rapid increase in the notifications from Tasmania Police and as you've noted, absorbing that within their existing staffing compliment. But Ms Van Adrichem, who is leading our charge, so to speak, on the negotiation of the next National Access to Justice Partnership is certainly flagging the need for additional Commonwealth funding similar to what the Commonwealth have provided to many other jurisdictions to continue this critical service.

I'm not sure if there's anything Ms Van Adrichem wishes to add.

Ms VAN ADRICHEM - Thank you. That's correct. It has been a concern that's been raised with the Commonwealth as part of the next agreements that we would seek funding for, a Custody Notification Service for Tasmania, but those negotiations are still underway.

Ms WHITE - The SIS Tasmania service as well is another one that they've raised concern about. Are you able to deal with the concerns I have there in the short time that we've got?

Ms VAN ADRICHEM - That relates to the FEPLS funding stream, is my understanding, and the intention is for the FEPLS funding that's currently provided directly by the Commonwealth to providers for that to transition into the next Access to Justice Partnership Agreement as well. That's also part of those negotiations.

Ms WHITE - Okay. There is a current funding deficit that they're trying to deal with. It's quite a challenge.

CHAIR - Thank you, Ms White. The time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing. We will now take a short break. As time taken for breaks must be made up, can I encourage members to be as quick as they can. Let's say ten minutes and we'll get back onto it.

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The Committee suspended from 11 a.m. to 11.11 a.m.

CHAIR - The scrutiny of the Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the Committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard, and ask him to left to right or in some order, so that Hansard can differentiate people.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning. I appreciate this opportunity. I'd like to introduce my Acting Secretary, Dale Webster on my left, and to his left, Michelle Searle, Deputy Secretary, and my Chief Medical Officer, Dr Dinesh Arya. More than happy, through you, Chair, if you'd be happy, for an opening remark.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for the Estimates for the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing is five hours. We'll take a short break for lunch at 1.00 p.m. Minister, feel free to make some opening remarks.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much. It's a pleasure to be here today as Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing to speak about the significant investments we're making in our health system. Our Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future we took to the March election is all about taking more action right now on the things that matter, such as health. I'm very proud that the Budget clearly delivers on this commitment.

The Budget invests a record \$12.9 billion across the forward Estimates, and an increase from the \$12.1 billion in the last year's Budget. That's \$8.8 million a day, each and every day, into our health system that is delivering better care to Tasmanians where and when they need it.

I'd like to speak about our investment in staff, with our recruitment blitz well underway and delivering. It's delivering with over 900 health professionals through the door since late April - a net gain of 167, and more on the way. There are more doctors, nurses, paramedics, allied health professionals, and there'll be more this time next year than today.

The Budget invests \$88 million to lock in the 44 new doctors and 25 new nurses for the expanded Royal Hobart Hospital ED, and \$39.8 million for the 78 new paramedics that will be employed in the next four years, including 27 community paramedics.

I am also very proud of the fact that we've locked in funding for our GP NOW guarantee, with \$17.5 million over four years to deliver our GP NOW Rapid Response Unit, and the \$3.4 million over four years for the relocation grants of \$100,000 to attract 40 new GPs to our regions.

The Budget also locks in \$649.6 million across the forward Estimates for health infrastructure, with investment at all four major hospitals as well as into our regions. This includes \$21.7 million for our four new ambulance stations and other significant investments to improve the lives of Tasmanians, such as the \$15 million for the new diagnostic breast imaging clinic in Hobart and \$10 million for Stage 1 of the new cancer wellness centre.

Finally, I'd like to speak about mental health and wellbeing, which is so important to Tasmanians. It's been an honour to take on this responsibility, following through in the

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footsteps of the Premier and former minister Jeremy Rockliff, who's certainly led very significant reform in this area over recent years, and I'm very grateful for that.

Our government has delivered record funding of over \$614 million in the last decade to transform our mental health and alcohol and other drug service system. There is significant investment in this Budget as well, such as the \$82.6 million for a purpose-built, 40-bed older persons' mental health facility to replace the Roy Fagan Centre that I visited a week or so ago.

There's the \$42 million to build a new dedicated 12-bed child and youth mental health inpatient unit and day program facility, and the \$7.6 million to deliver a new mental health hub in Devonport, and \$5 million for the successful mental health emergency response service to be trialled in the North from next year.

In closing, the Budget delivers for Tasmania. It's investing in the areas that Tasmanians care about to ensure that they get the right care in the right place at the right time.

CHAIR - Thank you. As per previous sessions, it's just easier if we go through that rotation according to the order. I'll start with Ms Haddad.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, on page 130 of budget paper 2, volume 1, there's a reference to your department's financial management account. There's a footnote to say that the drawdown on these funds was to meet additional demand pressures. It was a \$157 million fund, or a little above that amount. Can you firstly explain what this \$157 million was intended for before it was drawn down to meet those demand pressures?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. I'll pass to the Acting Secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, the special purpose account, which is the account you're referring to, is effectively retained revenue over a period of time. It is available to us to for one-off expenditure, for unusual expenditure or, in this case, unusual levels of demand. We drew down on that to allow for that. In addition, I would say that we drew down to support increases in the cost of our human resources information system and as per the Budget paper 2023-24, we also drew down as part of our digital health transformation and used some of the funds for that.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you to the Acting Secretary. Was that entire \$100 - well, it's nearly down to about \$6 million now. You've spent the majority of that \$157 million, and the Secretary said it was spent on HRS and digital health transformation. Was that entire amount spent on those functions or were there other functions of the department that you used that money for?

Mr WEBSTER - In fact, I said demand, plus HRS, plus digital health transformation. The demand was the majority of that fund.

Ms HADDAD - When you say demand, do you mean salaries? Cost of employing staff?

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister. A part of our demand is funding additional salaries, et cetera, across the system, but also additional locums, agency nurses. Generally speaking, an increase in demand is funded by both state and federal through a funding formula

known as the ABF, or we also get national efficient price changes and things like that. It is a change in our demand. We met that through the special purpose account.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. My understanding is that those accounts are usually earmarked for a specific purpose, which is why they're called special purpose accounts. Can you indicate what it was originally intended to be spent on before it was spent on those other things that you've outlined?

Mr WEBSTER - In our budget papers we'd indicated we would spend some of it on HRS, some of it on digital health transformation, and there are other smaller things that we were funding, a number of small things. However, our intent was not to spend the whole \$158 million on those. I think we had \$36 million earmarked for things, and it would have left retained revenue for future things, but we took the decision in 2023-24 that our demand was such that it should match to that.

Ms HADDAD - My final question on this issue. Thank you, Secretary. First of all, minister, did you approve that spending, or is that something that gets managed at an operational level? I'll follow up with one final one after this.

Mr WEBSTER - We flagged the demand with the Treasurer and we received permission from the Treasurer.

Ms HADDAD - Okay. The Treasurer, in the other committee, refused to outline what that money was intended to be spent on. He's deferred to this department and he did indicate that it was approved by him, but my question to you, minister, is you do have massive issues with the Health budget. That is clear for all to see. Haven't you massively hampered your department's ability to manage the important work that they do by raiding this account so significantly?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. It's fair to say there are challenges, but also opportunities, in the Health sector, and that's why we are spending record funding to provide the support and services that Tasmanians need when they need it. The Budget makes it very clear there's increased funding from \$12.1 billion to \$12.9 billion over the forward Estimates. We'll always respond, as and where required, to meet the needs of the Tasmanian people wherever possible and appropriate. Of course, the Budget does set up that process, and I think the acting secretary has outlined that measure that's addressed that you've been speaking with us on these last few moments, and I think it's designed accordingly.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, on 8 August 2022, Launceston woman Anne Pedler died at the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) while ramped, and she'd been ramped for eight hours. One of the major issues associated with her death was the lack of 24/7 radiology and pathology services at the LGH. Minister, in August 2023 you met with Mrs Pedler's daughter, Stella Jennings, and you promised her this issue would be addressed expediently and that the LGH would have these important services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Does the LGH have those 24/7 services today? If not, is there funding in the latest state Budget to establish them?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. I want to recognise on the record the sadness and grief of the family concerned. That's why I took the meeting, as you've indicated, and have followed up on that with my department and the chief executive of the Launceston General Hospital, who I also am aware has reached out directly to the family member

concerned. I'm certainly aware of that and know that it's a very important point. I met with Stella Jennings and her husband at that time. As to the detail, I will ask the acting secretary to see if we can add to the answer I've provided.

Mr WEBSTER - All of our hospitals have 24-hour pathology and radiology. It's not on-site at the LGH but there is a 15-minute call-in when it's required during the late hours of the evening and overnight. That 15 minutes is set into the on-call arrangements. A number of staff, doctors et cetera, have arrangements in their awards where they have to live within a certain distance of the hospital because of our ability to call them back in. We are confident that that meets the needs of the of the community, particularly because it is such a short period of time for recall.

Ms ROSOL - Stella Jennings has already been through a lot and the saga hasn't really stopped for her because she is bravely keeping on fighting for these services to be available onsite 24/7, but nothing's happened with that. She says that you personally promised her that you would get on with the job and make those services available 24/7. She feels sick at the thought that it's going to happen to someone else because there is not a staff member on site all the time. Would you commit to introducing that 24/7 radiology and pathology on site at the LGH and would you provide a timeframe for when that might start?

Mr BARNETT - I acknowledge again the meeting with Stella Jennings and the follow-up, and the fact that I've had direct contact not only with my department but the CEO of the Launceston General Hospital. To confirm the advice I have and that the acting secretary has provided, there is 24-hour access to those services. That's the important thing. We want to deliver better health services faster and I can assure you, as I assure all Tasmanians, that I've tasked my department to continue to deliver on this support for Tasmanians in need.

All the recommendations from the report being actioned and progressed are being monitored, including how to improve the process to request urgent diagnostic testing and increased education of staff to ensure greater awareness of the requirements for escalating patient cases. A number of measures are also being progressed across the health system to improve access to our hospitals and address the issue of transfer of care delays, such as our transfer of care delay protocol that is already seeing improvements and boosting availability of healthcare options in the community. Was the meeting very productive? We followed up on that, implementing reforms and improvements on the way through. I can also indicate there's further reforms that will continue. I will pass to the acting secretary to add to my answer.

Mr WEBSTER - The minister recently opened the second cath lab at the LGH, which has increased our ability to undertake those activities. We've doubled our capacity for cardiology activities at the LGH and that's directly relevant in this case.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, in May of last year, the mother-baby unit at St Helens Hospital was unfortunately closed down. That's had a massive impact on many families and the kind of service provision to new mums and young families. In response, your government established three dedicated acute psychiatric-only mother-baby beds at the Royal and it's listed as an election commitment in the budget papers and only has funding for two years. Why have you only funded it for two years?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. I want to acknowledge the importance of these services for mothers and babies in Tasmania and that the St Helens Private

Hospital closed last year. I want to thank the Premier and former minister for acting swiftly in terms of providing the mother-baby unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital to meet the needs of those mums experiencing mental health challenges such as postnatal depression and anxiety with a new model of care implemented and the cohort of staff, including staff from St Helens Private Hospital.

You asked about the funding in the Budget for two years. That is directly as a result of our funding support for the Tresillian four-bed \$9 million facility in Launceston. We hope that will be up and running for Mother's Day next year but it may be shortly after that. That would be as a pilot to see how that would progress, to see if we could then deliver that service statewide. It is funding in the Budget for two years while the Tresillian northern-based \$9 million facility is established and those mother-baby services are delivered and I'm really looking forward to that. That's progressing really well at the Launceston Health Hub.

I should indicate as well that we have a telephone service that started on 1 July this year for mothers and babies, which is a statewide service. We do take it very seriously and that's why we've got that support in the Budget. I'll just see if the acting secretary would like to add to that answer.

Mr WEBSTER - In addition to that, this space of intensive parenting services are on a spectrum from what we do with CHaPS, which is our universal service through to our parenting centres across the state through to our inpatient service. We've recently released a discussion paper to help get advice from the community about the gaps that we need to fill in this space and work through this, so that the two years of funding in the south and the pilot in the north can then be informed by community-based co-design of what we need to have right into the distant future.

Mr O'BYRNE - The service that was provided by St Helens is significantly different to the service that's been provided by the psychiatric-only beds. Obviously that is for when people are in dire straits that they need to get access to it. There are only three beds. St Helens' service created significant preventative care to ensure that women and families didn't get to the stage where they needed psychiatric care. I don't understand why you're seeking feedback and you're running a trial in Launceston when the benefit of that kind of care is well known. Why are you not considering rolling out the Tresillian service to the state?

Mr BARNETT - As the acting secretary and I have said, we consider this very important. That's why we have funding in the Budget for those two years. That's why we've got funding for \$9 million for the Tresillian service in the north. The St Helens service was privately operated and then closed at short notice and the Premier stepped in and provided that support for psychiatric and postnatal depression and related services at the Royal Hobart Hospital. We'll do everything we can to provide that support.

I should also indicate that I've welcomed Gidget House, which is based in Hobart. They are operating around Australia. The Gidget Foundation provides face-to-face and telehealth-based psychological support services for expectant and new parents, and that's very much appreciated. We had to act very quickly to the closure of St Helen's Hospital and we've acted in a swift way to respond to the needs of the community, noting that there are needs in the community and we'll be monitoring that. I've met with relevant stakeholders in respect to this matter, I'm aware of your concerns in the parliament and more publicly, and I appreciate your advocacy.

Mr O'BYRNE - You could understand people being cynical about the fact that families in the north of the state are getting this service, but not in the south. There's a large cohort of families that have relied on that service and it's been preventative. It's taken the pressure off other elements of our health system. You can understand people being cynical that it's in the north, where a lot of the ministers live, but it's not in the south. That is of concern to me when they raise that with me.

Mr WEBSTER - I want to reassure people that the service in the south, whilst we initially set it up because it was a response to mental health beds being closed at St Helen's, the model of care has adapted as we've moved forward. It is more in the intensive parenting space than the mental health space at the moment. We acknowledge that for a couple of reasons, firstly, where the need sits and we've worked with community members and GPs around that need. The second part of that is the facility we're using at the Royal, which is part of the paediatric unit, can't be used for higher level mental health conditions. Whilst initially the advice we had from St Helen's was these needed to be mental health beds, we have very rapidly adjusted over time, and we continue to adjust to make sure we're meeting those needs.

The idea of the discussion paper was a number of people, from psychiatrists through the GPs, through to midwives, were telling us that we needed to have a continuum of services and we needed to make sure they met community needs. That discussion paper was released by the minister several weeks ago. We're waiting on feedback on that. In the meantime, we are delivering intensive parenting services in the south. The Tresillian model doesn't automatically translate from one state to another. We do need to evaluate it before we go forward with one model, but we will have intensive parenting across the state.

Mr O'BYRNE - One final point of clarification. My understanding is that the mother-baby unit beds at the Royal are for acute psychiatric admissions only. They require complex referrals, and do not provide care for maternal exhaustion and a range of other health issues that Tasmanian mothers are facing.

Mr WEBSTER - The model we designed on day one, on advice from St Helen's, was that, but it has adapted over time so it is now in that intensive parenting service. It does include referrals from GPs. You are right, the referral pathway is, at the moment, through mental health because that's where we located the service, but we are transitioning it to our Child Health and Parenting Service because we feel, as we've moved, the services move further and further away from the mental health stream and closer to the parenting stream.

CHAIR - I remind members of the committee that the format of the sessions today are questions seeking answers from the minister. I remind members not to stray into debating because that is for the House proper.

Mr O'BYRNE - Good luck with trying to stop us.

Mr FAIRS - You mentioned transfer-of-care protocol in your opening address. Can you provide any update on how it's going and any data that comes with that, and also work about getting our ambulances back on the road?

Mr BARNETT - It's a really important question. As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we announced that this would be a key initiative of our government. It's

rolling out and we're seeing incremental improvement. We're committed to end ramping, also known as transfer-of-care delays, at our major hospitals. That's what Tasmanians expect and deserve, and that's what we've committed to. That protocol across our major hospitals is working. We're seeing progress, with the end of year data for 2023-24 confirming ambulances spent over 9000 less hours ramped when compared to the previous year, with decreases at all four major hospitals. That's an outstanding result. That means Tasmanian ambulances and paramedics are out in the field and available for over 9000 more hours for Tasmanians that need them in the community. That's a reduction of 25.3 per cent compared to the prior year. No one can say it's not reducing ramping, with statewide performance exceeding 80 per cent in May, June, July, and August, and the statewide average of 83 per cent over last week.

I'm also pleased that new data from Ambulance Tasmania's monthly reporting shows that the average amount of time ambulances are spending at hospitals has significantly reduced over the last 12 months, from an average of 54.5 minutes in August 2023 down to 34.7 minutes in August 2024. At the Royal Hobart Hospital, the average time at hospital for ambulances was reduced to 39 minutes for August 2024, down significantly from 63.6 minutes 12 months ago, and the first time since reporting began that it has been under 40 minutes.

These aren't just numbers. This means ambulances are spending significantly less time stuck at hospitals and more time in the community helping Tasmanians that need it and deserve it. We know that there will be fluctuations day-to-day, week-to-week but these results are very positive and we will continue to take the measured approach as we continue on our way to the national best practice benchmark of 30 minutes. There's clear progress and I'm really pleased with those results and the data I've just announced.

Ms HADDAD - I want to return to the special purpose account. Previous budgets show that account was to be used on many of the things the acting secretary outlined, including the Digital Health Transformation Project, but never before has it been raided to the extent it has this year. I've gone back four budgets, four years, and never before has \$150 million been spent in one year alone. Looking at that Digital Health Transformation Project over the next three years, from last year's budget, it's been cut from a \$140 million allocation down to just \$90 million. Minister, have you cut the Digital Health Transformation Project because you've raided the fund set aside to pay for it to plug your budget black hole, mostly on salaries?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. I don't concur with the remarks. The Digital Transformation Program is very important. It is funded in the Budget and we have plans to improve the efficiency and operations of our health system. The referral system, as an example, is delivering in spades, with thousands upon thousands of improved efficiencies for the health sector. That means getting health care faster to Tasmanians who need it. I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - You'll see in the forward Estimates that in the out year, 2027-28, there is actually an increase in the amount allocated in the budget in that year.

Ms HADDAD - For the digital transformation?

Mr WEBSTER - This is for the Digital Health Transformation. We're on target, as I think the minister said. He may not have. It's a \$450 million transformation, \$476 million. To date, we've spent, and with the forward Estimates, we'll spend about 210, so it's a very long-term program. We are behind schedule with the tendering for electronic medical records.

Therefore, we have re-cash-flowed across the forward Estimates. There is money in 2027-28 which is actually an increase, if you like.

What we're doing is making sure we're doing this right and we're taking our time with the major reforms. Initial programs that we've done, such as e-referral, et cetera, are well on track; in fact, e-referrals is ahead of time with its delivery and has rolled out to GPs.

Ms HADDAD - My question is then, minister, it will be hard to meet those additional allocated 2026-27, 2027-28 commitments to the Digital Health Transformation when you've raided the special purpose account by \$150 million this year. Will you acknowledge that it's quite unprecedented? It's never been raided to that account in the previous four budgets and you've spent more than \$150 million to plug a budget black hole in your department.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. First, to the two-part question on the digital transformation. It's a \$476 million commitment over a 10-year period. We're committed to that. That announcement was made some years ago in 2022-23 and through to 2027-28 it will receive \$190 million in investment out of that \$476 million over the decade. In this Budget we're investing \$120 million over the forward Estimates.

I've mentioned the more than 234,000 e-referrals seamlessly progressing through the referral management system. It's incredible. Since it was launched in May last year it is making a real difference delivering better healthcare services faster. In terms of the e-referrals' success in numbers, there is a two to three-day average reduction in time to triage patient referrals across all major hospitals. The length of the trail of paper saved by the Department of Health is 135 times the height of Cradle Mountain. This is a massive saving, it's an improved efficiency, it's an excellent investment and we're proud of it. It's a 10-year plan and that's just part of our record funding to deliver better healthcare services faster.

In terms of the SPA, as you've referred to it, I'm happy to pass to the acting secretary to speak to that matter.

Mr WEBSTER - With the SPA and the spending of it in 2023-24, a large element of the demand in that area was our backpay, because we had a number of EBAs that were signed off by government in that period and we had backpay. In addition to that, with the large amount of revenue that we received from the Commonwealth we have to manage the timing of that as well, so there's a number of things that go into that expenditure. The purpose of the SPA is it's retained revenue to put back into health services, so we took the decision that in 2023-24, in addition to the planned activities, we gained permission from the Treasurer to use that money to even-out demand for 2023-24, including the demand on us for backpay.

Ms HADDAD - Before that spend of more than \$150 million in 2023-24, was that special purpose account intended for any other specific purpose, for example, funding hospital beds or any other specific purpose that you intended it to be spent on?

Mr WEBSTER - What had been flagged in the in the budget papers going forward was money for a human resources information system and money for digital health transformation and a few other small programs which added up to hundreds of thousands of dollars rather than millions. It had only been flagged for things like that. As I said, you'll see there is money in the in the Budget for HRIS, so we don't need to use the SPA in terms of digital health transformation there. We believe that the cash flow is what we need going forward for those

things so through the state Budget, we've effectively smoothed out by spending the SPA, we've picked up other funding for the items that were to be flagged by the SPA, but the SPA had been building. The purpose of it is not to build and build, the purpose of it is to spend it on health services.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, nowhere else in the whole Budget are the cuts going to be felt quite as acutely as they are in the Health department. In addition to having raided that special purpose fund, you've got \$600 million worth of cuts coming out of an already struggling system over the forward Estimates. The efficiency dividend for your department, according to the budget papers, is going to be more than \$202 million over the forward Estimates. That's \$22.5 million this year. How do you expect to find savings of \$22.5 million this year?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks for the question. It's a very broad question.

Ms HADDAD - It's pretty specific actually. Your department's going to have to go away after these budget hearings and find \$22.5 million in your government's efficiency dividend. I want to know how you're expecting them to do it.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, and the first part of the answer is that the Treasurer tabled the budget savings strategy in the parliament last week.

Ms HADDAD - Well, he didn't.

Mr BARNETT - That's on the public record.

Ms HADDAD - He really didn't and you know he didn't. There're no strategies in that document.

CHAIR - Ms Haddad, I'm allowing people to ask follow up questions and pursue lines of questioning, but if you can let the minister answer the question, then you can follow up.

Mr BARNETT - I'm noting that that document was tabled last week. I am more than happy to have questions on that document and the budget savings that were noted. Just to confirm again, we are spending record funds in Health, more than ever in Tasmanian history. It's gone from \$12.1 billion to \$12.9 billion over the forward Estimates. That's not \$8.3 million a day, it's \$8.8 million a day. It's a massive investment. We're pleased and proud of it because we know how important Health is. In terms of the other part of the question, I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Thank you, minister. In terms of the budget efficiency dividends in the categories outlined in the strategy the Treasurer tabled, in each of the categories I'll give examples. In terms of combining roles to make savings, for instance, the Chief Medical Officer is also now the Chief Psychiatrist. The deputy secretary of Community Mental Health and Wellbeing, Michelle Searle, is also the Chief Executive of Mental Health Services. They are combining roles at the leadership level in order to save money at those senior levels.

In terms of our Budget, we have massive spending on consumables. If I just use one example from within our consumables, pharmaceuticals, because of delays in supply and those sorts of things, we run at the moment with around 12 weeks' worth of stock of high-risk

pharmaceuticals, and that is a prediction of what we'll use. If we don't use it, there is actually considerable wastage from that.

We have looked across the country at other systems of ordering et cetera and targeted systems used in a number of states and territories where the contract with the supplier is such that they're required to deliver it, so that we don't have the holding, the holding sits with them. We believe that we can save in excess of \$3 million across pharmaceuticals by changing the way we contract for pharmaceuticals. We can do that in a number of areas of consumables across the system, and I think consumables is in excess of \$600 million within the Health budget, so a small saving in that space can mean that the budget efficiency dividend is met.

Other areas we're looking at in the Department of Health is that we've grown up a number of silos and a number of policy teams that exist across different areas of the department. We are looking at whether we can combine those policy teams and things like that to gain efficiencies there. We're also looking at operating as a statewide service and how we can get efficiencies from doing things like ordering on a statewide basis rather than a local basis and things like that. All of those things, given the considerable cost of those to the department, means we believe we should be able to meet the budget efficiency dividend, and I probably should put in there that the standard ones of consultancies and travel will be targeted as well.

Ms HADDAD - Okay, thank you. It's a lot to come up with, \$22.5 million, and I wish you well with that task. Other ministers over the last day and a half of hearings have agreed to table more substantial savings strategies from their departments. I think there's been some taken on notice and some have agreed to table them. Will you undertake to table more detail than that one-page that the Treasurer tabled in the House last week? I'm happy to put it on notice.

Mr BARNETT - I think it's best to have questions and we can take the questions. We were very proactive last week in responding to the parliament's request and the Treasurer outlined those budget savings and it went through my office, obviously, as minister for Health. I know the acting secretary worked on it very hard as well. I'm not sure what more we can provide at this stage to the committee.

Ms ROSOL - I'm going back to the topic I was discussing before. A root cause analysis on Anne Pedler's death had a recommendation to consider feasibility of on-site services 24/7 and the department accepted that recommendation and said it would be done within a year. That timeframe's long since passed and earlier you confirmed that the department accepted all the recommendations of the RCA, so was that feasibility study completed?

Mr WEBSTER - Yes, it was, and I will repeat we do have 24/7 services available at the LGH. So, in fact, if you compare -

Ms ROSOL - I am talking about on site, a staff member on site.

Mr WEBSTER - They are on site. We don't do it off site. Someone comes in to the hospital to do it.

Ms ROSOL - Available on site.

Mr WEBSTER - It is 24/7. In a number of cases, it's quicker than what you would get in a nine-to-five window because in a nine-to-five window we have medical imaging that is

booked and those sorts of things, so, you're moving things around to fit in emergency patients, whereas in after hours you've got a 15-minute call in. As the minister said, or I may have said last time, we've doubled our capacity of our cath labs in recent weeks. We've moved to two cath labs at LGH.

Ms ROSOL - You're confirming you did do a feasibility study? What was the recommendation from it if it was completed? I think there was a report that was supposed to be outlining the feasibility of it.

Mr WEBSTER - Our management looked at the feasibility of it. We didn't do a study.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Going back to the matter of Mother Baby Unit, Mr O'Byrne was quite correct in saying that there was a vast difference in service provision between what was offered at St Helen's and what's now currently offered at the Royal Hobart Hospital. I think in response to a question from Mr O'Byrne, you talked about the intensity of parenting services that are now available to parents and mothers in the south. The St Helen's model provided not only services to mothers experiencing mental health challenges, but also to mothers and babies who are experiencing feeding and sleeping difficulties and related exhaustion issues. How are those mothers who are experiencing significant feeding and sleeping challenges and are exhausted being provided for now in the south with an intensive resident service?

Mr WEBSTER - St Helen's provided that service to the private sector, not as a universal service. They provided to the public sector a mental health service. When we established a mother and baby unit, initially - and incorrectly - we established a mental health unit, thinking that was what we were taking over.

We've adapted that service over time and, as I've said, the next step is to move it away from mental health in the actual mental health services into our CHAP service, because it needs to adapt to what are the requirements or the needs of the community. We accept that there is a need in terms of the, if you like, the psychosocial supports that the parents need, babies not feeding correctly, all of those sorts of things.

We've moved away from a pure mental health model to one that covers a, well, it doesn't actually cover the more acute mental health anymore, it covers more the acute intensive parenting support.

That said, the discussion paper talks about needing to have a range of services. If we can actually intervene through our CHAP service, through initially our phone service but also our parenting services that are day services, the idea would be to avoid the residential service and then have that as the last resort.

That's the model that we're trialling in Launceston, and we will move towards that in the south during the two years of the pilot as well. If it's successful, then we can move forward from there. But I would agree with you there is this need and our service is moving to meet that need. Initially, we only had a public mental health service. That's what we took over and then we've realised that the need is greater in the intensive parenting space than it is in the mental health space.

PUBLIC

Ms JOHNSTON - Regardless of whether that service that St Helen's has provided privately or publicly, there was a desperate need for that service and it was well subscribed to.

I, myself, went to that service, and I know dozens and dozens of women who have had that service in the 18 years since I was there. The issue remains that there are women in the south who have babies experiencing significant feeding and sleeping issues who are exhausted and need assistance overnight and residency assistance who don't have access to services.

Minister, what do you say to those women who right now are experiencing those issues? Their babies are failing to thrive because they're experiencing significant feeding and sleeping issues. They're exhausted themselves. Where do they go?

Mr BARNETT - My immediate response is it is a concern and we do take it seriously. That's why that discussion paper is being released. I have had meetings with relevant stakeholders. I acknowledge the concerns.

Having said that, St Helen's is a privately funded entity. Those services were primarily to the private sector, apart from what the Premier stepped in and then opened those intensive beds for mothers and babies that require that intensive support and care.

There's now a transition taking place, as the acting secretary has outlined. We do take it very seriously, that's why we have funding in the Budget for two years ongoing for the mother baby at the Royal Hobart Hospital. That's why there's funding in the Budget of new money of \$9 million for the four-bed mother baby unit in Launceston with access for day services as well. That's why there's funding support for a statewide telephone service, which started 1 July this year. The number is 1300-TASBUB. That is why this will continue to receive active consideration by not just myself but the department. I look forward to rolling out the relevant initiatives that the acting secretary has outlined.

Ms JOHNSTON - With all due respect, minister, our telephone service does not cut it at 2.00 a.m. when you have baby who's failing to feed, failing to sleep and you're exhausted. There needs to be an overnight service where women can go to experience parenting assistance with those particular issues but also to recover from exhaustion. You don't seem to have a plan to achieve that in the long term.

Mr BARNETT - The acting secretary has outlined details of that plan, including engaging with the relevant stakeholders and others in the community. That's why that paper was released in recent times. That's why we're getting that feedback. We do take it very seriously. That's why there's the transition for the support at the Royal Hobart Hospital to meet the needs of mothers, their families and the baby concerned. We do acknowledge the concerns that you've raised, that have been raised with me directly and are in the community.

Mr FAIRS - Longer term plan for a health system, minister, any update on our long-term strategy?

Mr BARNETT - I have an update that I am pleased to provide. We have the long-term plan for healthcare to Tasmania 2040. This is part of our plan. I'm pleased to provide a progress report to the committee. I'd like to table that progress report and make that available to members of the committee. That is a progress report with an update and it is very important.

PUBLIC

In the first year of implementing this plan, we've focused on building the foundations needed for a modern and sustainable health system which provides access and a patient-centred approach and patients should always be at the centre when we're talking about our health system to meet the challenges and grasp the opportunities for the future.

We have continuing investments in critical infrastructure, digital technology, contemporary models of care and our health workforce with the recruitment blitz. As indicated in my opening remarks, it is making positive progress. There will be more people on our frontline this time next year than we have today.

We also have a health workforce 2040 strategy and a 10-year strategy for digital health transformation touched on earlier today that's funded in the Budget.

I released the north west master plan a few weeks ago., which was very important for the north west coast. Medicare urgent care clinics are new initiatives with the federal government and they are progressing, with two in Hobart, one in Launceston, one in Devonport and soon to be one at Bridgewater.

We have the implementation of the Victorian Stroke Telemedicine Service at the Mersey Community Hospital to enable access to 24/7 on-call support for stroke specialists in Victoria. We have the expanding Hospital in the Home in the south from 12 virtual beds to 22 virtual beds. To provide rapid response services, we have the establishment of the Tasmanian Rural and Remote Clinical Network to understand rural needs. We've got continuing success with the outpatient transformation strategy to better meet the needs of the Tasmanians in the community. All this is about getting the healthcare services that Tasmanians need and getting it to them faster to deliver a better health system for Tasmania well into the future, into the decades ahead.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, this year's budget makes it clear you intend to spend around \$130 million less on salaries than you did last year. How do you spend \$130 million less on salaries without cutting jobs?

Mr BARNETT - Well, let's be clear in terms of those cuts. There will not be those cuts to the frontline services. I've made it very clear time and time again that there will be increasing funding support and numbers on the front line. That's what we're doing. We're protecting those frontline services. We'll continue to do that. In terms of the claims of budget cuts, that's not true. We're increasing the funding for health with a \$12.1 billion to \$12.9 billion over the forward Estimates and I can't be any clearer that we're delivering record funding for our health services.

Ms HADDAD - You've said that you'll be spending more, increasing funding support, protecting frontline jobs, yet the budget does show \$130 million less in salaries than last year. Is that an admission that your forecast in the budget papers is wrong and you already know that you're going to blow your budget again next year, because how else do you spend less on salaries but get more staff? It can only be one of the two. Either you've got it wrong in this year's budget or you know you're going to blow the budget again next year.

Mr BARNETT - Yes. I think I've made it clear that there will not be those cuts that you've alluded to. I'll pass to the acting secretary to add to that answer.

PUBLIC

Mr WEBSTER - As I've outlined before, part of the SPA was used on back pay. Part of last year's employment information is on one-off payments.

Ms HADDAD - Right.

Mr WEBSTER - That's important, but the second part of it is that the state budget, you know, in terms of activity demand, we actually have adjustments throughout the year, because as you'd appreciate, activity-based funding models that we run with the Commonwealth under the NHRA mean that as activity changes over the year, there is actually additional input from the Commonwealth. So, we need to adjust for that et cetera, but across the forward estimates where we would envisage that we actually need to increase FTE to match the additional demand, but also the additional commitments that we've made in terms of additional services that we'll be delivering. If I can correct, earlier I referred to a cath lab at the LGH when I should have said the CT scanner.

Ms HADDAD - I did write down 'cath lab', because I didn't realise there was a second - okay.

Mr WEBSTER - Yes, the cath lab is in Hobart, so, but just clarifying, it's a CT scanner.

Ms HADDAD - Okay, so there's still one at the LGH. Yesterday, at the other committee, the Premier confirmed that there is a cabinet razor gang looking at cuts across the budget. When there are deep cuts in your budget, why aren't you on that razor gang as health minister?

Mr BARNETT - Look, that's an interesting question. I think in history there's always been a budget committee even under a Labor-Green government. What the Premier and the Treasurer obviously - and I think that was made clear yesterday - what I'm interested in as the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing is delivering a better health system and I'm absolutely delighted with the outcomes of this budget, which provides record funding again, going from \$12.1 to \$12.9 billion over the forward estimates.

That's more than \$8 million a day, \$8.8 million a day. I'm really pleased with the support for the health sector and my ambition as the relevant minister is to be an advocate for the health sector and to deliver better healthcare services faster. We're delivering on that. I can see the improvements each and every day, but I also know there's still a lot more work to do and I'm absolutely determined to work with the stakeholders and the community and the people of Tasmania to deliver better healthcare services faster.

Ms HADDAD - Okay. My final question just on this issue really is, as your department goes forward and meets their share of the efficiency dividend, the growing efficiency dividend, will you rule out involuntary redundancies across your department and the THS?

Mr BARNETT - I think the acting secretary has outlined the range of measures in terms of the budget efficiency dividend strategies. I think it's very comprehensive. I think the strategies as tabled by the Treasurer last week are also quite comprehensive. I'll just check if the acting secretary would like to add to the answer.

Ms HADDAD - The strategies tabled last week didn't talk about redundancies, either voluntary or otherwise. Are you saying that you can't rule out involuntary redundancies in meeting your budget cuts?

Mr BARNETT - I think the acting secretary said earlier, and I just want to put on the record, we expect an increase in numbers in the health system and the Tasmanian health service. That's an expectation that the acting secretary has noted. I've said on the public record many times, and I'll say it again now, that there will be more on the frontline this time next year than we have today. Under our recruitment blitz we are already seeing good improvement with more than 900 employed since April this year. That's a nearly 170 net increase. This is doctors, nurses, paramedics, allied health professionals on the front line delivering the healthcare services that Tasmanians need and deserve.

Ms HADDAD - I respect that, but you can employ more staff while making others redundant. I am explicitly trying to seek an assurance from you that you will rule out involuntary redundancies across your department and the THS.

Mr BARNETT - Let's be very clear. I'm certainly ruling out any cuts to the front line, to make that very clear. We are growing the healthcare workforce in the Tasmanian health system. We're going to deliver more healthcare services faster.

Ms ROSOL - Through you, minister, the acting secretary, I just wanted to note that it was the Health Department's own language that used the word 'on-site services 24/7'. When I talk about that I'm referring to the department's own language. On what date did the management team complete the feasibility assessment. Did you update Stella Jennings to say that the promise of that 24/7 on-site services wasn't going to be kept?

Mr WEBSTER - I'll find out a date, but I want to emphasise that we provide 24/7 on-site services. As I've outlined before, it is highly likely you'll get a faster service in the middle of the night with a 15-minute call in than you get through the day. I emphasise, and whilst I misspoke that the CT scanner is about doubling the capacity, it goes particularly to this particular tragedy, that we have doubled the capacity available at the LGH.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, yesterday you told the Legislative Council's hearing on Health that the Department of Health has appointed a senior doctor to manually audit patient death records. This follows the final findings from the reportable deaths review. We appreciate the information that was provided to the Committee yesterday, but we do want to clarify a few things. We understand this doctor will be reviewing both historic and contemporary cases. How will this work be prioritised? Will you be taking further evidence and input from current and former staff as part of that?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I indicate that we certainly are taking this matter very seriously. That's why we acted so quickly to appoint an independent panel to look into this matter and report back. We now, through that independent panel to the department, have made those referrals to the coroner. There's further work to be undertaken. In terms of that work, I will refer to the acting secretary to speak to that important work.

Mr WEBSTER - It'll be a combination of things. If staff want to identify through the process, through the chief medical officer, that there are cases they believe should be looked at, then they can be given to the senior doctor to have a look at. The second part of it is randomising it. We think that's really important, that we have a random sample, so that we're checking that we are doing the process, and we're not just looking at cases that are identified, but where someone might be uncomfortable speaking up, or an area where they're

uncomfortable speaking up. We got a random sample so we can actually look that we're doing the process correctly. It's a combination of both.

Ms ROSOL - From what you're saying I'm just not clear, will they be reviewing every death certification Dr Peter Renshaw was involved with during his time or only randomised?

Mr WEBSTER - Prior to 2019 we had a manual process around the reporting of deaths and, in fact, prior to 2019, the reporting doctor of a death wasn't recorded in Births, Deaths and Marriages either. We will have to manually look back prior to 2019 and literally pull files off a shelf. Some of them will hit to Dr Peter Renshaw's cases, some will be other people's cases. But we want to assure people that we looked at all cases from 2019 to 2023. What we're doing is going back and actually randomising to make sure that we pick up any prior cases as well.

It is important that we note that it's almost an impossible task to go back to 1989 when Doctor Renshaw was originally appointed Director of Medical Services given the manual nature of the health records so a random sample is the best way to pick them up.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, back to the mother baby unit. You've allocated \$9 million for the trial in Launceston. The Tresillian model is well regarded, founded in good medical practise, and considered successful where it's been applied.

Now, I've been around a while, I've heard trials, I've heard pilots. Is this just a case where you're going to have to expand it to the South, but it's a budgetary decision to roll it out in the North and you're managing it financially as opposed to managing the needs of those of Tasmanians that need that service?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. We do take this very seriously. I'm pleased there's funding in the Budget, new funding of \$9 million for that 4-bed mother and baby unit which is being developed as we speak. We hope to have it in place soon after Mother's Day next year and then that will roll out and the services will be made available.

As I've said earlier, there's the telephone service from 1 July this year. The transition of the Mother Baby Unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital is outlined by the Acting Secretary and the discussion paper that the acting secretaries made reference to getting feedback on that from the relevant stakeholders in the South of Tasmania. We do take it very seriously, we're taking on board that feedback and we want to make sure that we get the balance right and deliver the services that Tasmanians need. I'll ask the acting secretary to add to that if he can.

Mr WEBSTER - Tresillian is actually only one model out there and there are a number of other models and we believe it's important that we find a model that fits Tasmania. Whilst we're trialling Tresillian, we're also working in the South, as I said, to transition as quickly as we can more into the intensive parenting.

But in addition to that, when we're putting the discussion paper together, we got lots of different views about what it is that we should be delivering, which is why we believe we have to go to community to get the community feedback. We have clinicians that understand this space that are advising us, but we are moving forward to make sure we have residential services across the state that are matched to the needs of the community.

PUBLIC

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, data from a federally funded state-wide perinatal infant mental health referral service paints an awful picture about the demand for perinatal mental health services and a lack of support available in the state. Over the last seven months, referrals for perinatal infant mental health services in Tasmania are up by 58 per cent. This has all happened since St Helens closed their service. Whilst you talk about a trial in the north and you talk about consulting, isn't everyday delayed a problem for Tasmania?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. Before I refer part of that answer to the acting secretary, just to note that St Helens was a privately-operated private hospital providing services-

Mr BARNETT - There's always been a management between public and private services and the public step in when the private collapse, it's always been the way.

CHAIR - I'll let the minister answer the question and I'll let Mr O'Byrne have a follow up if he needs to.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much. As I was saying, the St Helens Private Hospital closed and the Premier stepped in very quickly with taxpayer funded support for much-needed services for the mother and baby unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital. I appreciate the leadership of Jeremy Rockliff to deliver on that support and service. To add to the answer, I'll ask the acting secretary to respond.

Mr WEBSTER - Specifically on perinatal infant mental health services, we have seen an increase in referrals in recent times, but we've also had increases in service delivery, particularly in the north and north west, where we are putting additional services. At the moment we're running a Perinatal Infant Mental Health Service (PIMS) pilot on behalf of the Australian Government in the north and north west.

In the south it has had a service well established over a long period of time, whereas the north and north west had very limited services, which we are growing. Across all of our demand areas, we look to how we are going to clinically respond over a period of time. I would see that the perinatal infant mental health service is purely in the mental health space, and we continue to have separate plans to that. Then we have the Intensive Parenting Service (IPS) area.

We've only touched on very few of the parenting services that we offer. In addition, when we actually do checks universally on every child early on in life, from that we have risk assessments that then see CHaPS follow up with those children. We have the phone service, which can do referrals back into CHaPS, and we have the day parenting services as well.

Any parent that is struggling through that period should be in contact with our 1300TASBUB number because it gives them access to a range of services, not just a phone call.

Mr O'BYRNE - I apologise for talking over the top, minister. It's always been the situation that when there's a service that's been provided by a private health provider that is of absolute need and plays a crucial role in the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians, if that falls over, the state government or the public provider has a responsibility to lean in to fix that hole. That is something that is well accepted.

PUBLIC

I understand that there's access to phone calls et cetera, but essentially if you've got nowhere appropriate to refer a parent after a phone call for them to deal with the issue, then you might as well not have the phone call. It's further frustrating mothers and families. The only thing that I can take from a lack of response to a service delivery in the south is that you didn't value or you don't think that the St Helens model was appropriate. I would say there are hundreds of women and children and families that disagree.

Mr BARNETT - I'm happy to take that as a question. I think the advocacy is noted and your strong interest in this matter. We take this very seriously, as the acting secretary has indicated. There is a whole range of services for children and parents. We have the Child Health and Parenting Service across the state, and they have a whole range of services in place as well.

We take it seriously; that's why we are engaging with stakeholders as we speak. We'll get that feedback and we'll do everything we can to provide the support and services that Tasmanians need. St Helens was a private hospital that has closed, and we had to act at very short notice. That is why I've commended the Premier and former minister, Jeremy Rockliff, for acting so quickly to stand up the mother and baby unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital. I hope that's at least acknowledged in this place. I think it is in the community at least.

We have that discussion paper out now looking at the perinatal healthcare model that offers a range of options in the community, public and private system beyond hospital care. I think you need a holistic approach, and we take it seriously. I'll check if the acting secretary wants to add to that, but you don't have to.

Mr WEBSTER - I want to emphasise that it's not a phone call. There is a range of services that sits behind the phone call. The ministers outlined some of them - Gidget House at the Peacock Centre. We're working with Gidget House to extend into the north west. We have an iCOPE process within CHaPS; we have an app within CHaPS. We also have day service parenting services. We're adapting the mother and baby unit, as we're calling it, at the Royal into an intensive parenting unit. We have Tresillian coming online up north.

We are responding with more services than were available through St Helens. It's not just a phone call; there are services that sit behind that right from the universal service and then the risk assessment that goes with that.

The initial contact for mothers and parents across the state can be done through the 1300TASBUB number, but we want to assure that we have services that sit behind that number. We don't want to paint the picture of it's a phone call.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, you mentioned before about ambulance ramping and the positive or encouraging data that shows it is coming down. That's great. Can I talk about the new ambulance stations for a moment around Tasmania? I know in Beaconsfield, in my electorate of Bass, there's one. Obviously the ones at Bridgewater and Queenstown have been delivered. Is there any update on any others?

Mr BARNETT - I'm really pleased and proud of the fact that we've got \$21.7 million in the Budget for Cygnet and Snug, and likewise Legana and King Island. I was on King Island many months ago and I know they're very keen to see that happen. Likewise at Legana, which is a growing population area, as I know you would know, honourable member for Bass.

PUBLIC

As you've indicated, that's on top of the big investment we've already made at Bridgewater, Beaconsfield and Queenstown, which opened last year. I've visited all of those. I can advise work is nearing completion on the super stations at both Burnie and Glenorchy. It'll be great to see them operational very shortly.

Construction work is well underway at Oatlands. I was there again just a month or so ago and it's well advanced. It's expected to open in early 2025. I can't wait to get that one open because it's right next to the multi-purpose healthcare centre at Oatlands, and I know the community will really appreciate that.

I'm also happy to provide a further update with respect to the ambulance stations at Bicheno and Longford, and I'm pleased to advise that the locations for these new ambulance stations have now been confirmed with planning and concept design work already underway.

As you're aware, we listened to the Bicheno community to withdraw plans for the new station to be located at 60A Burgess Street, Bicheno. I can advise the preferred site is now Lot 1, 19 Sinclair St, Bicheno, which is on existing Crown land. This follows close consultation with the Glamorgan Spring Bay Council and key community stakeholders and the community, which indicated a good level of support for the new Bicheno ambulance station at this location.

Further, the new Longford ambulance station will be located at 20 Union Street, Longford. I know this announcement will be warmly welcomed by locals in Longford and the northern midlands who have been raising this with me in recent months. We'll continue to provide those updates to the local communities in Bicheno, Longford and elsewhere about the next steps as we progress our plans to grow our health infrastructure. Of course, that's part of our \$650 million commitment in the Budget to Health infrastructure.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, you made an election commitment to fully fund a northern heart centre with \$120 million of state funds. Now you say it won't be delivered at all unless the Australian government agrees to pay half. Will you admit this is a massive broken election commitment?

Mr BARNETT - As the Premier said, we will deliver the northern heart centre. We are very pleased and proud to be committing to that. In terms of working with the federal government, the Premier has already written to the Prime Minister in February and has received a response indicating the Commonwealth's willingness to have further discussions. I understand that they are very productive and positive.

Likewise, I've written to the federal minister, Mark Butler, and indeed the Leader of the Opposition, Peter Dutton, seeking the support of both major parties given the upcoming election. I'm very confident about that. We know that the north and north west do need that and that's why we've given that commitment. I'm really looking forward to progressing that and ensuring that it is delivered for the people of northern Tasmania.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. I agree it's desperately needed. We've got the worst rates of heart disease in the country here. But at the election, and I'll quote what you said on the news at the time you made that commitment:

We have the \$120 million budgeted for over the next five years. We are going to make this a priority for our government.

Clearly, state funds were intended at the time and this is a broken promise. Why did you wait until budget week to make a formal request to the federal government to deliver this project that you committed to two months earlier?

Mr BARNETT - It's not unusual for Health infrastructure to be asking the federal government for funding support. We should be treated in the same way that other states and territories are treated. You would have seen the federal funding support for the Royal Hobart Hospital in your electorate, Ms Haddad, and we expect to be treated in the same way as other jurisdictions. Tasmanians will not be treated as second-class citizens.

As I've indicated earlier, the Premier made that request in February earlier this year and you're quoting me. I will quote Ms Anita Dow during the election campaign, where she indicated as follows when she was asked about her plans to invest in our hospitals in Hobart, Launceston and the northwest and she said:

We certainly do have some firm ideas about how we want to see those projects progressed. We would love to work with the federal government to get more funding to make these projects happen.

It seems to be a little hypocritical for criticism at this stage from state Labor.

Ms HADDAD - No, you do misread me, minister. My point is it seems a very political way to negotiate with the Australian Government to wait until budget day to make a formal request. I acknowledge the Premier said he wrote on the day he called the election with a range of state-based projects and then weeks later made a commitment that \$120 million of state-based funds would be committed to the northern heart centre. That is a broken promise. It's a very political way to negotiate with the Australian Government.

My bigger question about this issue is, even if the Australian Government comes to the table today with \$60 million, there's not one cent of state funds in your Budget for the forward Estimates for the state's half of this project. How do you explain that?

Mr BARNETT - I think it's made clear publicly by not just the Premier, but also the Treasurer of our commitment to provide those funds to support the building of the northern heart centre. In short, as the Premier has said, we will get this done, we will build this, we will deliver the northern heart centre for Tasmania. Planning is already underway. I've made that clear publicly and privately. I'm really pleased about those plans and I'm looking forward to progressing them.

Ms HADDAD - So, plans are great, but you can't deliver infrastructure with just a plan. You need money to build the building and employ the staff that are required to run a new cardiac centre in Launceston.

Can you point me to where in this year's Budget there is any funding allocated to the state's half that you've committed to now? Even if the Australian Government comes to the table today with what you're asking of them, a 50 per cent component, there's no state-based funding for the forward Estimates. My question is, where in the Budget can I find that commitment and, second, if it isn't there, what's your time frame for providing any state funds to delivering a cardiac centre in Launceston?

PUBLIC

Mr BARNETT - In terms of the timeframe, as I've indicated, we consider this as a priority. Planning is underway.

Ms HADDAD - There is no money.

Mr BARNETT - I've had discussions with my department already and that's progressing. The expectation is that this will be delivered over a five-year period. We will have funding to deliver on that. The Premier has made it clear that we will deliver this. He said that publicly in the parliament and in the public arena as well, as have I. The planning is in this year's Budget, the budget allocation over the next four years. Working closely with the federal government, we will deliver and that's a commitment that I've given and the Premier has given.

Ms HADDAD - Just a genuine question to clarify, you've said it's a priority project to be delivered over a five-year span. Does that five years start from this financial year?

Mr BARNETT - Yes.

Ms HADDAD - Okay, thank you.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, I'd like to ask a few more questions about the reportable deaths review. There's been a suggestion made that in addition to his own direct misconduct, Dr Renshaw also intimidated or ordered others to falsify records and suppress matters from the coroner. Are you looking at any historic cases that don't involve Dr Renshaw, recognising what was said earlier about some of the case selection being randomised? Will there be any review of cases that don't involve Dr Renshaw?

Mr WEBSTER - It is indicated in the final report of the panel. They looked at some of the cases that would fit the category you just described. Yes, we'll look at other cases if anyone wishes to identify them. Earlier, I talked about going back to 1989. It has been pointed out to me that because of disposal schedules, the period we can go back to is 2003.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you for clarifying that. One of the things that's remarkable about the situation is how many times it happened. Staff we've talked to say that they raised concerns, but they never went anywhere. It doesn't seem like the review panel examined whether complaints had been made or how they were handled. Is that something that the department has done?

Mr BARNETT - I'll pass that question to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - The panel looked at whether we have corrected our processes. Importantly, we don't want the process that seemed to have been in place in the past to continue into the future. They gave us some assurance that it wasn't systemic, as in it wasn't multiple senior doctors across our system doing this. They gave us reassurance that our new processes were on the mark. We've taken the decision to give the public further confidence by having this audit process in place. As I said yesterday in the other place, if this has been a culture issue, we need to make sure that we're checking on the culture into the future, not just assuming that we fixed it at one point in time.

PUBLIC

Ms ROSOL - In recent years there have been multiple cases where a death that's occurred at the LGH has been referred to the coroner by another body, such as the health complaints commissioner. This fact was noted by the coroner in their findings. In one report in 2021, the coroner said:

I do not consider that the patient's death was due to, as the medical certificate of death indicated, a pulmonary embolism, nor, as a post-mortem report suggested, cardiac-related. The cause of the patient's death was sepsis.

When the department reviewed these coroner's reports and saw that the LGH had failed to appropriately report a death and that death certificates were incorrect, was anything done to investigate the issue?

Mr WEBSTER - I would have to look back and find out. I wasn't in the position at that time, so I'm not able to answer off top of my head. I will seek an answer for you.

Ms ROSOL - Is that something that we could take on notice, please?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, put it on notice, through you, Chair. We're more than happy to respond.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, you'd be aware that a number of NGOs provide important health services to our community. They've been experiencing cost increases in the delivery of their services. How many NGOs whose primary source is Department of Health funding reported a deficit budget last financial year?

Mr BARNETT - These are questions of community service organisations rather than the Tasmanian Health Service, but I'll check if the department can assist and ask the acting secretary if that's possible. We're talking about community service organisations that are outside of the scope of the Tasmanian Health Service.

Ms JOHNSTON - These are ones that are funded directly from the Health department.

Mr BARNETT - Sure, I understand where you're coming from, but we don't operate those organisations.

Mr WEBSTER - We don't get the annual reports and financial statements of every organisation that we fund. We can't tell whether they're running deficits.

Ms HADDAD - You do.

Mr WEBSTER - We get reports, but we don't look at that. We're looking at our services and report on our services. What I'm saying is we don't do financial analysis of the community service organisations, and I don't think we would have a list of who was deficit and who was profit. We might be able to find them on our files.

Mr O'BYRNE - Under the contract they should establish their sustainability. It's a standard question.

Mr WEBSTER - Absolutely. But you're asking - it's not something we readily collect and have at hand. As I said, we can go back through files. If there was an individual organisation we're concerned of, we would have particular conversations with them.

Ms JOHNSTON - My advice is that there have been a number of NGOs, who have their primary source of funding from the Department of Health, who have had to run deficit budgets last financial year. They have indicated to their grant funding managers that they reported deficit budget this financial year and so have requested an increase in their funding? Do you have numbers on how many have advised that they will need to run a deficit budget this financial year if they don't receive an increase in their funding?

Mr BARNETT - I'd have to check through the acting secretary. I would need to refer that question to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - The Community Service Organisation Indexation is in our budget this year. We are responding to the need for indexation. A number of our contracts would have been renegotiated in time. I have no information that any of our particular grant managers have flagged to me that we've had an individual request for additional funds because they're a deficit.

Ms JOHNSTON - Is that a concern to you? I'm assuming the grant funding managers are the point of liaison between the NGOs and the budget process. Is it a concern to you that there've been no indications from these grant funding managers that the organisations that they're liaising with are running deficit budgets and have requested additional funding above and beyond the community sector indexation to be able to continue to provide their services?

Mr BARNETT - First of all, I'd want to put on the record our strong support for the community service organisations. We have a very good relationship with them across the community sector. I want to say thank you for their support and services to deliver better healthcare services into the community, particularly for vulnerable and priority populations.

In terms of the grants program, I am advised we administer over 220 funding agreements to over 130 community sector organisations across a range of areas: mental health and alcohol and drug services, public health, home and community care services, the Tasmanian Health Service. In the 2023-24 year we provided \$75 million, which was an increase of approximately \$4 million from the previous year. The department has indicated it is important. The department will deliver the State government's election commitment to deliver the 12.5 per cent indexation over four years to community service organisations. In 2024-25 indexation of 3.5 per cent will be provided. The total cost of this initiative over the four years is \$7.6 million. I'll check if the acting secretary would like to add to that answer.

Mr WEBSTER - At the time of negotiating any of our agreements, there obviously would be organisations flagging their needs. In addition to that, there is a Treasury process where organisations put in individual budget bids and they are analysed by the department. There is a number of ways that community service organisations would flag the need for an increase, et cetera. Indeed, through grant programs, through contract programs, that flags the income from the Department of Health. As the minister said, there's now indexation in the forward Estimates. I would envisage that we would know who has asked for additional funding. It's considered in light of the entire Health budget, not just as individuals - you know, individual increases because an organisation has asked for it.

Ms JOHNSTON - There seems to be two streams that organisations can indicate their need for additional funding because they're facing budget deficits. There's a stream through their grant manager, but then also through a stream through a budget submission to Treasury. It seems that that request isn't getting through to the actual budget deliberations of Health because they continue to run deficit budgets. You can't give me an indication of the impact of how many organisations are going to continue to run deficit budgets without an increase in funding over and above the community sector indexation. Is that a concern to you that you have a significant number of community organisations, not-for-profit organisations, providing important health services, that are running at a deficit that you're not aware of?

Mr BARNETT - Personally I have a very good working relationship that's positive and collaborative with a range of community sector organisations. I appreciate their work on behalf of the government. I've just indicated that and how important those services are, which we really appreciate. In terms of the detail around that and the feedback we get, that is absolutely considered very seriously. That comes in writing directly to me and the department. The acting secretary has outlined the budget process as well, which we refer to the community service organisations so they can participate as part of that budget process going forward. That's not unusual. They're well aware of the process and they normally keep the government informed either directly through me, my office or the department. I'll ask the acting secretary to add to that answer.

Mr WEBSTER - I've just been reminded that the community services sector is actually part of DPAC and in fact the Community Services minister has announced the process of a review of the funding of all community service organisations with a view to the indexation, which we've completed, a review of the long-term certainty around outcomes, et cetera, which is due to commence, and the development of an outcomes framework looking at whether there is more certainty from longer-term relationships with government. I've only got scant detail of that given that sits outside our portfolio.

Ms JOHNSTON - So just to help NGOs with future budget bids, who should they be pleading their case to? Their grant manager, Treasury or the Community Services minister? Who do they go to?

Mr WEBSTER - That review is all organisations, hence some of the indexation is in the Health budget, but when we say that those submissions go to Treasury, that's the collection point. They are then sent through to the individual ministers and departments for analysis. The budget process when Treasury calls for submissions is that they come to Treasury and are then sent to the department for consideration.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, I'm sure the other committee members are finding this too in their electorates where their constituents are talking about the lack of GP access. I know there's GP clinics closing across Tassie and obviously that makes it, in turn, very hard to see a doctor. I know primary health is a responsibility of the federal government, not the states, but I just wanted to know what the 2024-25 Budget is doing to help Tasmanians access GPs.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. It's really important. Primary health care is a responsibility of the federal government and unfortunately they haven't stepped up where they needed to, but we've stepped in and stepped up and we've got funding in the Budget to support that. We've already stepped in in a whole range of areas, including East Devonport, St Marys at Lauderdale, Glenorchy and the like and we're not going to give up.

That's why we outlined a very significant funding commitment during the election campaign that's now in the Budget. I mentioned those in my opening remarks, or at least some of them.

I'm very pleased and proud to say that we now have that GP Guarantee, we have the GP Rapid Response Team of some 10 GPs based at Lauderdale, Launceston and Latrobe. They'll be available to move into those thin and failing markets and those GP practices that are not viable or under massive pressure. I am pleased with the news in recent days in terms of the Snug GP practice and my department was certainly involved in consultation there.

In terms of the GP NOW Rapid Response Team, we've got the \$250,000 grants for our GP practices. They've been advertised and the feedback's coming back in on that in terms of applications and that will help provide better healthcare services in rural and regional areas and across the state, wherever those GP practices are based, to keep them viable, to extend opening hours, to provide a nurse practitioner perhaps, and longer hours as I've indicated. On top of that, there is funding support in the Budget for up to 40 GPs in rural and regional areas over a five-year period to pay up to \$100,000, to pay for their HECS or indeed their incentives to come and live and be based in Tasmania. All those initiatives are well underway and progressing really positively and I'm pleased and proud of those nation-leading initiatives.

We are stepping up as and when required in this space. This will take pressure off our emergency departments. Four out of 10 people who present at an emergency department are not emergencies and having further support in the primary healthcare area will help us manage our EDs in our hospitals. The access and flow issues are very present every day, but this initiative is funded in our Budget and I'm really pleased and proud of it.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, another election commitment you made was that you would deliver a significant expansion of the emergency department at the Royal Hobart Hospital. Since then, there have been significant concerns raised that there isn't the budget for it and that the scope of the redevelopment will be significantly reduced. Can you confirm for the committee today what the reduced scope of work looks like and what the final scope, final budget and final time line for delivery is on the project?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question; it is a very important matter. Not only have we got a recruitment blitz on, but we've already successfully gone through a recruitment process for the 44 doctors and 25 nurses at the Royal Hobart Hospital ED. We've got funding in the Budget for the further expansion of the Royal Hobart Hospital ED. The department's working through that with the relevant stakeholders. I recently met with the department and the AMA, both the president and the CEO, and they're getting further advice from KP Health in terms of the plans and the concept drawings for that ED to make sure it's fit for purpose for both now and into the future. I'll pass to the acting secretary to add to the answer.

Mr WEBSTER - As we outlined yesterday, the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department budget has been adjusted a number of times by government. Initially it was a \$25 million expansion, the government then moved that to \$50 million, then \$82 million and it now sits at \$130 million. We are working through the second phase of development of the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department. The first phase increased the number of treatment points at the Royal from 57 to 82 to take us forward. As the minister just outlined, we have now funded the doctors and nurses so that we can use all 82 of those treatment points.

PUBLIC

The planning phase is to make sure that we know exactly the number we need for 2035. We have one report which shows that based on 5 per cent growth per year in presentations to the ED, we would need 121 treatment points by 2035. At the moment we're running at 1.4 per cent growth of the ED. A second report has shown a different number.

In addition to that, as the minister outlined, we're putting in the field a number of initiatives that are targeted at avoiding hospital presentations, a number of initiatives across aged care, community, et cetera. We've engaged KP Health to work directly with our clinicians and infrastructure to come up with what should be the exact number and we need certainty of that number, because as we go forward we need to plan decants around the hospital. As you would appreciate, we can't build and deliver. Our commitment to our doctors at their request is that we will, throughout the build, have 82 treatment points available and we'll staff to that need too, but where there are they will be moved around, including things like the main entrance to the ED which will move from Liverpool Street for a period of time and it will be Argyle Street. This is quite a detailed planning phase.

Part of that and part of the media recently is around whether it is this model or that model. Getting the numbers is important to decide that. As the minister said, he met with the AMA, but we also put in a process where we're consulting all our unions as well as staff through the planning phase. We need to get this right because we need to deliver the number of treatment points not for this year, but for 2035. We'll get one chance at this, given that our ED is in the basement of an existing hospital. We can't get it wrong.

Ms HADDAD - Is it fair, then, to say that the work you're currently doing - you said you're revising plans with KP Health - represents a reduced scope? Would you call it a reduced scope?

Mr WEBSTER - No. I want to emphasise that the department and the government in Tasmania has adopted the Aus Facilities guidelines, which are building guidelines for health facilities across Australia. We've adopted that as a standard. We'll be building a facility that meets that as a standard. What we deliver will meet that. What we are looking at is what the number of treatment points are. We could build 121, but if we don't need them and will never staff them, then we don't want to build to that level. We have to get that number right.

The second part of getting that number right is it affects how you decant. There are significant costs in this build from the fact that we have to move things around. Moving the front entrance from Liverpool St to Argyle St, we have to work with council to make sure we've got flow of ambulances in and out of the temporary entrance. It will mean our short stay unit, which we opened in February last year, will have to be converted to an emergency department area and those beds will have to go to another part of the hospital.

We've got all those complications, so we have to get this 100 per cent right. Yes, the scope is uncertain for the number of treatment points, but the actual facility we're delivering must meet that standard.

Ms HADDAD - I've had an email shared with me. To save time, I won't read the whole thing. It makes it clear that staff are worried that the scope will be reduced and that will impact patient safety. They say:

The ED redevelopment project is on hold for budgetary issues.

They go on to say that they have been directed to work with architects about a changed and reduced scope. They finish by saying:

We openly acknowledge that this design isn't fit for purpose to meet our current needs, let alone the future needs of the department. All of the risks associated with this design will be clearly documented and escalated.

They're disappointed with the outcome. They shared an architect plan that clearly does say 'reduced scope'. There is significant staff concern that the scope of the project now will impact patient safety in the immediate term and that it won't be sufficient to deal with future patient demand. Notwithstanding that you said you have the programs in place to try to reduce hospital ED admissions, there are significant staff concerns around reduced budget and reduced scope.

Mr BARNETT - I'll kick off the answer and indicate the objective of our government is to provide and to meet the healthcare needs of Tasmanians in the south of the state both now and into the future. That is our objective and the department is aware of that objective.

The department and I have collaborated with the AMA. I met with other unions last week around the table with the department with a range of questions and concerns, particularly relating to the Budget out of a decision of the House of Assembly a week or so ago. I have ongoing meetings with the unions and I look forward to those. They're usually productive and collaborative. We agree to disagree from time to time, but the expectation is that it'll meet the needs both now and into the future.

There is an agreement to continue collaborating and working together. That's exactly what's happening at the moment: getting expert advice, basing decisions on expert advice, and feedback. That's exactly what the government's doing. I'll pass to the acting secretary to add to the answer.

Mr WEBSTER - We accept that there's concern with our staff in our ED at the Royal Hobart Hospital and it is generated from the fact that we're in this planning phase. I'm familiar with the email that you just read out and I'm familiar with the plan attached.

I would hope that you would accept that that plan attached is not the standard that would normally be produced as part of a planning process. It is one person's quick and dirty look about how you could do something. We're committed to design to the standard, and part of that is making that decision about what is our need in 2035, because that's what we need to build for. As part of that step up, we didn't stay at 57 and say we'll build to a new number in the future. We actually said let's do the first step now and we went from 57 to 82 and the former minister gave that commitment and it was fast tracked in 18 months to give that extra capacity.

We will work with the staff through the planning process to get the right number and the right design going forward but, at the moment, I assure you that a quick and dirty plan attached to an email is not how we do our planning process.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you, and I'll just ask one last question on infrastructure to round out this, if that's okay.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Excuse me, Ms Haddad has another question or two left. I will just let the committee know, there is a hard cut at 1.00 p.m. and then we'll just continue on from where we left off as best we can.

Ms HADDAD - I may not need to come back to this, it might just be neat to finish it off. But it does go to capital works and infrastructure, which is the LGH master plan. You told the Upper House yesterday that the revised master plan is on the website, but it's not. The 2022 document is on the website. I want to know whether you will release - table today would be ideal, but if not then publicly release - a revised and rescoped LGH master plan that we understand has been worked on.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, so I think the current master plan is the 2022 master plan. The department is working on an update to the current master plan from 2022. Certainly, when that's concluded, I have no issues and I would support putting that on the website and making that available.

Ms HADDAD - Do you have a time frame for release of the revised plan?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question, we will just check on the time frame. Yes, I am advised by the end of this calendar year.

Ms HADDAD - Not to pre-empt it, but can you give a bit of a snapshot of reduced capital infrastructure commitments in the revised rescoped master plan compared to the original 2022 plan?

Mr BARNETT - I can advise we have \$650 million of capital infrastructure commitment in the budget, which includes work on the LGH masterplan, for which we're very pleased and proud. This includes \$39.5 million for expanding the emergency department, nearly double, at the LGH, and there's funding for the mental health precinct, which is adjacent to the LGH. There's funding for other work that's consistent with the master plan, including the car park, which is adjacent to the LGH.

There's a huge amount of work that will be undertaken over the forward Estimates consistent with the Budget and consistent with the master plan and we will update the community and the and the parliament as soon as possible once the revised master plan is complete.

Ms HADDAD - I would like to ask some questions about ambulance services. My first question relates to people calling triple-0 for an ambulance and the emergency call takers triage the call and assign it a priority level with priority zero and priority 1 calls being emergencies, life threatening incidents that require a lights and siren response.

When a call is graded as P0 or P1, it's supposed to be assigned an ambulance within three minutes. Can you tell us how many times ambulances were not assigned to a P0 and P1 emergency call within three minutes in 2022-23 and 2023-24 please?

CHAIR - The time being 1.00 p.m., we'll break for lunch but then I might suggest that we just kick off with the Ambulance Tasmania at the table.

PUBLIC

Mr BARNETT - Can I give you a heads up? We'll have the chief executive of Ambulance Tasmania at the table after lunch to assist us in answering the questions. Thank you.

CHAIR - The time being 1 p.m., we'll take a short break for lunch. We'll return to continue your scrutiny of the Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing portfolio at 1.30 p.m.

The committee suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 1.30 p.m.

CHAIR - This is scrutiny of the Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing portfolio. We'll start with Ms Rosol just restating her question, but I think I was just told that there is an answer to a question that was asked previously.

Mr BARNETT - Yes. Well, first of all, thank you very much to Ms Rosol, the member for Bass. We have the Chief Executive of Ambulance Tasmania, Jordan Emery, at the table. So I want to welcome the Chief Executive and in terms of a response to Ms Haddad earlier, I just want to clarify I can confirm 100 per cent that there'll be no forced redundancies at the Department of Health. Having said that, I'm happy for the Chief Executive to respond. I think we've got those questions and the Chief Executive's happy to respond directly. And if you're happy to -

Ms ROSOL - Do you want me to repeat the question or have you got it from before?

Mr EMERY - I think I understand it, Ms Rosol. Yes.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, we got the questions but let us know if we need to add to the answers.

Mr EMERY - Thank you. Through you, minister. And thank you, Ms Rosol.

If I can just provide some clarification around activation time: I think that's important and I'm very happy to go into the specifics of your question. The activation time is the time taken from when we receive an initial triple zero call to assigning an ambulance to that triple zero call, and it is affected by a range of different factors. But importantly, we continue to work towards a target of three minutes for all priority 0 and priority 1 cases.

In August of 2024, our 50th percentile or our average activation time across the whole state was 2.22 minutes and it's remained under 3 minutes as the 50th percentile for the last 12 months.

That said, when we look at the specific numbers of cases that have an activation time in less than 3 minutes, in 2022-23 that was 74 per cent. In 2023-2024 that was 71 per cent. If we extend beyond that to 4 minutes, in 2022-23, 85 per cent of P0 and P1 calls have an ambulance activated within 4 minutes or less, and in 23-24 that was 82 per cent of incidents had an ambulance activated in 4 minutes or less.

And if I extend that further to 5 minutes, in 2022-23, 89 per cent of P0 and P1 calls had an ambulance activated in less than 5 minutes. And in 2023-24, 88 per cent of priority 0 and priority 1 cases had an ambulance activated in 5 minutes or less.

And if I could just quickly touch on for a moment, through you, minister, the factors that impact on our activation time, of course, resource availability is one of those things and that is why the work we have done to reduce the average time in hospital through the transfer of care procedure has been so important.

And as the minister touched on earlier, to see that number reduce to 34.7 minutes as the statewide average for August is very important for us because that ensures we have more resources available to respond to those emergency cases. But, of course, there are some other factors that might affect our activation times, such as callers of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds or non-English speaking backgrounds. Sometimes caller information, particularly caller information around exact location that the emergency is taking place, can affect our activation time and we're actively working around ways we can optimise our services now to ensure that wherever possible, we can activate that ambulance as quickly as possible.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you for that. Is it possible to get a raw number for those figures, please, that are over 3 minutes for 2022-23? So a raw number, you've given me percentages of those that were seen within 3 minutes, 4 minutes, 5 minutes, but a number of those that weren't seen or went weren't appointed within or assigned an ambulance within 3 minutes.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks for the question. CEO.

Mr EMERY - Yes, through you, minister. We could provide that data. I'll have the team work on pulling out the raw numbers now and come back to you shortly if that's -

Ms ROSOL - Sorry. Just confirming, taking that one on notice?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, hopefully, we'll be able to get back to you today.

Ms ROSOL - Great. Thank you. So what was the total number of paramedic shifts that were worked in 2023-24? And what was the total number that went unfilled. And again, could we get that in raw terms, please, not percentages?

Mr BARNETT - So through you, Chair, I'll just check if the Chief Executive is able to respond.

Mr EMERY - There are limits to our capacity to provide that data but I can speak to some of the factors around that.

Mr BARNETT - If you could.

Mr EMERY - Thank you, minister, through you. Ms Rosol, whilst we continue to work towards implementation of the HRIS system, we don't have that data readily available. In terms of pulling shift data across the whole state for every location, it does require a significant amount of manual work to do that. We make every effort to fill all shift vacancies. We have had challenges at times filling shift vacancies, predominantly due to unplanned sick leave.

We also have circumstances that have affected some of our capacity to fill shifts around flexible work arrangements within Ambulance Tasmania that we're actively working through, but we're not in a capacity without current rostering systems to pool a total number of shifts and a total number of shift vacancies for the last year.

Ms ROSOL - So even though this would be a matter of significant public interest, you're saying you can't do that?

Mr EMERY - It would require - sorry, through you Minister - it would require a review of paper-based rostering records and timesheets over that period of time in order for us to pull that data. It's why the HRIS system is important for us to mature our rostering practices and ensuring that we can provide that data on a regular basis, but I would say Ms Rosol, we make every effort to fill those vacancies through shift arrangements, time credit, filling shifts on overtime, et cetera, because it's critically important for us that we have as many ambulances on the road as possible at any time.

Ms ROSOL - I understand that shift information has been provided in past estimates. So, just curious about whether that can be provided this time.

Mr EMERY - We have - sorry, through you minister, we have previously had some right-to-information requests around defined periods of time where we have provided information on shift coverage. We could potentially go away and look at that over a 12-month period. It would be challenging. We would need a fairly lengthy period of time to review that data. It's quite challenging absent an electronic rostering system, but we could provide some snapshot data for a more short or defined period of time.

Mr BARNETT - Perhaps we could to try to assist the honourable member, and the committee take it on notice and provide what information is sort of physically and practically possible and respond to that question on notice. Do you think that would be an appropriate way to go?

Mr EMERY - Yes, I think so, minister.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. I've got some questions around overtime hours worked as well. Would that - could we include that in the questions on notice too?

Mr BARNETT - Well, we're happy to ask those questions now and let's just see if the honourable chief executive is able to respond.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. So what was the total numbers of overtime worked by paramedics in 2023 to 2024 and what percentage of shifts worked by paramedics saw them doing overtime?

Mr EMERY - Thank you. Through you minister, I can provide some values as they relate to overtime as a percentage of paid FTE. I know that's not exactly what you're asking for, Ms Rosol, but as it related to 2023-24. In the northern region, overtime FTE as a percentage of paid FTE was 12.86 per cent. In the north-west it was 10.86 per cent and in the south it was 9.85 per cent for 2023-24 and for the previous year in the north, 11.12 - so from 11.12 to - sorry, 12.86. For the north-west it went from 8.82 per cent to 10.86 per cent and for the south it went from 8.69 per cent to 9.85 per cent and if I could just say as an extension to that, we have, through the leadership of my executive director of operations, made significant efforts to stabilise our staffing establishment.

As I said, a significant driver around the staffing establishment is flexible work arrangements and a change in our workforce composition. I'm frankly very proud to say that Ambulance Tasmania is now almost 50 per cent women in our paramedic positions, but that brings some additional challenges around maternity leave and we're in the process of doing structural work to address some of those maternity leave challenges and the associated flexible work arrangements, and I wouldn't want any of my comments to detract from the reality that we're a fundamentally better organisation because we have young mums working as paramedics for us. We just need to continue to work on modernising some of our roster practices and flexible work arrangements so that we can cover some of those shift vacancies that we've experienced through flexible working arrangements more broadly.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. We know ambulance response times are a big challenge and obviously there's some data available, but what we're hearing from paramedics is they've got particular concerns for what's happening to emergency patients who aren't getting an ambulance straight away and how many patients are waiting extended periods. In 2023-24, how many emergency incidents experienced a response time of greater than 30 minutes, how many experienced a response time of greater than 45 minutes and greater than 60 minutes, please?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question, it's quite a detailed question. I'll just check if the chief executive is able to respond.

Mr EMERY - We don't have that data immediately.

Mr BARNETT - We're more than happy to take that on notice and respond accordingly.

Ms ROSOL - Great. Thank you for that.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, over the last decade, particularly the Health department has engaged in employment practises which have encouraged short term contracts, casuals, rollovers, creating a precarious employment base where you've now had to rely more significantly on agency staff and locums. That undermines your capacity to deliver a functioning health service because you're relying on essentially plugging holes by getting staff that are not yours. Have you, by virtue of this practice, institutionalised that kind of employment engagement and therefore undermining your ability to have a functioning system?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I think you raise some important concerns that have been raised with me in the department and yesterday, the department, through the acting secretary, put on the record the costs for agency nurses and likewise locums for providing those medical services and indeed they're very high; those investments or those costs.

We're always trying to improve the healthcare services that are being provided and that's why we continue to provide record funding for our healthcare sector and putting on more people on the frontline, hence our recruitment blitz. That, over time, would certainly take some pressure off the locums and agency requirements, but, of course, there needs to be flexibility when providing a healthcare service. It's certainly something at the forefront of my mind in how we can improve the healthcare service. I'll pass to the acting secretary to add to that answer.

Mr WEBSTER - Mr O'Byrne, we, in fact, over the last few years, have been trying to change our practises that actually give greater certainty to staff and make them longer term and a few examples of that: traditionally, junior doctors, registrars, for instance, are employed on a year by year contract, which means that at the end of each training year they have to reapply or be reappointed and some of them will actually think, 'Well, it's coming up to the end, I'll probably choose to go elsewhere'.

With permission of the Premier, we are now able to offer length of training contracts to those doctors. If they're a four-year training contract or a six-year training contract, we actually offer them that whole length of training which takes away that decision point each year and helps us in that respect. Secondly, it also helps with our junior medical officers, some of whom, given their age post-university, et cetera, may want to do other things and take time off from their training. It may be for maternity leave, it may be because of a long period at university. The length of training contracts actually allows for that as well. Even though they're still temporary staff, they're able to go off, take that leave and come back to complete the contract.

The second area we've looked at is - we bring nurses, pharmacists, a number of other health professionals in on what are called, if you like, their transition to practise or internships or graduate programs. Traditionally, we've done that as a one-year program and then they have to apply for permanency.

We've actually had an exemption from ED1 to allow us to employ them immediately as permanents, but secondly, also their graduate year et cetera becomes tied to a probation, if you like, to make sure they get full registration and things before they go on. But again, it takes away them needing to look for a job at the end of that period and so we're pursuing a number of initiatives like that that actually reduce our reliance on casuals and fixed terms and increase the number. Recently, the Premier issued or did a review of ED1 which made it easier for us to actually appoint people who are temporary to make them permanent. We immediately started to look at our workforce on that and I'm pleased that we've already had applications from nurses who are fixed term for conversion and we've done that.

We've also had individual managers nominate jobs where people are temporary that they believe should be made permanent. We've done the same with paramedics. I can't remember the number there, whereas I can with nurses. We're looking across our workforce, if we've got people that are in long term temporary roles, we're putting out expression of interest where the person could put up their hand or where we've got ways of identifying them. We're actually identifying the people and offering them permanency.

I would say to you, yes, the short thing is those practises have worked against us, but we've pursued, since probably 2021, a number of changes to our practises and we've negotiated them with government and with head of State Service, et cetera, over that period to make sure that we're reversing that trend within the Department of Health.

Mr O'BYRNE - I appreciate the work that you're doing, acting secretary, and there's plenty of examples I'm sure you can give them. I've had a recent example of an experience with an ED and where the first four or five of the people that I've met were all agency. One person had just arrived, didn't know where the toilet was. I'm not reflecting on them and their skills and their ability and what they bring, but you can understand that that compromises culture, compromises the team-based approach when you're dealing with such, you know, acute circumstances. Further to the use of locums and agency staff, you procure accommodation for

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those staff when they stay in the state. Homes, short-term, long-term rentals, et cetera. How much does the department spend on locums and agency staff for accommodation?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. It's quite a detailed question in terms of accommodation. I'll just check if the department has access to that information.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, we pay for most of it through invoices from the local companies in the agency companies and so we don't actually split it off. We can give you the cost of a locum which includes that rather than splitting that off, although we have some accommodation where we are the leaseholder, if you like, and we can probably get that figure fairly quickly. But in terms of all accommodation costs for locums, because it seems it's rolled up -

Mr O'BYRNE - And agency staff.

Mr WEBSTER - It would be invoiced by invoice, so we'd have to add up to just split that off.

Mr O'BYRNE - I understand you can easily, well hopefully, and you'll take that on notice. We'll get that question up so you can do that. But I suppose -

Mr BARNETT - Sorry, which question?

Mr O'BYRNE - How much money is spent on department direct accommodation as opposed to rolled up in an invoice?

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, we can probably get that by the the end of the session. Secondly, I would say that cost that we roll up won't necessarily just be for locums. I mean some circumstances long term staff are in leased accommodation, for instance in Queenstown. But we'll give you a lease fee.

Mr O'BYRNE - If we could separate those longer terms, I'm really just focused on the short-term because the longer term one makes absolute sense. You're wanting to put a person in a remote area, you have to wear that cost. I accept that. This is the plugging the hole issue - you understand where I'm getting at.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, we will attempt to do that and I see those sitting behind me is probably already texting people to get them to do it.

Mr O'BYRNE - Excellent.

Mr BARNETT - We will do what we can to support you today.

Mr O'BYRNE - Well, one final question on that line of questioning, if that's possible. Did you approach Homes Tasmania to purchase the Fountainside?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question and firstly, I just want to indicate how pleased I am as a Health minister with that decision and that commitment by Homes Tasmania. Likewise there's support in the north as well. Member for Bass, Rob Fairs and I, with Felix

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Ellis, the Minister for Housing are very pleased with that support for our health sector. I'll just check in terms of the detail of that question with the Acting Secretary.

Mr BARNETT - (continued) That support for our health sector, I'll just check in terms of the detail of that question with the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Yes, we approached them.

Mr O'BYRNE - You approached Homes Tasmania. Given that you spend money procuring accommodation now, why didn't you take on the responsibility for your workforce to purchase Fountainside?

Mr WEBSTER - We were already a leaseholder of Fountainside when it came on the market.

Mr O'BYRNE - And you knew how much you're investing in it.

Mr WEBSTER - It comes from that transaction that we then looked around, would there be a provider.

Mr O'BYRNE - I understand that, but the question was, why didn't you seek to purchase it given it's your workforce, it's your staff, it's close to the hospital? There's a whole range of reasons why that stacks up.

Mr WEBSTER - We're not in the business of running residential accommodation. We do it through leasehold et cetera. We're not providers of accommodation and we didn't look to add that to our assets. We believe that leasing accommodation was the appropriate model for us.

Mr BARNETT - Maybe I can add to that answer as a former housing minister who helped establish Homes Tasmania, that's exactly one of the -

Mr O'BYRNE - For the homeless.

Mr BARNETT - No, actually you're wrong, not just for the homeless. That's exactly one of the reasons that Homes Tasmania was established and part of the purposes of Homes Tasmania is to support worker accommodation, not just on the west coast but in other areas, to meet the needs of our community and worker accommodation is set out in the legislation. I know you didn't support it and I respect that and a different view, but we took the view that it was important and they are meeting the terms and conditions set out in the legislation. I'm very pleased and proud of that reform agenda for Homes Tasmania. I'm obviously not the current minister and I thank Felix Ellis for what he's doing in providing excellent leadership.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can I talk about the Healthy Tasmania Fund grants program for a moment? Preventative health measures - I think all of us here want to see Tasmanians in the community healthier and happier, as that comes with health. Can you describe a bit more about this program and also the benefits you're expecting in the community from this program?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, thanks very much, it's a very good program. I'm very exercised about it myself. I love to support the healthy Active Tasmania program and for all Tasmanians to do everything we can in delivering healthy, active lifestyles for our fellow Tasmanians. As a government we continue to support that. Our government launched the Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan 2022-2026 with \$10 million for its implementation. The 2024-25 Budget delivers a total of \$12.9 billion, an \$8.8 million every single day. Under the Healthy Tasmania Fund grants program, since September 2022, a total of 179 organisations and communities delivering 217 initiatives have been awarded funding.

Step Forward provides grants to support health and wellbeing activities and equipment, including kitchen and gardening equipment, community training and events; 38 organisations have received a total of \$167,000 in grants.

The Lift Local grants are supporting councils to strengthen health and wellbeing planning; 26 successful applicants for the first round of Healthy Focus grants were announced in May 2023. The second round was announced just on the end of 26 August last month.

Reports for years 1 and 2 of the Healthy Tasmania Strategic Plan highlighted many significant community benefits. I've visited a range of those in north, south, east and west Tasmania. One of those good-news stories is the fantastic work of Farm it Forward and it was great to visit with Michelle Williamson recently, who shared the incredible work that they've done with Neighbours Every Day grants funded under the Healthy Tasmania grants program. Michelle has an amazing, broad program of activities that creates social connections for people living on the northwest coast, and I know Roger Jaensch is particularly supportive of that program.

I visited Will Smith at JCP Youth, who shared the work that they've done with the street program and funded under the Healthy Focus round 1 grants program.

Mr BARNETT - (cont) - that they've done with the street program and funded under the Healthy Focus round 1 grants program. I look forward to other grant recipients and catching up with them in coming months.

Just a heads up on the Healthy Active Tasmania strategy discussion paper. We are developing a 20-year plan to create a healthy, active Tasmania. This is focusing on a preventative health strategy for 20 years. That will be launched as part of the next 100-day plan. We will be consulting with key stakeholders, members of the community, government agencies, community sector organisations and the like to build that long-term vision for Tasmania. As someone with type 1 diabetes, I'm very keen to support that. I've done that in my political career as a senator for nine-and-a-half years and likewise as a member of parliament. I think it's really important for us to get ahead of the game. Of course we need to focus on EDs, hospitals and primary care through our GP plans, but focusing on preventative health measures is really a good plan for not just today or next year, but for decades to come.

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Ms HADDAD - Thank you, Chair. I actually want to stay on this line of questioning because I share your concerns around preventative health measures and public health. I acknowledge that Tasmania has some of the worst statistics in the country in terms of fastest ageing population, high rates of cardiac disease, high smoking rates, high rates of obesity, other comorbidities and combined health conditions that together put enormous pressure on the health system, both the acute health system and the community health and community services sector.

Much of the work to turn those statistics around - and of course everyone of those statistics is a human life and represents human suffering - is done by public health preventative health programs, early intervention and targeting, and yet you continue to make cuts to the public health part of your department.

In Table 4.2 in budget paper 2, volume 1, it shows a significant reduction in the department's public health division from \$38.585 million in the 2023-24 financial year to \$29.937 million in the 2025-26 year, which is a reduction of more than \$8 million.

I acknowledge that you said, as a type 1 diabetic you value the importance of public health measures, but how do you expect to turn around Tasmania's health statistics if you keep cutting the guts out of public health?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question and your interest in this area. I'm pleased to be aware of that special interest to support preventative health measures and hopefully look forward to working with you and others around this table on our preventative health 20-year strategy and action plan. I will pass to the acting secretary in a moment, but we have the Healthy Tasmania grants and that started in 2022 and I think it goes to next year. It then needs to go through a budget process going forward, but I'll ask the acting secretary to explain how that works.

Mr WEBSTER - Thanks, minister. The minister quite rightly explained the Healthy Tasmania was a four-year program being replaced by the long-term strategy that the minister spoke to, and that accounts for \$2 million of that step. The balance of it relates to the fact that we still are funding some COVID activity through public health services. This is the final year of that funding and then it steps down. This is the working out of the final funding of COVID within the Health budget and that is why there's a step down, and then you'll see there is a steady rise across the forward Estimates beyond that one-year step down.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. Notwithstanding that, I know there have been cuts to public health each year really since you came to government. I am happy to put this on notice if it's not a figure that you have available, but can you indicate to the committee the percentage of the entire Health department's budget that is spent on public health?

Also, specifically what percentage of the budget is spent on prevention and early intervention programs?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. It's in several parts and I have indicated -

Ms HADDAD - You can put it on notice if that's easier.

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Mr BARNETT - No, we can assist the member.

Certainly for 2023-24,

Mr BARNETT - For 2023-24, it is my understanding that total preventative health activity funded through the Department of Health was estimated at \$82 million, which is 3.33 per cent of the department spend. That's my advice. It is lower than the estimate of previous financial years due to the decrease in the COVID-related activity, as the Secretary has indicated.

I'm also informed the Department of Health use the methodology defined by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. While it's important to use this methodology for consistency at a national level, it's also important to note this is an underestimate and is limited to preventative health activity funded by the Department of Health only. Included in this calculation are activities such as the Healthy Tasmania Program, child vaccination programs, activities in oral health, including in the school-based environment, the prevention and early intervention programs in the mental health and wellbeing space, and the cancer screening programs such as Breast Screen Tasmania.

Ms HADDAD - Sorry, it does count?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, it does include that. It does not capture the important preventative health activity driven by other Tasmanian government departments. In addition to this estimate, there are a wide range of primary, secondary and tertiary preventative activities that occur within our health system, including the thousands of outpatient activities across cardiac rehabilitation, diabetes, smoking cessation, nutrition and metabolism clinics. Additionally there are extensive prevention activities delivered by the Tasmanian Sexual Health Service, including the purchase of safer sex supplies and care and management of sexually transmissible infections. I'll pass to the Acting Secretary to add to that answer.

Mr WEBSTER - I think that was quite comprehensive. To reinforce that, following the output of public health services across the many state budgets, there are changes regarding what is in public health services and what's not when moving things around within the department. From year to year back over the budgets it is not apples with apples every year, but it has been steady since 2020 at least. Across that, you have a huge bubble that was COVID, which sat within public health services. This is the final year of working that through. We try to capture preventative health rather than just public health.

Ms HADDAD - Can I keep going, Chair? I have a few questions about-

Mr BARNETT - I have an answer for the member for Bass, whenever you would like that, Chair, on the Ambulance Tasmania response.

CHAIR - I might let Ms Haddad finish her line of questioning and then we'll jump into that.

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Ms HADDAD - It is a new line. I'm happy to continue to seek the call after the minister's given that answer if you prefer. I have questions about nursing staff next.

Mr EMERY - Ms Rosol, in relation to your question about activation times, in terms of specific numbers for 2022-23, we have a total of 43,286 P0 and P1 incidents, of which 31,857 or 74 per cent were activated within 3 minutes and 11,429 incidents or 26 per cent were activated over 3 minutes. In 2023-24 we had a total of 43,452 P0 and P1 cases, of which 30,783 or 71 per cent were activated within 3 minutes and 12,669 or 29 per cent were activated in greater than 3 minutes. Those factors impacting on activation times are picked up in those cases outside of the three-minute mark.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you.

Mr BARNETT - We also have an answer to the member for Bass from the Acting Secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - In relation to the question about when we did the assessment after the coroner's recommendations, the assessment was done by the clinical director in March 2023 and we've revisited that a number of times since.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you.

CHAIR - Ms Haddad has a couple more questions left.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, I had some questions about nursing staffing, recognising that not just nurses but multiple workforces across the health system have had to engage in industrial action recently due to significant concerns around the staffing of shifts and pressure on both health workers and patients.

On 3 September, your department met with the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) following the industrial action that they took after some grave concerns were raised about short-staffing of shifts in the maternity ward at the Royal. That meeting was very welcome, and you made a series of commitments to them, including an immediate uplift of agency nurses and bulk recruitment for grade 2 and grades 3 to 4 nurses and midwives statewide to benchmarked positions.

Minister, can you advise the committee how many nurses and midwives have been appointed from that recent bulk recruitment campaign and how many additional agency nursing staff have been brought on since that letter of 3 March?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the questions. They are very operational in nature, but I appreciate that. It was very good to catch up with the Nursing Federation representatives at the roundtable we had with the unions last Friday. It was a very good first meeting, consistent with the House of Assembly motion that was passed. As you know, I meet with them on a regular basis and I look forward to continuing to meet with them and have productive and collaborative discussions to progress a team Tasmania approach to growing our Health workforce and delivering better healthcare services. On the detail, I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Firstly, on the agency nurses and the number of midwives, I'm advised that we'll get that to you in a short while. In terms of the bulk recruitment, we put that out to the market and 292 applicants applied, of which 154 came from overseas and a further 115 from New Zealand, which is also overseas. That's the way it's typed for me. There were 21 from Australia. That's the bulk recruitment answer.

Ms HADDAD - But that's the applicants, not appointments, right?

Mr WEBSTER - Yes. We're going through those processes, and obviously with a number of those - 271 that are from overseas - will require sponsorship and/or visas depending on where they're from. New Zealand is sponsorship rather than visas.

Ms HADDAD - There haven't been any appointments yet as a result of that bulk recruitment process?

Mr WEBSTER - The recruitment closed on 18 September, so we're a bit too soon.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. In the commitments to the ANMF in that same letter, you recognised the need to reduce the administrative impact on nurse unit managers and midwifery unit managers. What steps have you taken since 3 September, the date of that letter, to reduce that administrative burden on NUMs and midwifery unit managers?

Mr BARNETT - I know the acting secretary will respond to that. Just to indicate, I had a round table with the ANMF in Launceston at the LGH just two weeks ago. It was very productive and collaborative. I really appreciated the feedback. I was joined by one of my senior advisors in Health. We've taken notes and feedback, and we'll be following up on that feedback as well with the department.

We have already given some preliminary feedback, but I really appreciate the collaborative relationship that I have with the unions and other stakeholders in the Health space to build a better health system.

Mr WEBSTER - I've already signed off on the creation of a project nurse's role and I think one of the three roles has already been filled, which will be across the recruitment processes to support Nursing Unit Managers (NUM) at the local level in those recruitment processes.

One of the commitments was that we would look at how many nurses we could convert to permanency straight away. As indicated before, we did 17 within two weeks of the meeting. I'm advised by the chief nurse that she's going through a process of assessment ward by ward, working with the Executive Directors of Nursing and Midwifery (EDONM) in each hospital, but also with the NUMs, and from that we'll be able to ascertain the uplift in agency nursing et cetera. That exercise hasn't been completed as of yet.

The other side of that is with the direct appointment of graduates. We're going through a process, in answer to Mr O'Byrne's question earlier, where rather than have graduates go onto one-year contracts, they'll go onto permanent contracts, but in addition to that we are going through a process of, if you like, pre-offering with graduates, so subject to their passing their degree and getting the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) tick they'll have a job with us. That process is also underway.

Ms HADDAD - Okay. Related to this that came up in your answer to my first part when you mentioned how many overseas applicants there were, I've had raised with me a question around the recruitment of overseas staff. There's been concerns raised with me about the new protocol around the travel and relocation policy within the department. The amounts allocated in that protocol to assist in the relocation of staff from overseas and interstate are, from memory, between \$10,000 to \$15,000 for some professions and \$5000 to \$10,000 for others. Those figures won't be sufficient to actually cover those relocation costs and won't assist you in the task of recruiting and retaining staff applying from other jurisdictions. Can you make some comment about that new protocol and whether you looked at what other jurisdictions are doing in terms of trying to recruit and retain staff from elsewhere?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. There's a two-part answer from myself and then I'll pass to the acting secretary. The first is that, as we said in the election campaign, we provide funding in the Budget for an incentive of \$15,000 to attract nurses to Tasmania if they work within the Tasmanian Health Service for three years. That's really appreciated and I know is certainly having some impact.

The second is that this is not unusual for Health ministers. At the Health ministers meetings, we talk about workforce issues and challenges, particularly from overseas, in terms of getting them into the system as soon as possible to streamline the process. We've raised this on many occasions with the federal Minister for Health and he refers it to the federal Minister for Immigration so it has been raised at the highest level as well with the federal government. There needs to be a more streamlined process to get our overseas nurses and health professionals into Tasmania and Australia and it does require support at the federal level. Having said that, I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - As to whether we compared to other states, we compared ourselves to New South Wales and Queensland, both of which had recently done reviews and we either did similar or increased ours to match those two states. The protocol is a base level and it was issued because our previous regionalisation of the department meant that practices had become non-standardised across the state, so the protocol has become a standard for the state. The second part to say about the protocol is it's the standard clauses that will apply forever but we have a number of programs in place that the minister has just outlined in terms of incentives on top of what's in the protocol around relocation for nurses, doctors and incentive around GPS. We've also got a number of scholarships for allied health professionals and another one -

Ms HADDAD - Incentives over and above the cost of relocation that's in that travel protocol document. Are there salary bonuses or other incentives to attract staff here?

Mr WEBSTER - Yes, and in addition to that, there are some elements that are not covered in that protocol because they sit outside of Ministerial Direction 21, for instance, if we were going to offer assistance with visas and things like that. There are lots of elements to it. Protocol is, if you like summarises the base and then we've got all these other programs that sit above it.

CHAIR - Last question and then we'll go to Ms Rosol.

Ms HADDAD - Thanks. I know I'm sounding probably like I'm a bit in the weeds, but can you just clarify that last statement that the visa cost won't be paid for out of that relocation,

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because it's been expressed to me that visas for a family coming from overseas could be anywhere as high as \$9000, which is close to or up to the allocation in the protocol. What is or isn't included, I suppose is the question.

Mr BARNETT - It's a fair question but just to make it clear, we have had these ongoing representations to the federal government where you have nurses and health professionals in India who now have to travel to the UK to be based there, work there and then they come to Australia rather than coming directly. It takes time and time is money and we want them here as soon as possible because we're on a recruitment blitz.

Mr WEBSTER - In relation to the visa, it is in addition and the reason it's not in the standard protocol is because it requires a decision by the secretary of the agency to pay it, so I have to do it on an individual basis.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you.

Ms ROSOL - I have some more questions about the ambulance services. Minister, how many single response shifts were worked by paramedics in 2023-24?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for that question which is clearly operational. I'll just check if the chief executive can assist. We'll get to the detail of that and come back to you. Do you think that's possible today or on notice?

Mr EMERY - I think it would need to be on notice along with that other data.

Mr BARNETT - Yes. We'll take that on notice.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. A report on government services data shows that in 2018-19, the 90th percentile response time for emergency incidents in the Hobart area was 21 minutes, but in 2022-23 it had increased to 31 minutes - a 10-minute, 48 per cent increase - in just five years and we've also seen our statewide results rapidly worsening over the same period. We know in an emergency, every single minute counts, but thousands of Tasmanians every year are waiting longer and longer for an ambulance when they need it the most. Has the department done any work to understand the impact that lengthening response times may have had on patient outcomes or to assess in any way the harm that's being caused by these lengthening delays, so kind of following through after the delays and seeing the impact?

Mr BARNETT - The first thing I would say in response to that question is the increased funding support for the 78 new paramedics that we're putting on over the next four years and the incredible improvements in the ambulance times and the incremental improvements we're getting at all our emergency department outcomes in terms of ambulance and the 9000 hours that rather than being ramped, they're now out on the street and in the communities doing the wonderful work that they do. That's what I think I outlined in response to the member for Bass, Rob Fairs, earlier today, but in addition to that I'll ask the chief executive to add to that answer.

Mr EMERY - Any delayed response that results in an adverse patient outcome is picked up through our clinical governance framework and is the subject of root cause analysis where that is a SAC1 incident, or severity assessment code 1 incident. Where they are what we call SAC2 incidents, we would undertake a London protocol and I'm just having the team pull that information now in terms of the number of incidents we've had in the last year. It is small. We

closely monitor and have a number of processes in place for those delayed response cases, including procedure within the Ambulance Tasmania communication centre where we undertake call-backs and our secondary triage service can also undertake call-backs to monitor those patients whilst they're awaiting emergency ambulance response.

Ms Rosol, I'll just say that that more than 50 per cent of the 000 calls that come through to Ambulance Tasmania are not for priority zero or for priority one cases, and that's not to be disparaging of those individuals calling 000 for ambulance assistance, it is to say that often engagements with Ambulance Tasmania are for assistance in navigating the healthcare system and the minister touched on some of the challenges accessing primary care already.

We're working incredibly hard to increase the number of calls that we can manage through our secondary triage service where they can speak to specialist clinicians, including paramedics and nurses, as well as be referred to an emergency doctor. Since the inception of that program in 2021, more than 11,000 000 calls have gone through that secondary triage service and some 53 per cent of those calls are able to be managed in the community without requiring an emergency ambulance response.

On top of that, the funding of the Community Paramedic program has seen several thousand patients responded to in the community by our specialist community paramedics and in the order of 60 per cent of those patients don't require transport to an emergency department, which is about three times higher than the non-conveyance rate of other emergency ambulances. And, of course, the significant investment in the Police, Ambulance, Clinician Early Response (PACER) model in southern Tasmania and the mental health co-response model in north-west Tasmania and in 2025 in northern Tasmania will continue to support us providing care to those lower acuity presentations outside of the emergency department.

I share that context with you, Ms Rosol, because achieving those things along with transfer--of-care performance is critical for us to be able to service those time-critical P0 and P1 cases as quickly as possible, which is why all of this additional work is taking place so we can support those patients in the community as quickly as possible.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. I appreciate the bigger picture, but I also would love some information on those particular things.

We've been hearing concerns raised by paramedics about some critically important specialised equipment, particularly the portable suction units used to manage airways during cardiac arrests. Apparently, there have been concerns raised and safety reports made about the fact that the suction pressure in the equipment is too low to effectively deal with some cases. And not only that, but the units operate off the same oxygen tanks that also feed the patient's oxygen supply which means that the tanks need to be frequently changed during a serious resuscitation effort. Are you aware of these concerns and what's your response?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I've had two roundtables with the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) in the last few months. I appreciated both those roundtables, the collaborative positive feedback, and I've certainly taken that into account in terms of the specificity of the concerns you've raised.

That doesn't - I don't think it's come before me directly, but I'm sure that the chief executive would respond to that and hopefully assist the member.

Mr EMERY - Thank you, minister. It is a good question. I've used those suction devices many times over my career on patients in cardiac arrest and it is correct that the suction requires a drawing down of oxygen from the same oxygen cylinder.

At Ambulance Tasmania for our cardiac arrest patients, we have procedures in place to respond additional ambulances so it would be very unusual for us to respond only a single ambulance to a patient in cardiac arrest. The purpose of that is because they are intensive resuscitations that require a number of resources and we've been very focused on high performance CPR as part of our training to support care of those patients experiencing cardiac arrest in the community, alongside significant work done to mobilise more community AEDs to keep people safe and ensure early access to defibrillation.

I'm not familiar with particular issues as it relates to the suction devices other than there are challenges troubleshooting those devices from time to time and particularly if a patient in cardiac arrest has substantial volumes of vomitus in their airway. That can affect the efficacy of those suction units but in circumstances where there might be a safety event or a clinical incident involving a suction unit, we would encourage our workforce to report that in the safety reporting and learning system that exists across the Department of Health and we can act on that information by addressing individual device faults.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. It sounds like there are still concerns around that then. Is it possible to follow up and to seek feedback on that from paramedics and just get a handle on that situation and what might be needed there, please?

Mr BARNETT - I believe the chief executive has responded reasonably comprehensively. I'm more than happy to add to the answer if you can.

Mr EMERY - We could review the number of safety reporting and learning system events that have been logged as it relates to suction units. We meet fortnightly to review all safety reporting and learning system events and that's oversighted by our Executive Director of Clinical Services and our Executive Medical Director. We can look at that data to see if there's a trend. Ordinarily that would be picked up through those fortnightly meetings and work through various parts of Ambulance Tasmania to address those concerns.

Ms ROSOL - Is that something that we could put as a question on notice, please?

Mr BARNETT - Yes.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, I've been aware of concerns relating to Ambulance Tasmania attending properties where the property has a red flag because there might have been historic issues with offences, violent offences or aggravated issues at that particular property. My understanding is the protocol at the moment requires Ambulance Tasmania to wait before they enter the property for Tasmania police to attend. Tasmania Police experienced some frustration around this because it diverts their attention from other instances to attend, particularly where it's historical and it might be that the property has changed hands a number of times and the person who initially calls the concern is no longer there. I do appreciate that we need to make sure that our paramedics are safe when they attend, but is there a review of this protocol going to occur?

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Mr EMERY - Thanks Mr. Johnston. It's an important area of focus for us at the moment because the safety of our paramedics and volunteers responding to incidents is of paramount concern for me. We have done a substantial amount of work, including consultation with Legal Services and the Health and Community Services Union, to try and come up with a sensible and pragmatic solution. I would say this is very challenging for Ambulance Services right across the country and that's the advice we've received through the Council of Ambulance Authorities.

That is because an application of a caution note on an address is something that may not be appropriate to notify the person of that address for the safety of the responding paramedics. And we have people who change locations from those addresses and that information is not always known to us. We have worked very closely with Tasmania Police over the last 18 months to refine this process and we've refined it via two main mechanisms. We have a direct engagement with the supervisor within radio dispatch services and the deployment supervisor within Ambulance Tasmania's communication centre so they can share live information as an incident happens about any intelligence holdings that might be on an address.

We have done a significant body of work alongside Tasmania Police to retrospectively review existing caution notes on addresses and see what caution notes can be removed based on intelligence holdings from police.

Finally, we're at the very final stages of implementing a significant uplift to our ESCAT alerts or caution notes procedure, that will be a staged procedure which recognises that some members of the public pose an extreme risk to paramedics and the only appropriate avenue is that those paramedics would stand off until police arrive. We recognise that there are some other consumers of our services who don't need as substantial a response, but in fact it would be appropriate for paramedics to proceed with caution without the need to activate police. So that staged approach is critically important and we have consulted with our health and safety representatives and the Health and Community Services Union to really try and get that procedure right.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, I appreciate that and we want to make sure our paramedics are safe and they're doing their job. Minister, Women's Health Tasmania put in an application through the budget process for top up funding to meet the \$112,000 worth of cost increases it's facing, including inflation and the national wage increase. It was unsuccessful this time round.

It's forced the board to approve a deficit budget. This organisation runs part of the health system. It manages a brokerage funding that pays for terminations of abortions and long-acting reversible contraceptives. It also provides a range of service access by victim/survivors of family and sexual violence. People who are the focus of the commission of inquiry report. What plans are in place to ensure that these essential services that Women's Health Tasmania used to provide when they are cut is not affecting the members of the public when they run out of reserves?

Mr BARNETT - I believe you've made reference to the Women's Health Tasmania?

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes.

Mr BARNETT - We spoke earlier today about the Women's Legal Service. In terms of women's health services, I appreciate their advocacy and the work they do. There's a budget process and we've got record funding for Health. I'll just check if the acting secretary can add to that answer.

Mr WEBSTER - Ms Johnston, you flagged specific questions around services that they may want to withdraw from. I think it's only appropriate that, as a department, we seek advice directly from Women's Health Tasmania and talk to them directly on the question you've just raised.

Ms JOHNSTON - To be clear, they obviously haven't got a bottomless bucket of money, so they're going to have to draw on their reserves. Their reserves will eventually run out if they continue to run deficit budgets. Does the government have a plan to fund those essential services when the bucket of money from Women's Health Tasmania runs out? They won't cut them, per se, but the bucket of money will run out, so what's the plan?

Mr BARNETT - I think it's probably best to assist the member and the committee if we take that question on notice.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, one of the pleasing things - I think this is great, actually, because it's happening in my Bass electorate - is the funding in the Budget for a pilot of the mental health emergency response model, commencing next year. Can you elaborate on the benefits you are expecting from the expansion of the service in Launceston and surrounding areas, please?

Mr BARNETT - Yes. The chief executive touched on it a little bit earlier in terms of funding in the Budget for the ongoing work in the south with the PACER program, which is rolled out now and is delivering for the people of southern Tasmania. Then last month I was in Devonport for the expansion of the north-west mental health emergency response unit. It started in November last year in Burnie and it's expanding to Devonport, as I announced a month ago.

I'm very pleased about that in terms of the results. We're getting close to 75 per cent of those people cared for and supported in that context remaining outside the emergency departments and supported in-home or in their community. That is a terrific result. I think the chief executive alluded to it in his remarks earlier

I know the member for Bass is a strong advocate for health services in the north. The Budget provides funding of \$10 million - let me go back, it provides funding support for the expansion of that, starting next year, for northern Tasmania. In addition to that, there is funding in the Budget for the new mental health precinct adjacent to the Launceston General Hospital at 52 Franklin Street. You might recall that we've announced the development application for the demolition of that site to prepare for the building of the new mental health precinct. There's \$10 million in the Budget, which adds to the \$80 million in the previous budget for that development, so, in total, \$90 million for that mental health precinct. That will essentially replace what's at Northside, which is part of the Launceston General Hospital mental health unit. I'm really pleased and proud of that initiative. That will provide even better healthcare services in terms of what's available for northern Tasmania. That's another major development,

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part of our \$650 million health infrastructure initiative outlined in the Budget. Thanks very much for the question.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, I've got some questions about the vacancy control board.

Mr BARNETT - I've got two answers to provide if you want to get that, one from the acting secretary and one from the chief executive to Ms Rosol, if you'd like to hear that.

Ms HADDAD - You do keep providing those answers to other members when I have the call, it seems. I'm happy to wait.

Mr BARNETT - Well, let's have your question then.

Ms HADDAD - I'm happy to wait as long as I can retain the call, Chair.

CHAIR - Yes, you retain the call.

Mr BARNETT - Perhaps the chief executive.

Mr EMERY - My team have just completed a review, Ms Rosol. Over the last 10 years there's been 26 incidents of catheter - sorry, safety incidents reported around suction, so about 2.6 incidents a year. I've just been advised we are in the process of rolling out a new type of suction catheter. That is a DuCanto catheter. It's a larger bore; it addresses some of the blockage issues with the catheter itself. We're in the process of training paramedics in a new suction procedure. It is called the SALAD procedure, which is suction-assisted laryngoscopy airway decontamination. It's a technical procedure that particularly assists with substantial amounts of vomitus in the airway. This new suction device that is being rolled out, or this new catheter that's being rolled out will assist in that.

Mr BARNETT - The acting secretary has a response to Mr O'Byrne, member for Franklin.

Mr WEBSTER - The local agency nurse accommodation costs in 2023-24 was \$7.47 million.

Mr O'BYRNE - That doesn't include the rolled-up invoices?

Mr WEBSTER - That doesn't include the rolled-up invoices where we were unable to split it.

Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you.

Ms HADDAD - Just around the vacancy control board, that was an initiative of your department when the original \$300 million efficiency dividend was announced. That board's role, as I understand it, is to approve or reject requests from within the department and THS around filling vacant positions. We heard stories pretty quickly around nursing and cleaning staff being cut, which, by anyone's measure, would be considered a frontline role. The AMA at the time said you can't cut anything, from catering to cleaning, and safely run a hospital, and that, in actual fact, there's not really any such thing as a backline in a hospital.

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Can you make it clear to the committee today what roles you consider to be backline and if there are any roles or positions exempt from having to go through the vacancy control board?

Mr BARNETT - It's quite a detailed question and I'll pass to the acting secretary. But, as I've shared before, we'll be putting more on the frontline. We've got a recruitment blitz that is working. We have been rolling that out since April, consistent with our election promises. In terms of increased members of the Tasmanian Health Service, that's our expectation, as the acting secretary has outlined earlier today. Regarding the vacancy control measures in the department and how that works, I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Thanks, minister. The vacancy management process objective is not to cut jobs from the Department of Health. The objective is to improve our recruitment processes and to make savings from that reason. I'll explain that by way of example.

For instance, if we have advertised a 0.84 FTE doctor and not got anyone for three advertising rounds, it's pointless going out for a fourth round. We need to look at the reason we're not attracting someone. Probably the reason is we need to make it full-time. If we don't make it full-time, we're probably employing a full-time locum or a 0.84 locum at a much higher cost. What vacancy management are doing is saying, 'Okay, let's advertise that one at full-time. It's going to save us money in the long term.' That is just an example.

But others are, as I pointed out before, we've had a number of initiatives to change how we recruit in terms of the length of contract or making people permanent. That's not universally accepted by all of our managers. They still put up a lot of jobs saying, 'I only want this registrar for 12 months because I want to see how they'll go', and we are pushing back saying, 'No, they should be employed for the length of contract'. It's important to emphasise what we're trying to do is drive a better recruitment process as a way of saving money, not cutting jobs as a way of saving money. I would count it as vacancy management or recruitment management, not vacancy control.

The second part of your question was on exemptions. We have a large number of our nurses where the calculation of how many nurses we have is done on the basis of a nursing hours per patient day calculation. Any position that's identified as being required through that calculation doesn't come through the vacancy management process. It goes through a process of verification by the EDONM at the service level and then through the office of the chief nurse and midwife, and then directly to recruitment, not through us.

Ms HADDAD - That means no nursing positions would go through the vacancy control process, or just that scenario?

Mr WEBSTER - Certainly, no positions that are on wards with nursing hours per patient per day - or the other calculation that's done is the yearly safe staffing level calculation for district hospitals. Those automatic calculations were not holding up through a management process because there's already a process that identifies the need for that role, and it goes through verification by EDONMs, chief nurse and midwife straight to recruitment. You could interpret that fairly large cohort of nurses - because that's the majority of nurses - as exempt from vacancy management process.

Ms HADDAD - Thanks for that detail. I acknowledge what you said about different managers handling it differently, but there have been workforces who have been told there will

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be cuts and it's because of vacancy control. Those exact words have been used. One of those is the specialist cleaning staff in infectious disease cleaning roles at the Royal. I seek from you, Minister, a bit more of reassurance around how the board operates, perhaps by asking: have there been any instances where requests to fill positions have been rejected by the board since its establishment?

Mr BARNETT - I will have to refer to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Firstly, to address the issue of the planners, I have to say that there is one vacancy management committee that does this, which I chair. I believe that we get a blame for a lot of people saying, 'Vacancy management has knocked this back', when we hadn't seen it. For instance, if you're talking about the cleaners identified by the Health and Community Services Union (HACSU) very early on in the process, that was in that category of we hadn't even seen it. People may use the excuse, but the process we're trying to do is once you put in a job card, we'll have a look at it. If there's no job card there, we don't know about it. I should explain that the job cuts goes into a system called Page Up.

Since May, there are 18 jobs where we've actually said no, and 13 jobs where we've put it on hold because we believe that we need to look at other things. I will say that of the 18 jobs that we said no, 13 of them were subsequently resubmitted with further detail and we then said yes.

Ms HADDAD - Are there any clinicians on that board?

Mr WEBSTER - The Vacancy Management Committee is made up of me, the associate secretary - a role that's vacant at the moment - the Chief People Officer and the Chief Financial Officer. Other members of the health executive are invited to attend as they wish, but we always send it back to the business for further information. We don't make our call without full information.

Ms HADDAD - When you say other members of the executive can attend as they wish, would you call them in if they had clinical expertise in the area of the job that you're considering?

Mr WEBSTER - For instance, I would speak to the chief nurse if I needed some clarity around nursing roles and the chief medical officer around medical roles, but in addition to that, there are a number of clinicians that are in health executive roles who can put forward a view if they wish to. We go through a collaborative or consultative process in making our decisions. We don't say no; we'd say, 'Can we have more information?' We get that additional information before we make a decision.

Ms HADDAD - Outside of vacancy control, minister, you've made lots of comments about protecting frontline roles, but we still haven't really had an answer from you around what you consider to be a frontline role versus not a frontline role. Putting aside how the vacancy control board works, we have had an example given to us recently around a reduction in pharmacy assistants at the LGH. Regardless of whether that's happened through the vacancy control board or not, that's not my question. There has been a reduction in the number of pharmacy assistants on shift and that's led to patients being discharged from hospital with a prescription to take to their community pharmacy rather than being discharged with the medications that they need.

The end result of that staffing decision is that nursing staff are now having to pick up that work and troubleshoot with patients before discharge around how they're going to get their medications: Can they get to the community pharmacy?; Does the community pharmacy deliver?; and so on. Can you not see, minister, that by cutting pharmacy assistants, you're in fact increasing the workload on clinical staff? We could all agree that a nurse is a frontline worker, but by cutting what you might say is a backline worker - a pharmacy assistant - you're actually increasing the work of that nursing workforce. Do you have a comment about that around the reduction in pharmacy assistants and the increased workload that's putting on nursing staff? More broadly, what do you consider backline?

Mr BARNETT - As minister, I take advice from the experts, and I've made it very clear there will be no cuts to frontline workers. I've made it very clear we're increasing the numbers of frontline workers. We're on a recruitment blitz for doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and paramedics and there's significant funding in the Budget accordingly. We'll leave it to the experts to make those decisions.

You made reference to the pharmacy assistants at the LGH, so I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - To address the issue of pharmacy in our hospitals - they are frontline staff. The pharmacy assistants or technicians in hospitals are frontline staff; they patient-face.

Ms HADDAD - That's good. I'm glad to hear you say that.

Mr WEBSTER - However, there is a national shortage of pharmacists, and one of our responses to that has been, as the minister recently announced, a market allowance trying to attract more pharmacists to Tasmania to increase the number. It has come to a level that has had an effect, and you've described what happens when you can't get a pharmacist to do the dispensing. It would be a pharmacist, not a pharmacy assistant that would do that dispensing. That's important to say as well.

What we have been doing is pursuing the employment of pharmacy technicians, and the training of staff within our hospitals as pharmacy technicians and advanced pharmacy technicians, who can do some of the work of a pharmacist to take the pressure off both the number of the pharmacists that we have in the system because of the shortage, but also take the pressure off at the ward level. Pharmacy technicians can do things like restocking the ward-level pharmacy and those sorts of things. What we are pursuing is additional staff at the assistant level to take the pressure off, given the shortage of pharmacists. But if you haven't got a pharmacist, you can't dispense. You can't replace the pharmacist in that role.

Ms HADDAD - I get that. You named up doctors, nurses, paramedics and allied health staff. Assistant secretary, you named up that pharmacy staff are patient-facing. Those workforces will be relieved to hear that they're on the list of what you consider frontline. My broader question is what do you consider backline, given that organisations like the AMA and others have said there isn't really a backline in a hospital? Their example was, you can't cut anyone from cleaning to catering and safely run a hospital. I'm encouraged that you keep saying no cuts to the front line, but by saying that, by implication there's a back line. I want to know what you consider to be a backline worker?

Mr BARNETT - First of all, we're increasing the numbers on the front line and you've acknowledged that, for which I'm very grateful. The acting secretary has indicated that across the Tasmanian Health Service, we plan to increase the numbers in the health service. Thirdly, the acting secretary has made it very clear that we want positions that are fit for purpose and that are relevant to the Tasmanian Health Service both now and into the future. We have a range of incentives in place to build that health workforce. I've talked about the incentives for nurses. There are likewise scholarships for allied health professionals.

You mentioned pharmacists in your earlier question, and we've got the market allowance for them. We're doing a multimillion-dollar development at the Royal Hobart Hospital for our pharmacy there as well. We're very pleased and proud of all of those initiatives. In conclusion, as the minister, I take advice from the experts and I have to rely on that advice. That's very important, and I will stand by it.

Ms ROSOL - I have some questions around patients presenting to emergency departments. Minister, how many triage -

Mr BARNETT - Sorry, I will interrupt. We have an answer for you on the AT one. You can have it now or after the question.

Ms ROSOL - How about I ask these questions and then - if that's okay? How many triage category 2 patients were subject to transfer of care delays longer than 15 minutes in 2023-24?

Mr BARNETT - I'm always happy to talk about transfer of care delay because there are incremental improvements. We're very pleased to see those developments since - well, in the last 12 months, there are considerable benefits for the Tasmanian community with more paramedics on the streets and in our communities.

For the detail around that question, I will pass to the chief executive, who's sitting on my right.

Mr EMERY - Ms Rosol, in terms of breakdown by triage category, we may need to further cross-match some data between Ambulance Tasmania and the emergency departments themselves, but if I could speak briefly to the performance improvements wholesale and then pick up on the triage category aspect shortly.

In terms of ambulance presentations more broadly, in 2023-24 there were 53,183 ambulance presentations across the four major emergency departments in the state.

Of those, 62 per cent were transferred within 15 minutes and 70.9 per cent were transferred within 30 minutes. The number delayed in total as a count was 20,152 and the hours of transfer of care delay was 27,398. What I would say is when you look at that compared to the previous year, despite an increase in the number of ambulance presentations, there was a modest increase in the percentage transferred within 15 minutes and a modest increase in the percentage transferred within 30 minutes, but as the minister mentioned, a reduction of 9276 hours of ramping, and what I think perhaps is a more compelling statistic in this is that if you look back four years to 2020-21, there are 800 less hours ramped than even four years ago. Despite the increase in ambulance presentations over the last four years, the transfer of care work and the shared commitment around access and flow across the Tasmanian Health Service

has resulted in a 9000-hour reduction in one year and more than 800 less hours of ramping than even four years ago - a very significant improvement over the last four years.

Ms ROSOL - Can I just clarify the length of time because you're talking about the reduction in delay? I understand that sometimes by some, it's measured in 15 minutes and by some, it's measured as 30 minutes. What are you referring to there, please?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, we're looking at best practice across the nation, but I'll let the chief executive speak to that point.

Mr EMERY - The service plan that focuses on transfer of care times has two measures. One is percentage transferred within 15 minutes, the other is percentage transferred within 30 minutes, and those are the numbers that I referred to today. As the minister mentioned, we're working towards best practice of 30 minutes and as a point of clarity, that is about ambulance arrival at the hospital. Previously we may have measured these data as they related to when an ambulance was triaged, but that was problematic because there could at times be delays in that triage time. Now, there is a consensus view that the arrival of an ambulance at the hospital is the starting point for that count and the transfer of care occurs when the patient is moved into a clinically appropriate space within a target of 30 minutes.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Back to the original question, was that something that you agreed to take on notice? How many triage category 2 patients were subject to transfer of care delays longer than 15 minutes in 2023-24? I think you said that you would take that on notice.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, we'd be happy to take that on notice.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Just a question to you, minister. It was reported by the ABC in June that Associate Professor in Emergency Medicine at the University of Tasmania Dr Viet Tran has plans for the creation of a clinical quality care register that would track patients' experiences in hospital, so from the ED through the hospital, to identify common issues and population-level trends. Is the Department of Health supporting this project? If so, could you explain how?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much. I will pass to the acting secretary, but just to pay a commendation to Viet Tran for his leadership in emergency medicine and his involvement as the co-convener and supporter of our Health Senate that looks at health reforms in Tasmania. He's doing an absolutely terrific job in that regard. I have a very high regard for his work. I think he's also received an award in recent times, which I'd like to acknowledge today at this hearing. I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - All research goes through a process of approval and through that research application it's identified how it's funded, what support is required from the department or from the THS. In relation to this one, the key thing is to giving Viet the support that he needs to get access to the data and access to the ward-level data that follow a patient. Our key role in this particular piece is making sure that all of our data are available so that research can track the patient and make sense of those. In terms of research, we have MOUs and we're about to sign a new one with the University of Tasmania, but we have agreements with a range of universities to support these types of processes.

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Viet, in announcing that, had an approval to go ahead with it and we'll give him the support from within the agency, but he also said he's supported from within the university.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you.

CHAIR - Before I give the call to Mr O'Byrne, minister, you said there was an answer to one of those earlier questions.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I did and we're trying to cooperate with the committee to provide the answers as soon as possible. That's why I'm indicating at the appropriate time when the answer is available, and it's up to the committee when they'd like to hear the answer.

Mr EMERY - Ms Rosol, you asked about safety events associated with delayed responses. The information I've received from my team is that of the 193,985 incidents Ambulance Tasmania attended over the last two financial years, there have been eight SAC 1 or SAC 2 safety events over that period.

As I said, all SAC 1 incidents are the subject of a root cause analysis investigation, and all SAC 2 incidents are the subject of a London protocol investigation - just different investigative methodologies. Then we take those recommendations and work actively to implement those recommendations that are different for every circumstance. In some of those incidents it was about the activation of a helicopter emergency medical service. In other circumstances it might have been about the call-taking procedure. We look at those incidents holistically and do everything we can to learn from them and change our practice to prevent reoccurrence.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, back to the Fountainside, you are obviously now the main tenant of that at the minute and you have been for quite some time. How much do they invoice you per, per month, per year for the cost of the lease or the hiring of those rooms for those staff members? How much have you paid in the last 12 months, for example?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks for the question. We'll see if we can assist the honourable member. Just seeking that information.

Mr O'BYRNE - Okay, once we get that information, that would be good. My next question is around the Fountainside. Now that it will be transferred to Homes Tasmania, what rate will you pay? How will you be invoiced from Homes Tasmania? Will it be a commercial rate? A market rate?

Mr BARNETT - Let's see if we can assist the honourable member.

Mr WEBSTER - At commercial rate.

Mr O'BYRNE - A commercial rate. I'm paraphrasing, so if I'm wrong, please let me know, it would be comparable with what you're paying now to the University of Tasmania?

Mr WEBSTER - Yes.

Mr O'BYRNE - Wouldn't it make sense to purchase it yourself and then save money year on year and then at year five or six you become cash positive? Why are you being charged

a market rate from another government department for a building that's designed to provide staff for your hospital?

Mr WEBSTER - It's a valid question. We're getting the figure for what we're paying per annum, so it is a calculation of, do we put it under opex or capex and return on investment? We also have to factor in things like maintenance of that asset, and consider if it is within our purview to maintain a hotel-type asset. All of those things. It has to be a whole of life -

Mr O'BYRNE - There's a whole range of accounting practices that deal with that.

Mr WEBSTER - - expenditure if we bought it versus operationalising it as an OpEx cost related to that need. It is judgement of all of that but I can't give you a calculation off the top of my head without knowing the commercial rate which hasn't arrived.

Mr O'BYRNE - Essentially, there's no net gain apart from securing a longer-term lease which you could have achieved if you bought it and had the greater control over it.

Mr WEBSTER - I think the acting secretary did respond to that question earlier. Homes Tasmania is designed for that purpose and obviously it's a key instrumentality of government. It was established for that purpose - to provide worker accommodation, not just in Hobart but in Launceston, across the west coast and in other parts of Tasmania. I want to commend Homes Tasmania, the board and the CEO, Eleri Morgan-Thomas and their team for what they've done. I think it's a very good plan and initiative and it's delivering in spades already and they have a big agenda ahead of them. I know it's quite onerous -

Mr O'BYRNE - With respect, it's a different portfolio, minister. It's a different portfolio. I think the question is Health. You're the Minister for Health now and I really want to focus on the Health exposure to this. When you say commercial rate, is that the agreement you've got with Homes Tasmania? It's a commercial rate? Confirmed agreement.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, yes.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes. In relation to the invoicing that you receive from the agency companies - and you say that you can't identify accommodation - could you explain to me then, how do you negotiate costs with those companies? Surely, there are elements of travel, there are elements of accommodation and then there are elements of hours worked and allowances et cetera. Surely you would get that itemised. Surely you would, in terms of making sure we're getting value for dollar, surely that can be itemised.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, it is done through a tender process in which we get a panel of providers and I would envisage that the invoices are itemised, it's just how we enter them into our finance system would be as a total invoice, not as individual items within that invoice. That's why my earlier answer was we would have to manually look at each of the invoices to draw that out, but it is -

Mr O'BYRNE - And you're willing to do that or -

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, I'm reluctant to do that, given the number of invoices over the 12-month period and diverting resources to do that.

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Mr O'BYRNE - I understand that and I do appreciate that there's -

CHAIR - Last question.

Mr O'BYRNE - - Yes. I appreciate there's workload. However, when there's an efficiency dividend being applied, when there's the nature of the Budget the way it is, as a Tasmanian taxpayer, I want to know. I know that you come to this with a with a huge level of decency and ethics. I want to know that you're doing everything to ensure that every dollar that is spent is done efficiently and focused on better outcomes for Tasmanians. When you're not able to answer these questions around costs for agency and locums and accommodation, it raises questions when you say, 'We can't do this in this financial year because we're paying for this'. We need to know that what you're paying for is appropriate and a level of transparency is applied.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister. I can't but agree with you on that. This is a case where contracts are examined. When we go to tender processes, we make sure that we're not paying hundreds and hundreds of dollars for accommodation that we can provide and that's why there are hybrid models depending on where you are in the state, depending on what we have available. What I would assure you is that we're absolutely focused on these locum contracts and agency nurse contracts for two reasons. We need to get the numbers down. This is not just a Tasmanian problem, this is an issue for every state and territory. I constantly discuss with my colleagues, as does the minister - how do we achieve that? The second part of it is we absolutely need to make sure those contracts are nailed down, because the growth in those contracts since the beginning of COVID has been out of sync with any level of CPI that you wish to put forward. So we've got a dual role to bring the contracts back under control, not just in Tasmania, but Australia-wide.

Mr O'BYRNE - Will you just put on record that you'll bring back that question around the cost for Fountainside for the year?

Mr WEBSTER - I can answer it now.

Mr O'BYRNE - Well, perfect.

Mr WEBSTER - The lease cost for Fountainside is \$580,000 per annum and we also pay for essential services, I assume that's electricity, et cetera, \$55,000.

Mr O'BYRNE - So over 600,000 per year and you manage it as well? Or does the University of Tasmania manage it?

Mr WEBSTER - The University of Tasmania did manage it. I am assuming under the new arrangement that will be Homes Tasmania.

Mr O'BYRNE - You're assuming?

Mr WEBSTER - I can check, but I'm just saying that up until now it's been the University of Tasmania.

Mr FAIRS - Upgrading our major hospitals is a huge part of the Budget, which is wonderful to see obviously, and especially Health infrastructure as well. The LGH, which is in

my electorate, is getting some significant upgrades which is awesome, especially the doubling of the emergency department.

Can you run through some of the other infrastructure investments please, around the state, not just Bass?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question; that's an important one. We've got record funding in the Budget, but it does include \$650 million in the Budget over the forward Estimates for Health infrastructure. That's part of the \$12.9 billion for health services and infrastructure. That's on the back of the last 10 years where we've spent \$1 billion on new hospitals and Health infrastructure. I'm very pleased to see that the government certainly is continuing this momentum.

To name a few examples: the \$126 million across the forward Estimates for the Royal Hobart Hospital to continue its redevelopment, including the emergency department expansion and initial \$105 million in this Budget. We've also locked in the \$88 million for the 44 new doctors and 25 new nurses at the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department.

There's also \$135 million to continue the redevelopment of the Launceston General Hospital in your electorate, Mr Fairs, including the \$39.5 million to begin the doubling of the size of the emergency department at the LGH. It's certainly a significant election commitment and is in fact the single biggest renovation of the LGH in terms of the emergency department in the last 40 years. We're delivering.

There's another \$90 million for the mental health precinct. I touched on that just a few moments ago. I am very pleased and proud of that. That's at 52 Franklin Street. I'm conscious of time. So just quickly in terms of some of the other highlights: \$17 million for the Mersey's expanded redevelopment. I was just there a few weeks ago and it's great to see the \$42 million expansion come to fruition and there's more work to be done there.

There's \$17.9 million for the North West Regional Hospital upgrades, along with the \$34 million for the mental health precinct, and a range of other investments such as the \$21.7 million for the ambulance stations at Legana, Cygnet, Snug and King Island. There's \$15 million for the diagnostic breast care centre here in Hobart, \$9 million for the new mother-baby unit, the Launceston Health Hub. I know how important that is to you Mr Fairs. There's \$10 million for the stage 1 of the new Cancer Wellness Centre.

So in terms of Health infrastructure: \$650 million it is go, go, go.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, it's widely acknowledged that it costs more to provide acute health services than community health services and that well-funded community health services can reduce acute health need. We've talked about it already today. Your department does fund a range of not-for-profit organisations to provide services to Tasmanians that improve health outcomes. Demand on the services that you have funded across a range of things - women's health has been raised already by Ms Johnston, sexual health contracts, mental health contracts, alcohol and other drug contracts, public health contracts - demand on all those services have increased substantially, but their core funding hasn't.

Organisations are basically doing more with less, or being asked to do more with less, and the end result is they will have to cut services or staff or both. Minister, will you commit

to reviewing the core funding amounts, the core contracts, of the not-for-profit organisations that you fund through the Department of Health to make sure that they are funded sufficiently to provide those services that you're purchasing.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I think the most important thing to say firstly is thank you to the community service organisations for what they do. As a government, we do have a strong relationship with them and that's collaborative and cooperative and positive and I appreciate that personally as well as, as Minister for Health. We have got, as a Department of Health, administering over 220 funding agreements to over 130 community sector organisations in a range of areas, mental health, alcohol and drug, public health, home and community care Tasmanian health services. In terms of the funding support, the Department of Health will deliver the state government's election commitment, which we did make thanks to the Premier's support, the Treasurer's support during the election to deliver 12.5 per cent indexation over the four years, to the community sector organisations - and in 2024-25 indexation of 3.5 per cent will be provided. The total cost of this initiative over the four years is \$7.6 million.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you, minister. I do understand in the commitment around indexation, there are two problems with it: one, the indexation doesn't actually match other costs like CPI wage index growth and the cost of doing business and the second larger problem is that the indexation is being applied to core funding amounts that are too low to deliver the services that you're purchasing from those organisations. While I know the Community Services minister is doing a broad review around outcomes purchasing and five-year funding contracts, that's welcomed, what are you going to do in your department around the NGOs that you fund to make sure that their core funding contracts are enough to deliver the services they're funded to provide?

Mr BARNETT - Well, firstly, in response to that question, just to make it clear, the rate of indexation is above the Treasury CPI forecast level and in line with public sector wages across the period, which were increased to factor in additional cost-of-living pressures for people on lower incomes. The indexation will be built into the base each year which ensures real growth in funding to our CSOs and it provides certainty for indexed funding agreements and supports longer term planning. The number of time-limited funding commitments ended on 30 June 2024, for which ongoing funding beyond that date could not be confirmed until delivery of the state Budget on 12 September. To enable service continuity across the interim period until the state Budget was delivered, the Department of Health provided over \$1.5 million to the impacted CSOs and then the state Budget subsequently confirmed a provision of ongoing funding to some, but not all, of those CSOs that received interim funding.

I can also advise in terms of any further requests for funding, I'm a strong advocate for the health sector, as you know, I will continue to be so. Those additional funding requests will be considered as part of the normal budget process and as part of that process, certainly as minister, I would be very pleased to hear from those organisations to support their efforts wherever possible.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. My next question is around forensic health assessments, which, as you would know, are vital for victim/survivors of sexual abuse. The commission of inquiry identified specifically that your department needs to increase the availability of forensic medical examination services for child victim/survivors to ensure that they can access examination with minimal delay. My understanding is that to conduct those examinations,

doctors and nurses who conduct them need to be registered and specially trained to provide that forensic medical examination, which of course, is to be expected for the safety of the victim/survivor.

My first question is how many nurses and doctors are there at each of the major hospitals who are registered and specifically trained to conduct that work?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. As a government we're totally committed to responding to that and delivering on the 191 recommendations. Part of that falls to the Department of Health and it's a lead agency for 24 recommendations, including 13 short-term recommendations, which were delivered by 1 July 2024. There's a full summary of all the work that's been undertaken. I must acknowledge the former secretary who's now the head of the State Service for her leadership and indeed the minister and now Premier Jeremy Rockliff for his leadership in that regard and certainly a collective responsibility for all of us to respond to those child sex abuse concerns within the health sector. It's acknowledged that it's been deeply distressing for members of the community and that's something we take very seriously and we do not want to compromise on that. And so the trust and safety of vulnerable individuals and children and others does not want to be undermined and so there's a lot of work that's been undertaken by the Department of Health to respond to those concerns. I could outline them in further detail, but with respect to the specificity of the question around those positions, I will pass to the Acting Secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Thanks, minister, and through you and this in this space we have a medium-term objective under the commission of inquiry recommendations to review this category of employment, if you like. I shouldn't call it that because it does attach to - it's important we actually increase the overall number that might actually only be doing this certain amount of time. So we are focused initially on making sure that we have a minimum number, and I have to say that in, for instance, a smaller hospital that might be one in place in all of our hospitals. So we've done that step; we are currently working on the next step, which is actually identifying all those that have currently got the training across our network, but secondly, offering training and working with people to actually become trained specifically, where the training is not brief training - it's actually quite lengthy - over 12 months - so we are working towards that. So our objective on this is by the end of July 2026 to have a, if you like, a sufficient pool in each of our regions that this isn't something that needs to be highlighted in our system because we have it there. At the moment, what we would say is we have an absolute minimum number identified and-

Ms HADDAD - Do you have that? I'm happy to put it on notice.

Mr WEBSTER - I don't have the number. I can tell you it's one in the north-west and that's because I can bring that to mind, but I'd have to actually get the number for the other -

Ms HADDAD - I know the committee hasn't got that long to go, I'm happy to put on notice that question.

Mr BARNETT - Are you happy to put it on notice, and we'll respond.

Ms HADDAD - And in that answer, thank you assistant secretary, you covered a little bit of my next question, which is what commitment there is to training more. So it sounds like you do have that commitment, but I do understand that there's an internal policy requirement

that a second additional APRA registered practitioner needs to be present for each forensic medical exam. And I do understand the sensitivity of this and the intent, of course, making sure that victim/survivors safety and wellbeing is absolutely protected. But I also understand that those exams, there's usually - it's a small exam room, there's usually many people present, often a parent or a support person, a social worker from a community organisation, plus a victim/survivor.

So I just wonder, and through you minister, in a system where there are shortages of staff across the health system, is there a way for these exams to be safely and victim/survivor centred and conducted without having to have a second trained registered medical practitioner in attendance. Of course the person doing the exam needs to absolutely be registered and trained, but just wondering if there's a thought to that policy protocol around availability.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister so the best practice using the fact that it is two people, so it's not just a local protocol process, it's so -

Ms HADDAD - So two doctors or nurses or two registered trained -

Mr WEBSTER - Not necessarily, trained health professionals.

Ms HADDAD - Yes.

Mr WEBSTER - So this is an area we would need to work with the other states and territories about adapting best practice models, et cetera. I absolutely take your point through the minister that there can be a lot of people because we want the child to identify support people as well that might be in the room, but the way we manage this in the room would be it may be that we talk to the support people in terms of making this trauma informed that some of them may need to leave. But in a sense, we make that the child's decision rather than the clinician's decision, because we need to do this in a way that the child is most comfortable. So we don't want to have a situation where our practitioners are saying everyone out of the room. We want to work with the child to make sure that we're actually identifying who they need to support it, but on the other side of it, we also need to identify who is on - which staff are there because we need to do this in a way that gathers the evidence that's required and all those sorts of things. So, there's a whole tightrope of circumstances.

Ms HADDAD - That's right. I do understand the sensitivities and totally respect the need for victim/survivor safety to be the primary aim here and best practice needs to be followed.

The assistant secretary mentioned that there's one person in the north-west currently, I think he said. If the best practice and the protocol is that two people need to attend, does that mean that there's no capacity in the north-west right now to be doing those forensic medical exams?

Mr WEBSTER - It's my understanding that other health professionals would attend. When I say there's one person, it's one person who is allocated to the task. Their job is these. So they're -

Ms HADDAD - Okay, one person who has the relevant training and registration.

Mr WEBSTER - Relevant training and registration, but allocated to the task. Part of what we need to do is identify who else has had the training in our network. It's a process we're going through. As I said, it was a medium-term objective to have this uplift. We're giving it as much priority as we can. We're ahead of the curve because it's a 2026 recommendation from the commission of inquiry. We've already identified who does it, already working with the other states on the training programs and those sorts of things. Sorry, that's probably not a complete answer but it's as much - we're trying to do as much as we can and be trauma-informed.

Ms HADDAD - That's okay. It makes sense. Thank you.

Ms ROSOL - The Human Resources Information System (HRIS) in the Department of Health was scheduled to be rolled out and operational by the second half of 2024. Can you give us an update on what the status of the HRIS is and has there been any reduction to its scope or implementation?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. It's something the Health department has been leading, for and on behalf of the government, for some time. It's a considerable effort and investment. I know the acting secretary and the team take it very seriously, so I'll pass to the acting secretary to respond to that question.

Mr WEBSTER - The Human Resources Information System is an incredibly complex program that we're doing on behalf of whole of government, but we're probably the most complex agency. There's a number of things we've had to work through, everything from in the last round of EBAs we actually had to agree on a whole lot of clauses with the unions that would modernise how we process time so that we can actually intersect with HRIS. That has slowed us down.

However, the first module has already been rolled out, which is case management. We prioritise that module because it was a recommendation of the commission of inquiry. That has gone live a number of weeks ago now and, in fact, has rolled out across all agencies. No, not yet? Will roll across all agencies.

In terms of the main module that we've been talking about, which is the payroll system that has rostering attached to it and all of those automations we desperately need, that is scheduled for the third quarter of 2025. The main work that needs to happen within the Department of Health in the lead-up to that is we need to review all of our rostering, standardise it more and, if we can, digitise it into systems so it can be automatically uploaded. At the moment, for a very large number of our staff across the state, they fill out a manual timesheet which gets literally signed on a piece of paper and sent to someone to data-enter, so it slows down our entire processes.

HRIS is a goal we've been working on for a period of time, but the main delays have been around we actually have to take fairly antiquated human resources processes - I won't even call them systems, and uplift them all the way to a digital platform. I'll give you one example: we actually run 700 separate roster processes across the department.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Minister, what additional nursing resources have been allocated to the state's emergency departments to assist with the increased workloads that are

associated with the government's new transfer-of-care procedure to assist nurses who are now looking after patients in corridors with no additional staffing?

Mr BARNETT - I think you're aware we have concluded the recruitment of 44 doctors and 25 nurses to the Royal Hobart Hospital emergency department. Secondly, we take this very seriously and you've seen the beneficial results for our ambulance care into the community, with 9000 hours' improvement. We have regular meetings with the unions, the department and the AMA on transfer-of-care delay. The most recent one was a few weeks ago. The chief executive of Ambulance Tasmania indicated that we're bringing forward the review of that transfer-of-care delay activity, in terms of the numbers. I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - We had this question yesterday. We haven't actually split number of nurses, number of doctors out in the figures we're providing. You asked for the number of nurses in ED.

Ms ROSOL - No, I, asked what additional nursing resources are being allocated to help cope with the transfer-of-care change in procedure.

Mr WEBSTER - In the south, 25 additional nurses are employed to increase the treatment points as part of the \$22 million announcement by government.

At the LGH, an uplift to ED to ensure there are 26 nurses on day shift, 28 on afternoon shift and 24 on night shift. That has required us to have a large number of agency nurses to make sure we maintain those numbers on a daily basis. The Launceston General Hospital ED is subject to nursing hours per patient presentation, I think you would call it, rather than day calculation, which we've worked through with the ANMF because there was a recalculation of that because of the nature of the ED. The minister has talked about the need to expand the space at the Launceston General Hospital. We actually have a separate agreement with the ANMF that has a top-up in addition to the calculation of nursing hours per patient presentation. The uplift is we went from 22 to 26 on day shift, 25 to 28 on afternoon shift and 21 to 24 on night shift.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. I want to ask a question about COVID. I understand COVID is something no-one wants to talk about any more. It's had an enormous negative impact on us and people want to forget about it and move on. But there is mounting evidence that the health impacts of COVID are growing and not going away, and ignoring the problem won't change that. There is research that links even mild acute COVID infections with population-wide increases in a large number of chronic diseases, which has huge implications for our health system and increased demand we can expect on services going forward.

At a briefing with the acting secretary two weeks ago, we were told demand for health services in Tasmania has increased dramatically since COVID infection became widespread. So, I'm just wondering if you could provide data on the rates of a number of health conditions and I think this might need to be taken on notice, just comparing 2019 and 2020 rates of some diseases and 2023-24 rates of diseases.

I have a list here of those, including heart disease, arrhythmias, mood disorders and anxiety, strokes or blood clots, postural orthostatic tachycardia syndrome, myalgic encephalomyelitis or chronic fatigue syndrome, diabetes, including type 1 diabetes in children,

Strep A, and we also know that increasing cancer has been linked with COVID infections as well.

So, are you able to provide data on the rates of those health conditions across those years before COVID became widespread here and now, please.

Mr BARNETT - A very detailed question.

Ms ROSOL - Yes, it is.

Mr BARNETT - Something that we would need to take on notice, I would say in response to COVID, as a government we invested very heavily. I want to pay tribute to the former premier Peter Gutwein and minister for health at the time Jeremy Rockliff and others within the Health department. But, across the Department of Premier and Cabinet, across the government, it was an incredible effort and supported by many around this table and elsewhere.

So, I just want to pay tribute to that because that was about saving lives and saving livelihoods, and those were at the forefront of everybody's mind during that difficult time. There is still, very much, in the community, a focus certainly through the Department of Health, the Tas health service, a focus on COVID-19, on flu, on RSV vaccination program. We've had the Health department's Winter Wellness Campaign.

So, it's very much important, particularly for those at risk, those over 65, those in a high risk category, and we do Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander groups, for example. We do take it very seriously and there's a lot more, well, there's a lot that we are doing and a lot more that can still be done. In terms of the detail of your question, we'll need to take that on notice.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, I'm pleased to hear about the new Mental Health Hub plan for my beautiful electorate of Bass. However, I've noticed that the 28-day readmissions rate rose from 14.7 in 22-23 to 15.2 in 23-24, while the target for 24-25 is set under 14 per cent.

At the same time, the average length of stay has been increasing year on year reaching 16.4 days, yet for 24-25 you predict it will drop to under 13 days. Could you please explain how these targets are calculated given the mental health hubs won't be operational by then?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for your question, your interest in mental health and your support for the mental health precinct in Launceston. Some \$90 million, an extra \$10 million in the Budget on top of last year's \$80 million, for that mental health precinct set for Franklin Street in the north.

In terms of those targets that you've outlined, that's clearly an operational question, and we'll need to pass that to those at the table who might be able to assist the honourable member. So, let's see if I can pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Thanks, minister. So, firstly as to how we set the targets. So, we work with the actual service areas in setting those targets and what they have planned for their particular areas and those sorts of things. In particular, in setting, if you look at Launceston and

the uptick in readmission and length of stay, we initially had in our adult mental health services our reform program rolled across the south of the state and then in the last two years has become a statewide reform program.

So, additional changes to how we operate in that area is increasing our focus on acute episodes in the community and the hub is actually an outcome of the final step. Once that's in place, you have things like Safe Haven recovery college, but along the journey we're already increasing the services available in the community. In addition to that, it factors in mental health emergency response switching on over the next couple of years and the minister, I think has a number of times over the last two days, has pointed to the success of that in both Hobart and the north west where we're seeing in excess of 75 per cent of cases remaining in the community when responded through mental health emergency response or PACER in the south rather than in the traditional way of sending up Ambulance Tasmania to those cases. All of those things are factored in in setting the new targets because our services believe that those will have an effect and will bring down those targets - bring down those percentages.

Mrs PENTLAND - Great, thank you. Different question. Thank you, Chair. Minister - and I do apologise if this has been asked because I know that I came late - but \$32 million has been allocated for a medical equipment fund but Tasmanians deserve more transparency about how this money will be spent. Can you specify exactly what hospitals will receive this funding and what criteria is used to determine where the equipment will be deployed?

Mr BARNETT - Yes. Thanks very much for the question. I think the total amount is \$40 million including in the out years.

Mrs PENTLAND - Okay.

Mr BARNETT - Over the forward Estimates and then into the out years, so that's a commitment we gave at the election. In terms of the detail, in terms of the application process, but it's not just for our four major hospitals, but also rural and regional hospitals. In terms of that process, I'll pass to the acting secretary. I should note also, as the northern member here, member for Bass, amongst others, of course, interest in the robot which will be placed at the LGH, \$4.7 million, which will provide wonderful healthcare, medical services for not just men but also women. That's a new technology which is outlined in the budget and will absolutely deliver better healthcare services for those that need it.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, so the medical equipment fund within the Budget is our estimate of need over the next few years in addition to our current programs and that's based on our assessment of asset condition, those sorts of things, across our network. One area that we're focused on through our infrastructure team is in fact the rollout of an asset management system which will, you know, allow us to plan for the future when we need to replace things and things like that. In terms of this set of money, we have some identified needs which will almost immediately go forward into the fund, but then we'll be working with each of the services - and I'd say services because it's not just for hospital - on what are their needs going over the next few years. We have a plan to spend the money on a year-by-year basis in addition to the money we will already be spending on that equipment. As you can appreciate, we churn through millions and millions of dollars' worth of medical equipment every year.

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes. I just wanted to ask, then, that how can you guarantee that this investment won't be wasted on equipment that ends up sitting unused due to ongoing staffing shortages or operational mismanagement? You did talk about your asset management system, will that incorporate that or is that a different system that you'll have?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, thanks very much for the question. First of all, just to make it very clear, we're looking at increasing the number of people in the Tasmanian Health Service. We're on a recruitment blitz now. We've got more than 900 since April on the frontline; doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, paramedics, that's part of the budget. We've got funding in the budget to increase those numbers. In terms of those people to manage and to supervise the equipment that you've made reference to, that's our expectation. We want an efficient health system that's delivering better healthcare services to Tasmanians faster. In terms of the detail, I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, it is really important that this fund is to buy equipment or replace equipment that is at the end of life and needed in our system. It's not about funding equipment that can sit around. When this equipment is needed in our system and is coming towards the end of its life, we need to replace it. This fund gives us the additional ability to do that. I can assure you that we won't be buying high-cost equipment that isn't being used across our system.

Mr FAIRS - As we know, the funding for the hospitals is awesome, and people living in those population centres are well-serviced in that regard. What about people in regional and rural areas? Can you outline what the Budget's doing for those people, please?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I can. The support for rural and regional communities is really important. I've made mention of the GP NOW guaranteeing the Rapid Response Team. Also the multi million-dollar support for the extra 40 doctors into regional and rural Tasmania. On top of that, we have the 27 community paramedics, and the chief executive made reference to them earlier, as did I, and they'll be deployed across the rural and regional communities at our district hospitals, caring for people in their communities and keeping them out of our emergency departments wherever possible. They're certainly highly trained paramedics specifically for that purpose, to treat patients who present at those district hospitals or in their local communities.

In addition to that, the Royal Flying Doctor Service - I was with them just a few weeks ago, Nicole Henty was with me, when we announced funding support. We brought it forward by one year to extend the oral health services from St Helens down to Nubeena, so extending it from Orford down to Nubeena. Being down at the Tasman with the Premier and the cabinet a couple of weeks ago, they are absolutely delighted to see that service being extended.

Of course, we have the funding support of some \$6 million on top of the federal support for the \$15 million from the Australian Government for their expansion of the new purpose-built facility at the Launceston Airport. So, we have a lot taking place in that regard, and we will continue to do that.

The other initiative on the east coast is at Swansea, the May Shaw Health Centre. They do a fantastic job supporting the local community. I visited there some weeks ago now. Some \$600,000 towards the \$1.3 million upgrade to provide two additional GP consulting rooms with the on-site Swansea general practice there.

Likewise, on the west coast, working with the West Coast Council on their plan for the Rosebery health centre to deliver more outreach home and community health services across that area. Of course, the West Coast District Hospital in Queenstown, we have funding support thanks to our advocacy with the federal government support for aged care facility expansion. Likewise, I was in Oatlands just a few weeks ago, the multipurpose centre and the expansion of the aged care beds there, again, with federal support. We have, as I mentioned earlier, the ambulance stations being built around Tasmania, including at Oatlands, which is nearly finished. That will be fantastic for the southern midlands and the surrounds.

We have plans for Legana, King Island, Cygnet and Snug with our new ambulance stations. I gave you a bit of a heads-up a short time ago in terms of Longford and Bicheno ambulance stations, and they've now been identified. We will absolutely be rolling those out to deliver better healthcare services faster for those rural and regional communities that are so important.

I think we have an answer to some earlier questions - one from the chief executive of Ambulance Tasmania to Ms Rosol and I think the Acting Secretary also has an answer. Would you like to go first?

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, Ms Rosol asked for the number of patients in category 2 (under 15 minutes) transfer of care delay and the number of patients within 30 minutes transfer of care.

Category 2 - this is a triage category 2 - there were 17,085 arrivals at our hospitals in 2023-24; 9572 or 56 per cent were transferred into the care of the hospital within 15 minutes, and 11,665 patients were transferred to the care of our hospitals within 30 minutes (68.3 per cent). Does that make sense?

Now, that is up. So 2022-23, the percentages were 53 per cent and 63.6 per cent, and the number of cases increased by - I think that works out at about 1000.

Ms HADDAD - Minister. There have been concerns raised with me around the safety of people working in Cath labs in terms of exposure to scatter radiation. The current protection used at the moment is lead aprons, which are heavy, bulky, kind of old-style PPE that only provide about 60-70 per cent body coverage, meaning there is significant exposure to radiation. They don't represent best practice anymore. There are jurisdictions that have moved away from using those. I'm also told nurses can be exposed to roughly double the amount of radiation than doctors working in the same labs, so I wondered if you can explain what you're doing to improve the PPE and the safety and protection for staff, and particularly nurses, working in Cath labs.

Mr BARNETT - Firstly, I want to say that the health and safety of our workers in the health system is a priority for our government. I want to thank, again, our awesome healthcare workers for what they do. In terms of the answer to that question, I'll see if the Acting Secretary is in a position to provide an answer to that very specific and detailed question.

Mr WEBSTER - We don't have the answer immediately.

Ms HADDAD - I can put it on notice, if that's easier. I know there's not long to go.

Mr BARNETT - We may be able to assist if we just had a few moments. If we could just hold that thought and we'll get back to the committee as soon as possible.

Ms HADDAD - I can move onto a different question if you like, while you look it up. It's about the Spencer Clinic. There was an election commitment in 2021 for the government - you made a commitment to a \$40 million upgrade to replace the ageing Spencer Clinic, the inpatient mental health clinic in Burnie. That hasn't happened yet, and you've recommitted to it in this Budget. I wondered if you can explain when those upgrades will be completed and whether the whole project is budgeted. Also, how many positions are currently vacant at the Spencer Clinic?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. I'm pleased to respond regarding the north-west and the Spencer Clinic, having visited there just a few weeks ago - and I thank those healthcare workers involved in the Spencer Clinic for the services that they do provide. We have \$40 million committed in the Budget to build the new inpatient mental health services at the North West Regional Hospital to replace the Spencer Clinic. The facility will provide 22 inpatient beds, five short stay beds. Following confirmation of the model of care detail, the project scoping and design processes will be undertaken before tenders are awarded and construction begins. However, it is anticipated that construction will be completed in 2026.

Also I should note \$7.6 million for the north-west coast has been committed for the mental health hub in Devonport.

Ms HADDAD - So, the whole Spencer Clinic project is funded in this Budget? The other part of the question was, how many positions are currently vacant at the clinic? Again, the numbers question I'm happy to put on notice. Specifically, how many are vacant. Also, how many staff are on stress leave or workers' compensation leave at the moment from the Spencer Clinic.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. That's very much an operational, detailed question. I will just pass to the Acting CEO.

Ms HADDAD - Again, happy to put numbers questions on notice, if that's easier for the committee.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister. Because the Spencer Clinic is actually part of our northern, north-western region, we only have regional-level data with us.

Ms HADDAD - Okay, I'll put that on notice if it's not possible to break it down. I just put it on the record that we are hearing some pretty concerning stories, Minister - I'm sure you're hearing them too - that staffing levels are critically low and that morale is really low and that it's difficult to recruit staff to work in the Spencer Clinic, which is what's led to this series of questions. I'm wondering, are you hearing those concerns as well? If it isn't possible to break the staffing data down to that granular level, whether you're committed to doing the work required to make sure that the Spencer Clinic is a place you can employ people to and recruit and retain staff there.

Mr BARNETT - I just wanted to respond to that question and indicate the level of priority that we place on this. That is because there's \$40 million in the Budget for a new

inpatient mental health service at the North West Regional. I saw plans for that. I've had a briefing on it. It was great to visit there. I thank the healthcare workers who are providing that service in the Spencer Clinic. Clearly, there is going to be absolute benefit for the community in a new facility and those new services. That's a level of indication of our strong commitment to that. I thank the Premier and former minister for health, mental health and wellbeing, Jeremy Rockliff, for his leadership to help secure this commitment for and on behalf of the government. I'll check with the acting secretary if you wish to add to that answer.

Mr WEBSTER - We are absolutely concerned about workforce, particularly in our regional areas. It has been a long-term challenge to recruit and retain staff across all health professions at Spencer Clinic. We have worked to change our models of care to diversify the workforce, for instance, by bringing in RNs and then giving them scholarships to do their postgrad in mental health. Where we can identify roles that could actually be a nurse or an allied health professional, then we will dual-advertise that role so that we can attract either a nurse or an allied health professional.

The Spencer Clinic is a 19-bed facility. We run it at occupancy levels at various times at 16 rather than 19 so that we're not overloading the staffing levels. I would say that the occupancy level of Spencer Clinic is lower than other facilities, but the reason for that in the stats is in fact that decision that we take to lower the level to 16. We think it's really important that when we come under pressure in the north-west that we don't continue to say this is a 19-bed unit when the staff are not there. But we have worked very closely with HACSU and ANMF in particular around what the staffing model is, how we can diversify, how we can dual-classify jobs - all of those sorts of options that we apply in the north-west that you might not necessarily apply at the Royal or in other states. I share your concern. We have a number of management tools in place that we're tracking. I have to declare that for our Executive Director of Nursing and Director of Services for Mental Health Services, unfortunately Estimates hearings this year coincide with our accreditation visit, so the entire support around mental health is focused elsewhere.

Ms HADDAD - I have one super-short one just to round out this rotation. The minister mentioned the surgical robot before. I'll really truncate what I was going to ask. We all understand and agree on the benefits of the surgical robot committed to for the LGH, but it has been delayed by a year in this year's Budget. It was originally committed to be installed this year for operation next year, but it's now in next year's budget. Why has it been delayed and can you guarantee that it will actually be delivered next year, or do you anticipate it will be delayed further?

Mr BARNETT - I take this very seriously. I've met with relevant medical professionals and others regarding the surgical robot. I have raised this with the department to ensure that the department is aware of the expectations that it is a priority and to bring it on as soon as possible. I'm very pleased for the acting secretary to speak to that matter.

Mr WEBSTER - There is an estimated time on what it takes to order this and then bring it in from Europe into Australia. We believe we can do it quicker than the budget paper would indicate, in which case we would undertake and we've undertaken to the minister to cashflow it into this financial year.

Ms HADDAD - That's great news. So, it could still happen as planned.

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Mr WEBSTER - We want it here as soon as we can. The Treasury estimate is that we won't achieve it this financial year.

Ms HADDAD - Okay. They might be a bit more conservative than you guys.

Mr WEBSTER - Our estimate is that we will do it as quickly as we can.

Ms HADDAD - Okay. That's great news.

Mr BARNETT - I should add to that to respond to the question that there's planning, there's training and there's procurement. What the acting secretary is indicating is that I've indicated it's a priority and they can get going on the planning and get going on the training and get going on the procurement - it sort of all happens at the same time so that we can get it going as soon as possible.

Ms HADDAD - Okay. Good news too. Thank you.

Ms BURNET - Minister, I just wanted to touch on the Gender Budget Statement and obviously there's a large proportion of women in the Health workforce. You and I co-hosted a forum on menopause and perimenopause - a good time to pause there, wasn't it? There's a significant concern for women in relation to having those benefits in the workplace and, clearly, Ms Haddad was talking about retention or work health and safety around issues. Having and retaining more staff rather than losing them would be of benefit. I was just wondering what sort of benefit you may see to having some sort of reproductive leave and recognition of that.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question and your interest in this important matter for women. I think it's an issue for all of us and that's why I was very pleased to jointly host that with you, honourable member -

Ms BURNET - Thank you. I appreciate it.

Mr BARNETT - I think it was a very productive and collaborative meeting and I learnt more about the merit of appropriate leave in appropriate circumstances to support women going through menopause, and perimenopause as well. That's something that I have taken on board and I'd like the acting secretary to respond as well to help outline the government's views on these important matters.

Mr WEBSTER - It's a range of issues but in particular perimenopause and menopause are a focus of our people strategies going forward at the moment to look at how we can do this. The first thing is flexibility within our leave provisions, particularly around personal leave and the use of that. Second, it's also in patterns of work and how we can work with people who, from a financial point of view, need to work full time but may not be able to do that because of a range of situations within life - endometriosis comes to mind and things like that - as well as menopause. How do we flexibly design their work practices to meet their personal needs? The answer is not always in flexible work practice, that someone should work part time. We may need to be flexible around shift rostering, hours of work and those sorts of things so that we're supplementing any leave packages which, by their very nature, end up being limited. We don't want people needing personal leave, taking rec leave, because the purposes of those two leaves is completely different. We have to have flexible work practice available.

Ms BURNET - Is that available now for staff?

Mr WEBSTER - Yes, it is, but where we need to work on this is to making sure that people know about the access. We've got a range of things that have come through recent enterprise bargaining agreements, et cetera, but we don't promote the use of it in this way. That's work that's underway, to especially say to people we actually want you in the workplaces as much as you wish to and therefore we want to adapt our work practices. I've just been reminded, for instance, I should add breastfeeding to this as well, but there's a whole range of things where we need to change the way we expect our employees to work and agree that with the employee rather than the traditional, 'we expect you to be here from 9.00 to 5.00' or 'we expect you to do five eight-hour shifts' or whatever.

We need to change that and to negotiate it on an individual basis because, again, we can't assume that what fits me will fit the minister. Our flexible work practices policies are all about flexibility, but we have to make it, and we are increasingly aware that we don't market it enough. Traditionally, when we talk about flexible work practices, we talk about part-time work and we need to change the way we think.

Ms BURNET - I'm interested to see that flexible work practice because that sounds like you're moving in the right direction. Clearly, reproductive leave and legislative reproductive leave - Queensland has I think 10 days. We would be looking at introducing 12 days. The health workforce would benefit greatly as would the rest of the Tasmanian workforce and economy. Thank you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, budgeting to support women's access to terminations of pregnancy is impossible when the state doesn't gather data on the numbers are terminations, medical and surgical, provided here. These procedures are spread over four Medicare items, which also include medical procedures such as DNCs.

Other Australian jurisdictions require GPs to report a request for service and medical termination or referral for a surgical termination, in the same way they report seeing a patient with a notifiable disease like chickenpox. This enables those states to track trends, budget for costs, and support women to avoid unwanted pregnancies by identifying the barriers to accessing contraception.

What's the government's plans to start collecting the data it needs? I appreciate it's been asked a number of times but I'm keen for an update on how we're going with data collection.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question and I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Apologies, Ms Johnston, there is a delay between this room and the people sitting in the other room.

Ms JOHNSTON - Would you like me to ask my second question while we're waiting for that to come through? You might need some responses from the other room for it as well.

I want to know how many women gave birth in Tasmanian hospitals in the last financial year who weren't covered by Medicare. What was the average cost of their antenatal and birth costs? How many required support for gestational diabetes and what was the average cost of

that treatment? How many were put on payment plans? What was the average rate of repayment on those plans? And, how many had their fees waived due to financial hardship?

I'm happy to put that on notice if that's an easier task. I appreciate I asked a number of detailed questions there.

Mr WEBSTER - We have with us the totals for Medicare ineligible but not specific to maternity, unfortunately.

Ms JOHNSTON - Okay. Is that something you're able to get specifically or is it not?

Mr WEBSTER - We should be able to.

Ms JOHNSTON - If you could take that on notice.

Mr WEBSTER - Yes.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. The earlier question about data, has that come through to the other room? We can move on, perhaps, in the interest of time, I know and come back to -

Mr WEBSTER - The short answer is, and I, you know, I am happy to actually provide this in writing. It's how we go about collecting the data limits and what we can actually bring up from the hospitals, but I appreciate that I've heard that answer three times in the last three years. I'll work with my team on how we actually obtain the data.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you want to put that on notice then? I'll put both those questions on notice

Mr WEBSTER - Yes, put that on notice and we'll respond as best we can.

Mr FAIRS - Thank you. Minister, the Budget this year includes significant investment in a new mental health facility for older Tasmanians. This is a sector that I'm very passionate about. Can you outline what this will involve and can you update the committee on the reform activity that's underway in the area of mental health service delivery, please?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. It is important in terms of mental health services across the state and something we've been focused on.

As I indicated earlier, I visited the Roy Fagan Centre and older persons' mental health services more broadly. There was a reform project for older persons' mental health that made six recommendations in 2021, all of which were accepted and an implementation plan was released soon after that. There was \$1 million allocated in 2021-22, and in 2022-23 there was an additional \$20.5 million secured to continue this work.

The Roy Fagan Centre site is privately owned and has been leased by the Department of Health for almost 25 years. It's certainly an ageing facility and it's not fit for purpose and I'm happy to put that on the record. We will invest \$82.56 million to establish a new 40 bed older persons' mental health facility at St John's Park, which I've also visited in recent months. The services currently delivered at the Roy Fagan Centre include in-patient and day-program services. I thank the healthcare workers that are there doing a fantastic job, I really appreciate

their support. Those services will be transferred to the new facility by the end of the department's current lease in 2029; that's the current plan.

Other highlights of our reform include: the successful recruitment of the new older persons' mental health services' statewide senior leadership positions; the expansion of the workforce delivering care at the Roy Fagan Centre; and increased staffing in the community older persons' mental health services team, with more than 22 new full-time equivalents appointed since 2021; and working with the residential aged-care sector through a rapid access service pilot to provide specialist in-reach support to more than 14 aged-care facilities in the greater Launceston area. Older persons' mental health services are also providing in-reach support to the Glenview specialist dementia care unit in Hobart, which is the only service of its kind in Tasmania.

We want to continue working with the federal government on the bed block for older Tasmanians, so getting access to the aged-care services. As I've indicated publicly, there's about one ward of people in our hospitals that can be discharged today into a residential aged-care facility, but none is available. It's called bed block and it's very frustrating for the Tasmanian government and the people of Tasmania, especially those older Tasmanians who deserve those services. We've raised this consistently with the federal government and we need more done in that space.

In addition, there are people in our hospitals who really deserve the disability support care in the community and through the NDIS. If you add those together it's 60 to 70 people at any one time who are blocked in our hospitals who deserve care in the community through disability care or through residential aged-care services to be funded and supported by the federal government. This is something that I've been raising consistently with the federal government and other jurisdictions. It's something that I consider very important and we will continue to advocate in that space for a better healthcare services for those Tasmanians in need.

We've got an answer to your earlier question, if you want it.

Ms HADDAD - Yes, absolutely. Thank you.

Mr WEBSTER - The Spencer Clinic FTE 44.54, currently we have vacant 6.08 of that. I'm also told that we've recently appointed two additional RNs.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. I also put on notice, and I'm happy to leave it there, the workers' comp and stress-leave numbers. Also, on scatter radiation - you took something on notice, but I didn't write anything down.

Mr BARNETT - If you could write it down, we'll take it on notice and support you accordingly.

Ms HADDAD - Okay, I'll do that.

I have some questions about oral health. I know you were asked about this in the upper House yesterday, and we both agree that good oral health is fundamental to health, wellbeing and quality of life. In the Legislative Council, you were asked about the general care waiting list and explained that it had dropped from 15,187 in 2022-23 to 13,684 in 2023-24. Looking at the waitlist data, the occasions of service also dropped. It was a small drop from 8063

occasions of service to 8006. So, the reduction hasn't only been from people receiving treatment. Can you explain other ways that the waitlist has reduced?

Mr BARNETT - Yes. I'd like to pass to the acting secretary to indicate it is a priority for our government. I mentioned the expansion of Royal Flying Doctor Service on the east coast. They do have support on the west coast as well, but we have \$2 million in our budget over the next two years for an extra 20,000 dental appointments. We do consider it as a priority and in terms of that additional funding - to see those changes since COVID - which have seen some improvements, but for the detail of your question, I'll pass to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - I think the minister outlined yesterday in the other place that the Tasmanian government has provided \$6.5 million since 2020 to address this. In addition to our occasions of service, we do a thing called vouchering, which is effectively paying private dentists to provide occasions of service -

Ms HADDAD - Yes, a bit like Legal Aid.

Mr WEBSTER - Yes. And over that period, we increased the number of appointments due to that 6.5 by 28,646, so that's had an impact. The second thing is, this is a regularly managed list, so some people come off this list because they've sought service elsewhere. We do regular checks of the list to make sure that the people on there are still waiting, if you like, and move through it.

Those two methods would see the list come down, but the main thing is the extra appointments that we've generated through the additional investment and, as the minister mentioned, in rural and regional areas having RFDS provide more services.

Ms HADDAD - Over a similar period, there was a drop in the waitlist itself from 15,553 patients in November 2023 to 13,723 one month later. So, that's 1790 people who came off the waitlist, but in that same period, there were only 699 occasions of service. That's 1091 who have come off the waitlist not due to receiving service. Has that dropped because of an audit of the waitlist or some other means?

Mr WEBSTER - It is about the audit of the waitlist at that time of year, although not all of it. Some of it would be that vouchering that occurs -

Ms HADDAD - As well.

Mr WEBSTER - -but we do that regular check. People will receive service through RFDS or the private sector that we don't know about and by the regular audit, where we go out and check with that person, 'are you still waiting for service?' If you go back over many years, you'll see November, December, January is the adjustment period.

Ms HADDAD - That's when you do it.

I think waitlist audits are fine, but they shouldn't necessarily be characterised as a success in service because there are different reasons people come off the waitlist.

On a procedural level, what happens if a patient doesn't respond to an attempt at contact, if they're still on that waitlist, they might have moved house and not received a letter or changed

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phone numbers or email and not receive that contact from Oral Health Services, are they then automatically removed from the list, or is there some further attempt to contact that person?

Mr WEBSTER - There are multiple attempts to contact. We're trying to move away from letters, but if SMS and email don't work, then it may be a letter, but it also may be a crosscheck of records.

Ms HADDAD - Okay.

Mr WEBSTER - We may actually have -

Ms HADDAD - Another way.

Mr WEBSTER - - multiple members of families and some members of the families have told us of the address change, and things like that. So, crosschecking of records also occurs.

Ms HADDAD - Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR - Ms Burnet.

Ms BURNET - Thank you Chair. Minister, every dollar spent on keeping people well is a dollar saved, according to multiple sources, and yet there seems to be little in this budget that will aid in improving communities' access to health and wellbeing options. According to the Australian Prevention Partnership, each additional kilometre walked has been estimated to result in health-related benefits that range in value from \$1 to \$2.08. Each additional kilometre cycled results in health-related benefits that range in value from less than two cents to \$1.12.

Minister, there's a holistic approach to health, which is really important to both you and me, and the Greens have been pushing this for a very long time, but yesterday we had the release of the news that upgrades to the Tasman Bridge, particularly the walking and cycling facility will not be improved. That's a huge impediment to people's health and wellbeing across -

CHAIR - That's an infrastructure -

Ms BURNET - I'm getting to it and it is an infrastructure-related question but it's about health and wellbeing. So, as a cyclist and somebody who is very aware of the benefits to keeping healthy, what is the joined-up thinking reflected in this Budget about making communities active, safe and well?

Mr BARNETT - Well, thank you very much for your question and interest in this matter. We are very much on the same page in terms of the benefit of prevention and as a government we are very keen to support healthy, active lifestyles and that's why, as a government, we've funded the Healthy Tasmania Five Year Strategic Plan, which kicked off some years ago. We have funding in the Budget and the Healthy Tasmania launch in September 2022. Since then \$4.2 million has been provided to 179 organisations and communities, delivering 217 initiatives.

In terms of the Health in All Policies approach, which I know that's where you're sort of getting to, I'm happy to put on the record, which I mentioned earlier, that we will be releasing

a 20-year strategic plan to improve the health of Tasmanians. It's focused on prevention. It will be released. It's a discussion paper. We will be seeking feedback from stakeholders and members of the community on ways we can do that even better over a 20-year period.

Subsequent to that we'll then have a further draft and we'll get further input from the community. I want this as a bottom-up approach where we can all work together, Team Tasmania, to deliver a healthier outcome for all Tasmanians over the decades ahead. I think it was just last week that many of us around this table participated in the Heart Foundation Walk. You've mentioned the benefits of walking and I commend the Heart Foundation for that launch. Simon Wood, I know, is a co-walker with Craig Farrell and I think Vica Bayley was very much involved as well.

You've mentioned the benefits of walking, you've mentioned cycling and, as a keen cyclist, I love it and I know the benefits for me but also for so many other Tasmanians, walking, cycling, just being active more generally. So, I appreciate your question and the motivation, and I look forward to working with you and others to deliver a healthier outcome for all Tasmanians.

Ms BURNET - One final question, today is my last day of the Get Bus Active trial. It's run through Menzies and it's about getting people active by catching buses. Again, it seems to be a limitation as to having that incidental exercise because we've got such a broken transport system. So, again, how can you influence that joined-up thinking?

Mr BARNETT - Well, just to indicate that part of our election campaign - and I'm not the Minister for Transport - was the half-priced Metro bus fares. You mentioned buses and so I'm very pleased to remind Tasmanians of that. It's getting more people using public transport and then, of course, walking wherever possible and I acknowledge that.

I'm also not the Minister for Infrastructure. You mentioned the Tasman Bridge and the upgrade, and we'll do everything we can across government to make a difference, to provide more healthy, active options for Tasmanians and deliver a healthier community over the years and decades ahead. We need to look long term when we're talking about our health policies. And that's why we've got a 2040 plan for the workforce, a 2040 plan for our health policy and we're going to have a 20-year plan for health prevention in this state and that'll be subject to feedback from the members of the local community and we will deliver on that vision for Tasmania.

Ms BURNET - Thank you.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, I just want to take you back to the transfer of care protocols and understand that there's differing results and you responded to a number of questions earlier in the hearing, but my understanding is that the Royal Hobart Hospital had specific transfer of care nurses employed to facilitate the transfer of care, but apparently approximately a month ago those positions were removed. Now my understanding is that that has created a level of difficulty in the communication between paramedics and the Royal Hobart Hospital staff. I'm just wondering if that did happen, and if it did happen, surely to facilitate the transfer of care, having good positions on both sides, negotiating and working through the bed-block and the flow would be important.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question and I'm pleased to have another question on the transfer of care delay, particularly while the chief executive of Ambulance Tasmania is at the table, to indicate it is really important to our government and we do take it seriously. We've got \$22 million in this Budget year and then over the forward Estimates, \$88 million in total for the employment of 44 new doctors and 25 new nurses at the Royal Hobart Hospital Emergency Department. I announced at the emergency department a month or more ago now that we had successfully gone through the recruitment process for those nurses and those doctors. I was very pleased to advise of that and there were smiles all round when I was down there, including by the director of emergency services at the emergency department. I met some of the new nurses and doctors. Gabby was one of those, from far north Queensland, and she was so pleased to be based in Tasmania at the Royal Hobart Hospital and was very complimentary of the emergency department, so that was very encouraging.

In terms of the detail around that, I will pass to the chief executive of Ambulance Tasmania to assist.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is not so much the paramedics; my understanding is there were specific transfer of care nurses engaged.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, well, we've got the chief executive who's undertaking a review on behalf of the government and we've also got my acting secretary and hopefully we can assist the member accordingly.

Mr EMERY - Thank you minister, thank you Mr O'Byrne. There's been a range of initiatives that we have put in place to support the transfer of care procedure, including the appointment of a health relationship manager position to work very closely with the Royal Hobart Hospital. That's a senior manager within Ambulance Tasmania for both THS North and THS South that works very closely around the transfer of care process. In addition to that we established the communication escalation procedure which clearly defines escalation pathways between Ambulance Tasmania and the Tasmanian Health Service as a way of ensuring a step-based approach to communication to address those issues on a case-by-case basis.

In addition to that procedure, the inter-facility transfer procedure sought to substantially reduce the number of ambulances presenting to the emergency department when there was a ward bed available for them for inter-facility transfers and that's particularly relevant at Launceston General Hospital and between August 2023 and August 2024 we saw 25 per cent of inter-facility transfers go via the emergency department at the LGH down to just over 5 per cent, so very significant reductions as part of a wholesale approach to improving flow and access through the emergency department. Of course for some time now we've had transfer of care paramedics who pick up additional shifts and support the transfer of care of patients between Ambulance Tasmania and the Emergency Department and support that being done in the most timely way possible.

We continue to work very closely with the Royal Hobart Hospital. They have a range of rapid improvement plans in place at the moment to address those challenges. Ambulance Tasmania meets with them on a very regular basis to address those challenges and as the minister mentioned, there is a forthcoming review or evaluation of the procedure. The data, as I touched on earlier, is extremely positive, as I said, down from 24,000 hours ramped in 2022-23 to 19,000 or a 21 per cent reduction in just one year but we need to continue to do that work to address the delay and ensure that Ambulance Tasmania can offload patients as quickly

as possible into the emergency department and we do that through our relationship with key roles in the emergency department such as the ANUMs and the nurse navigators that exist within the ED.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, minister, just to add to that and specifically on the nursing resources at the RHH ED, as part of putting in the transfer of care delay policy or protocol, RHH took a local decision to supplement the number of ANUMs, associate nurse unit managers, who are the critical role in terms of access and flow. That was put in place and I am told that they are still in place, but what I would say is that in Mr Emery's answer, coming up in the next few weeks is a sit-down with all of the key players, the unions, on-ground staff, the doctors, the leadership doctors, leadership nurses all in one room to do a complete review of this, how we've gone over the six months, what resources have helped, what things have hindered, all of those sorts of things. So, if there is a need for these roles ongoing, it should be identified through that process which will be very much driven by the workforce rather than by us as the managers of that.

Mr O'BYRNE - I appreciate that this is a work in progress and there's various roles that are being applied and I appreciate that Ambulance Tasmania has applied significant resources and the numbers are coming down. All of that is a good story. What I am worried about is my latest intel, not nurse unit assistant, nurse unit managers, but specific roles that are transfer of care nurses have been removed from the floor in the last four weeks. The numbers that have been quoted may not reflect that and my concern is that from what I'm hearing anecdotally and I'll obviously take it on face value from the committee, is that is necessitating more visits from senior paramedic people down to the Royal to try to resolve something that previous to four weeks ago had been resolved on-site.

Mr BARNETT - Just quickly, thank you very much for that and your interest in the matter. I consider it very important and that's why I have regular meetings on the transfer of care delay with not just my department but with the ANMF and HACSU and AMA. We meet regularly over a number of months and then there are regular meetings with the department and those relevant unions and representatives and likewise Ambulance Tasmania. Those concerns are taken very seriously. My door is always open from those organisations if they want to raise those concerns, but we are taking it seriously. We're seeing incremental improvements and we will be having that review as the chief executive's indicated. I'll just see if you can add to that.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you minister. Those ANUM roles, you're calling transfer of care nurses -

Mr O'BYRNE - That's how they've been described to me.

Mr WEBSTER - -Yes, but the ANUM roles, if they're identified through this review, then that's part of what we're trying to achieve here as the right model. So, as a BAU, the ANUMs that are rostered should be talking to the -

Mr O'BYRNE - BAU, ANUMs, could you, just for the punters out there, you know -

Mr WEBSTER - Sorry, business as usual, the associate nurse unit managers should be talking to the operational supervisors in AT, sorry, Ambulance Tasmania, and -

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Mr O'BYRNE - Thank you, DW. I appreciate that.

Ms HADDAD - Too many acronyms.

Mr WEBSTER - And D.O'B. -

Mr O'BYRNE - Okay. We'll stop there.

Ms HADDAD - Too much.

Mr WEBSTER - Sorry, Mr O'Byrne. We need to get back to a situation where those people are talking to each other and that resolves it, rather than having additional senior resources having to go in. So, we are hoping that doing this review particularly - and this was requested of us that it be brought forward by HACSU - is that we'll identify these issues and iron them out of the system so we can continue to improve.

Mr O'BYRNE - It would be a pity to waste the progress that's been -

CHAIR - Given there's exactly 10 minutes remaining, I might just go straight to Ms Haddad.

Ms HADDAD - Thanks, Chair. Minister, recent concerns raised by the ANMF around working conditions, particularly at the maternity ward at the Royal, has started a new campaign called Count the Babies. You'd be aware what the campaign does is recognise that in the patient-staff ratios in the maternity ward right now, babies are not actually counted as patients. While the new mums and the staff ratio applies to how many midwives on shift to mothers who may or may not have given birth, there are also babies there being cared for as well, but right now they don't count towards patient staff ratio numbers. I wanted to know, are you aware of that campaign? Have you discussed it with the ANMF and will you commit today to counting the babies?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question, your interest in the matter and broadly high level, I will ask the acting secretary to speak to it, but I just wanted to indicate in terms of the Royal Hobart Hospital maternity service, I take it very seriously. That's why I stepped in and announced the independent investigation and we've appointed Ms Amanda Singleton who will lead that independent investigation. She's an experienced nurse, midwife and health consultant with a 35-year career in Victoria. She's supported by Ms Ann Maree Keenan, a registered nurse, and Dr Sara Bayes, a registered midwife, who will join Amanda to form that independent panel and they'll report back before the end of the year. That's the expectation I have, that's an independent investigation, I look forward to that.

In terms of the detail around the counting of the babies, I'll pass that to the acting secretary.

Mr WEBSTER - Through the minister - and I am avoiding all acronyms at the moment - the tool that we use within maternity is called Birth Rate Plus. It's a long-standing tool developed in the UK and babies are counted as part of the calculation for Birth Rate Plus, which is different to nursing hours per patient day or midwife hours per patient day. It may be that the campaign is about 'count the babies', but in fact there is actually a calculation within birth rate.

Ms HADDAD - Does Birth Rate Plus apply to every shift worked at the maternity ward at the Royal? I don't mean to be cheeky, but I have no reason to doubt their campaign.

Mr WEBSTER - Yes. We don't calculate our staffing on a roster shift by shift.

Ms HADDAD - No, I didn't think you would. So you're saying they're wrong in other words, they're wrong in saying that babies aren't counted towards staff-patient ratios at the maternity ward.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you, Minister, I would never call the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation wrong.

Ms HADDAD - Neither would I. I've got no reason to doubt their campaign, is what I'm saying.

Mr WEBSTER - Birth Rate Plus does include that, however, what I would say is that as part of the last two Enterprise Bargaining Agreements that we've entered into with the Australian Nursing Midwifery Federation, we've looked at how we actually transition to nursing midwifery ratios that would more overtly take into it things like birth rates and things like that and that's work being led by our chief nurse and midwife in preparation for our EBA negotiations which commence next year.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. One of the other things that they raised is the challenge of midwives and nurses, and midwives specifically, on late shift having to take on administrative work that is covered by ward clerks on other shifts. Through you minister, has there been a commitment in your recent commitments following that industrial action, that there will be ward clerks or administrative staff employed on every maternity ward shift because at the moment midwives are answering phones, opening locked doors on those late shifts overnight, which isn't the best use of their skill and qualification and their work, which should be caring for the mums and babies.

Mr BARNETT - Yes. Thanks very much for the question.

Mr WEBSTER - Through you minister, there's been no agreement on that with the ANMF, so it is an issue. We continue to meet with the ANMF with the next meeting due on 1 October to work through the list from the letter they sent on -

Ms HADDAD - Early September.

Mr WEBSTER - 3 September.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. I appreciate the answers. Through you, minister, but I would like to seek a commitment from you that you will look at employing ward clerks on maternity ward shifts around the clock, recognising that it's no different to a mum or a midwife if that baby is born at 2 a.m. or 2 p.m.. The challenges are different, though, with the staffing ratios across the 24 hours that babies can be born.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks for the question. As I indicated earlier, I had a round table with the ANMF, at my request, which they organised at the LGH a couple of weeks ago. That was

really productive and I appreciated that a lot. I learnt more as a result of being in that round table with one of my senior Health advisers. I've taken notes of that and have some of the messages that are coming through. What you're sharing and asking was raised with me in that meeting. I've raised that with my department and will continue to raise it. I wanted to say thank-you to Emily Shepherd and the ANMF for organising that.

I do take it seriously, and what we want is a Health system that delivers better healthcare services for Tasmanians that deserve it. The patient is always at the centre, but we need the workforce to deliver those healthcare services. I think they're awesome. They do that job 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and Tasmanians really appreciate it. The department is now looking into those matters and we'll have more to say. I know we have another meeting with the ANMF. My expectation is productive conversations and discussions, and my hope and desire is that those take place well before industrial action ever were to occur, and to try to work through those issues and challenges together - 'Team Tasmania' - wherever possible.

Ms BURNET - Minister, just another issue that's dear to your heart. Tasmanians are dying at a considerable rate from smoking-related diseases - cardiovascular and respiratory diseases - and clearly there are anti-smoking measures taken up across Tasmania. Reducing smoking in CBDs and other public places can be effective in reducing smoking rates, and yet changes of by-laws through each council is costly and clunky. It's a really clunky system. How can you look to making smoke-free areas more uniform across Tasmania?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. Yes, I have a very special interest in this space, not just as Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, but as a Tasmanian. You have 500 Tasmanians die every year as a result of smoking, so it is a priority for our government. I really appreciate what you're saying. I'll be looking at every and all options to reduce smoking in Tasmania, and likewise, you would have seen my vaping reform measures announced in recent times with the bill accordingly tabled, and seeking support around not just this table but the parliament for those important reforms, which I think will deliver better healthcare outcomes. Referring to your specific question about providing more smoke-free areas, that's certainly on my agenda and it's something I'll be raising with the department and seeing what more we can do, as a government and as a community, to improve our smoking rates.

CHAIR - We have a minute left. Does anyone have anything burning?

Ms JOHNSTON - I have a question.

CHAIR - Ms Johnston, go for it.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, my constituents are reporting lengthy delays in accessing paediatric services through the public system, and this is obviously leading to issues for children, in particular, in their schooling and their social development. Can you give the committee an update on what improvements will hopefully be made to paediatric service access, because this is critical for young Tasmanians.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks for the question. It's a very important matter, paediatric services across the state, not just at the Royal Hobart Hospital. Certainly I'm very keen as a health minister to deliver improvements in those paediatric services. We have the child health and parenting services, that we covered earlier today. In terms of access to paediatricians and the

like, I'm more than happy to pass to the Acting Secretary, but indicate to you that it is an important matter. I'm more than happy to have ongoing consultation with yourself and others on that matter, because it is important.

Mr WEBSTER - A number of things are underway. Last year we launched a paediatric service that we now deliver through local areas, such as neighbourhood houses, et cetera. We can gain greater access to paediatricians through that service. We are currently reviewing the Patient Transport Assistance Scheme (PTAS). In relation to a shortage of paediatricians, we know there is a shortage. If a GP wishes to refer to an interstate paediatrician, we need to be able to respond to that in terms of funding, et cetera, through PTAS. We are undertaking that review-

CHAIR - Apologies. I tried to try to stretch it out, but it's a hard cut. The time is 4.42 p.m. The time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Veterans Affairs.

The Committee suspended from 4.42 p.m.

DIVISION 9

(Department of Veterans' Affairs)

CHAIR - The scrutiny of the Veterans Affairs portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions, for the benefit of *Hansard*.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much, Chair. I'm very pleased to be sitting here with Mellissa Gray, Deputy Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC) Policy and Reform, and Rebecca Pinto, Executive Director of Community Partnerships and Priorities at DPAC.

CHAIR - Thank you, Minister. The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Veterans' Affairs is one hour. Would the Minister like to make an opening statement?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much. I'll make this as brief as possible, but indicate our strong support for our veterans in Tasmania, 17,500 of those, and acknowledge the more recent Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide. I'll indicate we had a veterans' ministers meeting last week across the country. That was a key topic of discussion, and the federal government has indicated they plan to respond to that by the end of the year, so that's encouraging. Certainly, from our point of view, we want them to take it very seriously and respond as soon as possible.

In terms of the Budget commitments, you can see that the veterans' employment strategy, veteran wellbeing voucher, and the veterans' reference group, are all important policy initiatives of our government. Also, the Frank MacDonald Memorial Prize study tour, Cameron Baird VC MG scholarship, Teddy Sheean VC memorial grants, which colleagues around this table know very well. We also host a reception each year for Tasmanian members of the ADF deployed overseas and, of course, provide ongoing support to RSL Tasmania and its sub-branches, and Hobart and Launceston Legacy. I'm pleased to indicate our strong support

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for our veterans in this Budget and ongoing, and that will continue. I'll leave it there. Thanks very much.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, I notice from the ministerial staff directory your office employs a dedicated senior adviser to manage the Veterans' Affairs portfolio. Is that correct?

Mr BARNETT - Dean Young is my senior adviser.

Ms BUTLER - It seems excessive when the output is around \$600,000 a year, and it's my understanding your previous veterans' adviser was not a senior adviser. What's the annual salary of this member of your team, Minister?

Mr BARNETT - I'd have to pass that to the deputy secretary. Having said that, I really appreciate the support of Mr Young. He provides excellent support to me as Minister for Veterans' Affairs, and the veterans community more generally.

Ms GRAY - We don't have that information at hand. We'd have to consult with ministerial and parliamentary services and get that.

Ms BUTLER - Can I take that on notice then, through the minister?

Is it true this senior adviser is a previous Liberal Member of Parliament who lost their seat this year, and is the salary drawn from the Veterans' Affairs allocation?

Mr BARNETT - I think we've agreed to take on notice that question, and we can take that question on notice as well.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, is this senior adviser a veteran?

Mr BARNETT - No, he's not a veteran.

Ms BUTLER - What experience does the staff member have to be considered appropriate for this position? Or are you simply looking after your own?

Mr BARNETT - I don't appreciate the question. Nevertheless, I feel very supported as Minister for Veterans' Affairs. I know the veterans of the community likewise appreciate and support the work of my Veterans Affairs' adviser. I thank you, in that regard at least, for allowing me to put that on the record.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister I'm going to start with the stadium and its impact on the Cenotaph - obviously an incredibly important symbol for veterans. The CEO of RSL Tasmania wrote to the Premier on 18 July. In fact, he cc'd all of us and put unequivocally his organisation and its sub-branches' opposition to us in relation to the stadium and the treatment at the hands of government. I'll quote and read into the *Hansard*, just quickly, a part of this letter:

RSL Tasmania has been clear and steadfast from the start. It has always known the stadium would dominate the Cenotaph and we have always known that it would destroy key sightlines. The RSL has been disrespected and misled at every turn, be that by State Growth, Macquarie Point Development Corporation or Cox Architecture, with the former telling us that it would be

no more than 40 metres high at our Congress in 2023 and the latter stating only six weeks ago in a meeting with us that it would be six storeys.

The reason the RSL is so passionate is that the Cenotaph was chosen as a site for its prominence. The hill where the Cenotaph now stands was the last thing of the city that departing World War I soldiers would see from their ships. That's why the sightlines are so important, including sightlines to the water, and that's why they're protected in the planning scheme. You, I know, minister, have been long aware of this.

Did you ever advise the Premier of the unsuitability of Mac Point for the stadium before, during or after it was chosen by the AFL as the only site upon which to consider a stadium, despite at the time having numerous options?

Mr BARNETT - Quite a long question and I'll be pleased to respond to that and indicate my strong support for our veteran community and RSL Tasmania. I appreciate their ongoing engagement with me, my office and with the Premier over a long period of time. I also indicate with respect to Macquarie Point Development Corporation, we will be establishing a working group that will provide engagement and feedback in the process as it goes forward. The project of state significance has taken a new step and that submission has been made for the Tasmanian Planning Commission to consider.

There will be further opportunities for ongoing consultation and engagement, but that's at the forefront of my mind as the relevant minister and I expect that to continue.

Mr BAYLEY - And the question, did you ever advise the Premier that this site would be unacceptable because of the impacts on the Cenotaph?

Mr BARNETT - Both the Premier and I visited with RSL Tasmania - the president and the CEO - the site at the Cenotaph and we talked about the plans for Macquarie Point. We got feedback from RSL Tasmania, so the Premier is very well aware of the views of RSL Tasmania as am I and others. We take on board the views of RSL Tasmania and other veteran organisations. Indeed, there are mixed views in the community and in the veteran community more broadly but, yes, those views have been taken on board in the development application and meaningful engagement will continue.

Mr BAYLEY - What about this working group? Who is on the working group? Can you talk us through what the working group looks like, who's on it, how often it will meet and what it's going to do or what it's trying to do? You already have a design that's published.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, for sure.

Mr BAYLEY - What's it seeking to achieve?

Mr BARNETT - The main objective is to ensure that the veterans are honoured and respected in the development of the multipurpose precinct and that their views -

Mr BAYLEY - Hasn't the horse bolted on that one, minister?

Mr BARNETT - No, not at all - that the views of the RSL -

Mr BAYLEY - The RSL has been -

CHAIR - Mr Bayley, you can ask follow-up questions but let the minister answer the question and then you'll get another opportunity.

Mr BARNETT - It's very important that there's ongoing engagement with the veteran community and RSL Tasmania will be front and centre there. Other veteran members will likewise be on that working group to engage with the Macquarie Point Development Corporation on the development. As I've said, there'll be further consultation. You've seen the concept plans already, you've made reference to them and they're on the public record, which I think we both acknowledge is important.

How to better represent the interests and honour our veterans in the development process, that will take some time, and there will be opportunities for the RSL and other veterans to have input into that development process.

Mr BAYLEY - To your comment around this working group, making sure that veterans are honoured and respected, I just reiterate what Mr Hardy wrote to the Premier, which says that 'The RSL has been disrespected and misled at every turn'.

It seems that this working group has a lot of catching up to do, minister. Who is on it? I can appreciate it would be representatives of the RSL but could you be more explicit about who is on it from the veterans' side of things and also the government/Macquarie Point Development Corporation? Are you on it, for example, minister?

Mr BARNETT - It hasn't been established as yet, but it will be established. I want to make that clear. They'll work with the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and be consulted, engaged, and I think the important thing is meaningful engagement. As Minister for Veterans' Affairs, I get the feedback consistently. I meet with the RSL Tasmania and other groups on a consistent and regular basis, but we'll certainly be consulting with the veteran community and ensuring that feedback is made clear to and offered to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and to me, the Premier, and the government. We want to make sure that those interests are protected and supported.

Ms JOHNSTON - There are some in the community, including pro-stadium advocacy groups that the government clearly supports through social media who state that the RSL is anti-stadium when, quite clearly, the RSL has said it supports a stadium, just not the Macquarie Point version 1 stadium. What are you doing as minister to support the RSL in correcting the record in ensuring that the community and those pro-AFL stadium social media sites that the government supports are corrected?

Mr BARNETT - I'd make the point that RSL Tasmania is an entity in and of itself. I don't speak for them, they have to speak for themselves, but I have ongoing engagement with them. I meet with them regularly, both the CEO and the President, or the acting President at the moment, and I visit many of their sub-branches around Tasmania and meet with them on a regular basis. What some people say about what they say is a matter for them.

My main aim is to represent their interests and ensure that they are honoured, supported, protected, promoted, and I think most people would recognise that's a key objective of mine. I hope that I'm achieving that.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you represent their interest and their position when it comes to your colleagues in Cabinet with the messaging that's out there, in their stadium position?

Mr BARNETT - I think it's well recognised across government that they don't support the Macquarie Point Development Corporation's plans, but it's also recognised that as a government we want to honour our veterans. We have 17,500 of them and we want to make sure that they're honoured, supported, promoted and protected in the development process, and their views should be considered throughout the process.

Ms JOHNSTON - But do you recognise that they support a stadium, just not your stadium?

Mr BARNETT - I recognise that and I think most of, if not all, members of parliament across the board would recognise that.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can you tell me about the veterans retreat project at Lake Sorell at Interlaken and how it's benefiting veterans and their families, please?

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I'm very pleased to speak to that. Dago Point at Lake Sorell is a fantastic development. It's something that we started as a state government with Parks and Wildlife and a hut that was gifted to the Vietnam Veterans Association and, likewise, with \$100,000 of support from our state government. I want to commend Terry Roe, who's the former president of the Vietnam Veterans Association for that, and I hear a 'hear, hear'. I acknowledge that as well. That's grown since then with the vision of providing mental health and wellbeing support, of providing recreational activity and opportunities for veterans and their families, particularly younger veterans. It's been a wonderful success and I'm very pleased with that progress.

I'm very thankful also for the federal government's support backing in the state government's initiative, working with the Vietnam Veterans Association. That was nearly \$300,000 to fit out the multipurpose education and training facility with modern equipment - wi-fi capability, et cetera. That was officially opened on 12 July earlier this year. I was there and spoke; the local mayor, Lou Triffitt, spoke, as did Brian Mitchell on behalf of the federal government. It was really great to see team Tasmania - the federal and state governments - working together to deliver better services for their veterans and their families. I want to put on the record my sincere thanks to Terry Roe for his leadership, who was recognised and a tribute was paid to him on the day, as it should have been, and I want to put it on the record here today. It's directly adjacent to the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Bush Retreat, which I visited many times. It's a versatile venue that will cater to both current defence force personnel and ex-service personnel and organisations. It will focus on wellness, bush retreats, and it will have benefits for mental health, so, with my hat on as the Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing, I'm absolutely delighted as well. I hope they get the chance to have tight lines on Lake Sorell with the trout fishing season well underway.

Mr FAIRS - Good luck Tom.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you.

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Ms BUTLER - Minister, you would be aware of the current push by RSL Australia to ensure the sanctity of the RSL brand is protected. What is your perspective on the use of the RSL logo by community clubs that don't provide services to veterans and their families in Tasmania?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. I'm well aware of the importance to RSL Tasmania of community clubs using that brand without their sanction. I know those concerns have been raised by RSL Tasmania with my department. I'm more than happy to refer to the deputy secretary if you would like any further feedback.

Ms BUTLER - Yes. I have more questioning on this topic as well -

Mr BARNETT - On that?

Ms BUTLER - - Yes.

Mr BARNETT - We'll see if there's anything further to add to that answer, then we can have further questions.

Ms GRAY - No, nothing further. We're just continuing to work actively with the RSL on the issue.

Ms BUTLER - Okay. Still on the use of that RSL brand. The Swansea RSL, which I've visited frequently, provides great meals, is a lovely social space for the local community, and has a large number of social members. However, it doesn't provide services to veterans and their families as such, even though veterans hold branch meetings there and there is a war memorial museum, of sorts, on site. Noting that in your election promises the Swansea RSL Club was provided funding, did you conduct due diligence or contact RSL before providing that funding to Swansea RSL? I'm not saying they shouldn't have received it, but I wonder whether it may have been better allocated against communities or hospitality or another area other than veterans.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. I also visit the Swansea RSL regularly and the war memorial is not within the facility. It's not even adjacent. It's further down the hill on the corner, on the main road. Having said that, the RSL at Swansea has provided excellent support to the community and to veterans and their families in my view. I have backed them in over a number of years and I'm very pleased and proud of the support that we've been able to provide Swansea RSL. In terms of the mental health and wellbeing services, we now have hubs in Tasmania -

Ms BUTLER - But not run through the Swansea RSL.

Mr BARNETT - Well, I'm making -

Ms BUTLER - I'm certainly not having a go at the Swansea RSL.

Mr BARNETT - I'm making the point. You've asked the question. I'd like to opportunity to answer the question. The mental health and wellbeing services are being provided now through the hubs obviously in Hobart and Launceston and up the north-west coast. Those services are provided as a hub and then provided out into the community - the rural and regional

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areas, including the east coast. I'm aware of those services being provided to the east coast, including from the Launceston hub, - I think you're aware of Peter Williams, his great work there. I'm aware of all of that and, as I say, I'm pleased to see that they do good work and they support the local community and the local veterans and their families.

Ms BUTLER - Does the South Arm RSL & Community Club provide services for veterans and their families and was due diligence undertaken to ascertain whether the site provided services for veterans? Likewise, would could that election commitment have been allocated under a different area such as communities, health, education potentially, if they're not providing veteran services?

Mr BARNETT - The South Arm RSL has been subject to, and under the leadership of, Terry Rowe

Ms BUTLER - I know Terry, I am asking you about whether this would be -

Mr BARNETT - who just a few moments ago you said 'hear, hear' in terms of the tribute to Terry Rowe.

Ms BUTLER - Yes, they meet there, but are they providing the veterans' health service?

Mr BARNETT - If you're questioning the leadership of Terry Rowe and RSL South Arm -

Ms BUTLER - On a point of order Chair, can the minister please withdraw that because that is not what I was saying and it's a misrepresentation.

Mr BARNETT - I asked the question rhetorically, and if you don't like the question rhetorically, that's okay.

Ms BUTLER - The minister is not allowed to ask me questions in a committee.

CHAIR - This might go a lot more smoothly if you ask your question without interjection. It'd be a lot easier if the minister was able to answer, then I'm happy to give you the opportunity to follow up with questions.

Ms BUTLER - If you could advise the minister to not misrepresent that would be that would be appreciated.

CHAIR - I'll draw the minister's attention to that if we can move on from it.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much Chair and I respect the Chair's ruling. To be very clear, I think the South Arm RSL does important work, it's got a great memorial there, they provide an excellent Anzac Day service and other memorial services, and under the leadership of Terry Rowe, they're providing an excellent service to the local community.

CHAIR - Last question, then Mr Bayley.

PUBLIC

Ms BUTLER - Will you consider conducting due diligence to ascertain whether clubs with the RSL logo are providing services to veterans and their families before allocating funding through the Veterans Affairs portfolio in the future?

Launceston RSL sub-branch, Westbury RSL sub-branch, our Scottsdale, Primrose Sands, and Oatlands were also provided funding as election commitments. All those branches do provide dedicated services for veterans and their families. My point is will you conduct due diligence in the future prior to allocating funding for those sites through Veterans' Affairs portfolio? They could be better suited to being allocated from other areas of government.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. As to whether RSL sub-branches use the logo and how they use it, that's a matter for them and RSL Tasmania. With respect to the government and commitments that we've made, which I back in 100 per cent, I'm very pleased with those commitments and we're very pleased to be providing support to the veterans, their families, and the local community.

Ms BUTLER - With due diligence? I asked that about five times and you didn't touch it.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much, through you, Chair. We do undertake due diligence when it comes to those commitments and it does have to be processed and implemented through the Department of Premier and Cabinet, for which I'm supported here today. We want to focus on what's best for the local community and for our veterans and their families. That remains a priority for me and our government.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, the Sullivans Cove Planning Scheme has height limits for development on Macquarie Point and key sightlines from the Cenotaph are explicitly named and provided protection via criteria. Are you aware of this and do you accept that the purpose of those provisions is to protect the values of the Cenotaph and its reverential ambience from development?

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for the question. Yes, I am aware of the process that you outlined. I'm also aware of the Project of State Significant process and the need to go through that process. The Macquarie Point Development Corporation has made that submission and it will be assessed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission and then subject to further consultation. What I am very keen to ensure is ongoing meaningful engagement with RSL Tasmania and other veteran organisations and the interests of veterans to ensure that we protect and promote them wherever possible.

Mr BAYLEY - You're aware of those protections for the values of the Cenotaph? You're also aware, I'm sure, the Projects of State Significance dispenses with LUPAA, the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993*, and with it, longstanding protections like those for the sightlines and reverential ambience are also gone. They're no longer enshrined in law. A decision on the stadium and whether or not it will affect those values is at the discretion of a panel that's been stood up as part of the Project of State Significance process.

The application for the stadium must still report against those values, but nothing compels it for protection. Nothing compels the panel to make a ruling based on the need to protect those values. Do you think this is fair?

A stadium at 54-metres high has now been shown to completely obliterate three important sightlines and the cultural heritage values. The assessment itself, as part of the Macquarie Point development application, describes the impacts on the Cenotaph and the cultural landscape as very high. Do you think this is fair and, acknowledging your work in the veteran space, how can you tolerate this? How do you think this is acceptable to veterans?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for the question. In answering the question, I note the Greens' opposition to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation development at Macquarie Point has been consistent and I think is the motivation behind your questions and your objectives. That should be acknowledged. I certainly note and acknowledge that at least you've been consistent, unlike perhaps some other parties. I also acknowledge that various sightlines are impacted and I'm pleased that the RSL Tasmania were given access to those sightlines because they were interested in them and it was important that they had access to that.

Mr BAYLEY - Do you acknowledge they're lost completely - three of them are lost completely?

Mr BARNETT - I do acknowledge that there's been an impact on a number of the sightlines, but also that there is an opportunity to recognise, honour, promote, and support our veterans in the development of the precinct, and that's the point of having meaningful ongoing engagement with RSL and other veterans.

Mr BAYLEY - If you acknowledge the impact, do you think the Planning Commission should reject the proposal?

Mr BARNETT - The important thing about the Tasmanian Planning Commission is and the Project of State Significance process is that there's an opportunity for both houses of parliament to have their say and it must go through that process. It needs to be democratic and there needs to be a view expressed by both houses of parliament as to whether the project proceeds.

Mr BAYLEY - What will you do, minister, if the Planning Commission rejects the stadium on the basis of a range of factors, potentially including the impact on the Cenotaph?

CHAIR - Last question, then Ms Johnston.

Mr BARNETT - I can't pre-empt the Tasmanian Planning Commission. That's a matter for them and what they do is a matter for them.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. Just further on that minor questioning, minister. The documentation submitted by MPDC to the Planning Commission for assessment last Wednesday, has the heritage impact assessment attached to it. As Mr Bayley outlined, there are three critical views from the Cenotaph that have historical and cultural significance and that the general cultural landscape impacts have been determined to be very high. You've mentioned a number of times now that you recognise the impact, but will you recognise that, particularly for view three from the Cenotaph to St George's church and for view five from the Cenotaph to the mouth of the Derwent River - very important viewlines - that they these views will no longer exist if the stadium is constructed as planned?

PUBLIC

Mr BARNETT - I have said publicly and I'm saying again today, there has been an impact and will be an impact on a number of sightlines. You've made reference to a number of them. North, south, east, and west are not impacted, but a number of the sightlines are. The RSL are aware of that and they have access to those documents. In terms of the development of the multipurpose precinct, there's real opportunities there to better honour and preserve and support our veterans and their history and heritage that is so important in Tasmania and we are keen to ensure that that occurs.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, when you say there is 'an impact' that underplays the significance of that impact. They're obliterated and I think it's disrespectful to the RSL and their members who are advocating for protecting the historical importance of the Cenotaph. Do you acknowledge that there will be no sightline between the Cenotaph and St George's Church and the Cenotaph and the mouth of the Derwent River if the stadium is built? Not just an impact, there will be no sightline.

Mr BARNETT - I've already indicated the impact on the sightlines and RSL Tasmania have access to those. What I am saying in terms of access to Macquarie Street, the eastern shore, north south, east west, these are not impacted. RSL Tasmania knows that, other veterans know that, so you've got to look at that in perspective.

The other thing that needs to be noted is the significance of the development to Hobart and it's going to be a game changer for development and the opportunity to grow jobs and bringing a new industry to Tasmania - 4000 jobs during the development phase and then ongoing support for our visitor economy and our economy more generally. It's a very good opportunity to promote those opportunities for Tasmania.

Ms JOHNSTON - It will certainly be a game changer for Tasmania when it bankrupts the state. Minister, do you recognise that the heritage impact assessment submitted last week concludes that the overall magnitude of the effect of the stadium on the historical importance of the Cenotaph is major?

Mr BARNETT - I think it I've made it clear it does have an impact on the sightlines. I've made that clear on a number of occasions and on a number of those sightlines. In terms of east west and north south, it does not have any impact. It's not affected at all. I need to make it clear it's going through the Project of State Significance process. It needs to go to the Tasmanian Planning Commission. They need to review it carefully and then respond accordingly. There'll be further consultation and, ultimately, it'll come back to this place, the Parliament of Tasmania, and both Houses of parliament will have their opportunity to have a further say on this very important project.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, could you give us an update please on the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide?

Mr BARNETT - As I said in my opening remarks, I met with the federal minister just last week and other state and territory ministers. I consider it to be really important. I presented evidence in August 2022. I think I was the first minister in Australia, certainly in Tasmania, and one of the first in Australia, to present to the Royal Commission into Defence and Veteran Suicide and certainly want to acknowledge the many veterans, families and advocates, who bravely and courageously shared their stories during that royal commission process, which took place over a number of years. It's just incredible that they've been able to be brave enough to

share that story. I've asked the federal government to respond as soon as possible, but subject to very comprehensive review and understanding of the report.

It's made 122 recommendations. One of those in particular is relevant - they're all relevant to Tasmania, but one in particular on mental health and wellbeing is the establishment of the mental health and wellbeing hubs in Tasmania, for which I fought for years. We got the \$5 million from the federal government, having lobbied successfully for that. One of those recommendations is ongoing funding support from the federal government. I made my support for that clear at the meeting last week and I hope that the federal government responds accordingly and provide ongoing support for those services provided through those mental health and wellbeing hubs in Tasmania.

We've also got the Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027 that's led by my Department of Health. That's very relevant as well.

We have the Open Arms program, which is providing a service here in Hobart and likewise up in Burnie. I was with the federal minister when that was announced and launched at least, and an update on those services were provided. I commend Dr Jon Lane for his wonderful work in providing that support and Open Arms more generally. The mental health services access for our veterans is important and we do want to provide those in Tasmania wherever possible, so they don't have to fly to Melbourne for that service and care. That's another point to note.

I should indicate we do have mental health and wellbeing services in Tasmania which are growing and expanding, but there's a lot more work to do in this space. I'm really committed to supporting our veterans to ensure they get the services that they need.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, last year I spoke to you about the differentiation between concessions offered in Tasmania to veterans as opposed to other states. I'm going to readdress that now. You'd be aware Tasmanian veterans holding a Gold Card receive less concessions and discounts than their mainland counterparts. The Tasmanian government provides pensioner concession card discounts. There is a DVA Pensioner Concession Card eligible to veterans who have served in a conflict. There's also a number of veterans with a Gold Card who do not qualify for DVA Pensioner Concession Cards. There are also a number of younger veterans as well that are on a Gold Card, but don't have a Pensioner Concession Card.

When I spoke to you last year in relation to this and asked you about the veterans' concession discrepancies, especially in relation to the Gold Card, you stated there is an internal review taking place which has come as a result of the national Veterans Ministers meeting, the state is undertaking that internal review, and I'm not sure how close it is to conclusion, but that work is ongoing. That was 14 months ago. You then stated commitment by the government to undertake that internal review and to progress it as soon as convenient. Your words were, 'We take that seriously and continue that work'. Have you undertaken that review?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for quoting me, it's very encouraging to be aware of your interest in these important matters.

Ms BUTLER - I want to make sure I got it right.

Mr BARNETT - I appreciate that. It was not only raised last year, it's been raised at the Veterans' Reference Group. I want to pay tribute to Don Ryan, who's the chair of that group and took over on 1 July 2024. I appreciate the work of the Veterans' Reference Group and their advice to me and the Department.

Likewise, it's been raised at the federal level. Wherever possible we try and harmonise those concessions across Australia and various jurisdictions. We've got the concessions and discounts in the Tasmanian Government Guide, and 2023-24 is available. I understand it's online. There's reference to the Department of Veterans' Affairs cards, Gold, White and Orange Cards. There's the Department of Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card and the Department of Veterans' Affairs Commonwealth Senior Health Cards. That work has been ongoing. I'll ask my deputy secretary to speak to the harmonisation efforts and the other work that's ongoing in that regard.

Ms GRAY - At the most recent Veterans' Ministerial Council meeting on 20 September 2024, just gone, there was quite a bit of work underway in relation to the harmonisation of veterans' concessions project. Ministers discussed at length the need for clearer and more consistent veteran concessions arrangements around the country. Since then, the senior officials group, the Commonwealth, State and Territory Committee, has been undertaking quite a detailed comparison of concession types. We're working towards making that publicly available, the outcome of that work that was agreed at the last minister's meeting, and also looking at the eligibility rules across Australia.

The senior officials are looking at considering in what areas we would look to harmonise in the first instance. That's not an easy piece of work, because jurisdictions are doing things differently. At a state level, internally, we have worked with the concessions guide and the presentation of concessions, being able to communicate concessions better, but also make it easier for people to navigate, and be able to click on a card and see what concessions are available to them. It's one thing to offer the concessions. It's another thing for people to know and be able to take them up, as you would be aware. There is quite a lot of work underway at the national level on this. Tasmania is very much engaged in participating.

Ms BUTLER - Just on that, I have a written example from a veteran in relation to that discrepancy between states in concessions offered to veterans on council rates. It's dated 3 September. I'll read it into the *Hansard*; it states:

I got a concession on my rates last year because of my DVA Gold Card. I applied again this year for it, but the Treasury department denied my concession and now I also have to pay back the money from last year. It is all because I don't have TPI stamped on my Gold Card. I thought when I got the Gold Card that it was permanently from permanent impairment.

That is an example there, minister, of where our concession system has - I believe it was for the sum of about \$390 that he had to pay out. This is a veteran on a Gold Card.

The other thing is, on the DVA website under Tasmanian veteran concessions, under rates, it states:

PUBLIC

A 30% reduction on local government rates and charges (capped at a maximum amount each year) is available to a pensioner who, on 1 July each year, holds a PCC -

A Department of Veterans' Affairs Pensioner Concession Card, for the record.

... or Gold Card inscribed with TPI or War Widow/Widower.

That's from the DVA website in relation to Tasmania, but then on the Tasmanian Government Concessions website, it says:

A 30% reduction on local government rates and charges ... is available to a pensioner who on 1 July each year holds one of the following:

- Services Australia or DVA Pensioner Concession Card
- Services Australia Health Care Card
- DVA Veteran Gold Card - printed with TPI or War Widow

You can see why the veterans are getting are getting confused because the DVA website under Tasmanian Veteran Concessions says that he can apply for the rates concession and would be successful in getting a concession, but then the Tasmanian Government Concessions website has it that he's not eligible.

Would you take that on notice and look into that case? I've got his contact details and I can pass them on through to your office if you like. I believe this is what I've raised last year about the discrepancy. I know you have been doing a lot of work, but when you have a cohort of people who are very vulnerable, especially after the findings of the royal commission, these kinds of things can really set people off.

I will pass that through you, minister, for your office to do some work on making sure that those concessions that are provided are up to date and are easy for veterans to access. The work that needs to happen on making sure they're compliant across Australia is really vital.

Mr BARNETT - Thanks very much for your interest. The objective for us is to deliver a better veteran services wherever possible and as soon as possible. I think we're delivering that, but there's always an opportunity for continuous improvement, so the remarks that you've shared will be carefully considered in *Hansard* and if you're happy to forward that information through to my office, I'll make sure my department does follow up.

We've already got the guide. It's online and it's designed to allow veterans to easily find those entitlements and where they are. It needs to be consistent across that. You did mention the Department of Veterans Affairs as well and there is clearly a need to collaborate with our federal colleagues as well to ensure that, wherever possible, it is harmonised.

As I said earlier, we did raise this at the meeting last week with our Veterans Affairs ministers around Australia and we're doing a lot of work to harmonise those concessions and discounts for our veterans around Australia. I appreciate that and we will follow up.

PUBLIC

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I have a question about the veteran wellbeing vouchers. In the Budget, veteran wellbeing vouchers are listed as making up a component of support for veterans. They're small one-off payments of \$100 each and that can be paid out twice per financial year, designed to allow veterans to access gyms or recreation centres at a discount rate.

A couple of questions here, how much of the \$50,000 per year of the support for veterans is set aside and dedicated to the veteran wellbeing vouchers? How was the amount of \$200 a year set and arrived at? I note, for example, that in relation to the Hobart Aquatic Centre it's only one of four gyms where this can be used in Hobart. The \$200 would cover about 17 per cent of the total annual cost of the cheapest concession membership. I acknowledge it's a contribution, but for some people it may not be a significant contribution or at least enough to get them over the line to actually engage in some of these wellbeing activities. How much of the \$50,000 is set aside and how was that amount set?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you for the question. There are some very good questions in there. There are quite a few and they are totally understandable because we've been monitoring this since it was launched in 2021. The whole purpose, of course, is to encourage our veterans to be healthy and active and have very positive wellbeing.

We now have 108 gyms, community recreation and sporting clubs involved as of 10 September 2024, and a total of 471 vouchers have been issued. Since 1 July 2024, the Veteran Wellbeing Voucher Program has doubled with veterans now entitled to two \$100 vouchers per year, so it's two lots of vouchers.

The application for the program is simple, with veterans able to apply for a voucher through the Department of Premier and Cabinet's website. The activity providers can also register participation through the website. I've discussed this with the department during the last 12 months and we've had a promotion campaign during that time to encourage other organisations to come forward, to make themselves available to our veterans and then likewise promoting it to our veterans to make them more aware of this opportunity to be healthier and more active. We did briefly discuss this yesterday, and I think if the deputy secretary could add to that answer, that would be useful.

Ms GRAY - Through you, minister, the minister referred to continuous improvement and that's a good way of looking at this program. The member has quite rightly pointed out and asked how much of the \$50,000 is available for the vouchers and the full \$50,000 is available for the vouchers every year.

Part of the decision to increase the voucher from \$100 to \$200 - two \$100 vouchers - was because, despite some very good efforts at promotion - and we've promoted through advertisements in RSL newsletters on service, the discount and concessions guide, we've produced videos in 2023 for Remembrance Day to be shared on DPAC's website and social media channels, we included reference to the vouchers and promotion of the vouchers in Active Tasmania's newsletter *Actively In Touch*, and also through direct contact with state sporting organisations, sporting clubs and other activity groups - that resulted in an outstanding doubling in the past 12 months of the veteran's vouchers. But, from 1 July 2024 we've decided - in the spirit of continuous improvement - to increase the amount to the \$200 because from this \$34,990 in the previous financial year, there's room in that \$50,000 to be able to offer a bit more.

The member also asked on what basis was the \$100 commitment. Ticket to Play per child. We probably looked at other similar programs and based it on those. As you quite rightly point out, gym memberships are a little different to being able to play in the local footy team. However, as a parent of two young boys, I do know that sports can be quite expensive and Ticket to Play probably only gives you only one third of what you need.

Mr BAYLEY - A quick follow up, Chair, if I may. You mentioned there are now 108 venues that are offering this is a service and that's really encouraging. Are you spending money to try to recruit more partner facilities to offer this service or to partner-up because we did a little bit of research and it may be out of date, I note that in Tasmania's largest four largest cities, the number of gyms where these vouchers can be redeemed numbered less than 10. There's not a widespread uptake at the at the facility level and there's none in the regions from what we could see. It's off-limits for some veterans who don't have access to the facilities that will accept these cards.

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much for that. Thank you also for doing your follow up research on that. It is appreciated and just to indicate that gyms aren't necessarily the be-all and end-all. There's a whole range of sporting and recreational activities. Particularly for veterans who are elderly, often they don't go to the gym, so they go to other places. I just wanted to recognise that. I know the deputy secretary and/or the executive director have further to say on that.

Ms PINTO - Yes, we do recognise the fact that it can be limiting with the capacity of clubs or gyms for veterans to be able to attend. We want to make sure that the program is open to all veterans of any gender and also to broaden the capacity of the services that they could apply for, including more wellbeing-type service organisations or through organisations along those lines. It was broader than just attending a gym.

Mr BAYLEY - Yes, and you're actively trying to expand that pool of partner organisations?

Ms GRAY - Through you, minister, the member asked whether we spend money to do that. We do that within our existing team and we actively engage with ex-service people who might apply, to get an understanding of what the broadening of that wellbeing scope might be so that you don't have to be someone who wants to frequent a gym. We need to understand how we could broaden the parameters of the program so that we're fully expending the funding that's allocated every year.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. On 25 July last year, my office wrote to you and the Treasurer on behalf of a constituent who was very distressed. He was a DVA gold card holder but was not TPI-endorsed because he was not of employable age, because he was 96 years old. It took some time for us to get a response from the Treasurer, eventually, in relation to his request for a discount on his rates. That information didn't come through until 29 May this year, 10 months later. Unfortunately, as the Treasurer indicated in the letter, he wasn't eligible for a discount on his rates. My constituent died three weeks prior to the letter being received from the Treasurer and his widow informed me that he was incredibly distressed at not being able to receive the concession and that he was waiting for a significant time for a response. It was something that mattered and it played on his mind at the time. What are you doing to ensure that veterans are responded to in a more timely fashion when they raise

significant concerns. As Ms Butler has indicated, my constituent is not the only one who has been waiting for an answer around these concession matters.

Mr BARNETT - First, thank you very much for the question and I'm sorry to hear the report and advice that you've shared with me and the committee. It's very sad and disappointing to hear that. I want to recognise that and I want to pass on my condolences to his wife and his family, and I'm very sorry for the circumstances which you have outlined today.

As a government, we can do better in that regard and I'll take that on notice and follow-up if that's possible. I'll do that with my department. I have certain protocols in my office in terms of responding to people, stakeholders and constituents and we need to follow that. From time to time those protocols are not met, so I'm very sorry to hear the information that you've shared with the committee.

Mr FAIRS - Thank you, Chair. Minister, firstly I'd like to commend you on this issue that I want to talk to you about and that's Teddy Sheean. This goes a long way back with us when I was still doing my radio show, long before I got into parliament and you were a regular on that, and your determination and unrelenting push and desire to get justice for Teddy is duly noted and I wanted to put that on the record. Thank you, because I know it wouldn't have happened if you did not push as hard as you did for so long, and I'm talking years on that one.

But minister, can you outline some of the government strategies in supporting our veterans and in particular, noting your interest in the Teddy Sheean VC Memorial Grants?

Mr BARNETT - Thank you very much and I want to pay a credit to Garry Ivory, the nephew of Teddy Sheean, who fought for 32 years to have his uncle Teddy recognised with the Victoria Cross, which he rightly deserves. It was only 17 years for me to get that VC, working with Garry and the family and the veteran community. So yes, it's very pleasing and I can give you a heads-up that the statue of Teddy Sheean will be unveiled on Remembrance Day this year at Latrobe. That's very exciting, something I've been looking forward to. The state government has got funding support for that, some \$50,000 to support that. Latrobe Council, of course, \$150,000, and I'm really looking forward to that very special day. It'll be a great tribute to the memory of Teddy Sheean VC. Regarding the memory of Teddy Sheean VC, those memorial grants, it's \$100,000 annually, it's over two funding periods for ex-service organisations and clubs for minor capital works, equipment, welfare initiatives and memorial upgrades. They are well appreciated. It's not just the RSL sub-branches but the ex-service organisations and others, they really appreciate those funding rounds. I get a lot of feedback on it. I get appreciation on behalf of the government for that wonderful support. I just draw that to members around this table to promote those grants to your RSL and ex-service organisations in your various electorates.

You mentioned other strategies. I just want to say in terms of the Veterans Employment Strategy, that's something that we launched just a few years ago. We have an ongoing focus on that to employ within the State Service, a target to increase those numbers as much as possible. That's something that is likewise at the forefront of our minds. I've mentioned the Frank McDonald Memorial Prize and I know people around this table are very supportive of that. It's something that I support and I think it's a wonderful investment in our youth, our young people, to help them understand the service and sacrifice, the courage and the mateship that is demonstrated by our veterans and, of course, their families.

PUBLIC

There's a whole range of initiatives that we've got in place, but it's really encouraging to be able to stand here and be part of the government and I know it's very much supported around the table for many of these initiatives, and I acknowledge that as well.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, it's our advice that you were recently approached by a member of your own government advocating for around \$15,000 to support Veteran Entitlement Advocacy Training and Mentoring and the mentoring and training is for volunteer trainee advocates required under the new National Training Level guidelines to assist and support veterans as they lodge claims and seek support through DVA.

The volunteer applicants, for example, returned \$10-\$15 million for Tasmanian veterans last year, and just last month lodgments for lump sum payments generated through Tasmanian advocates was around \$2.7 million. They're really important. These volunteers are required to travel to Launceston from the east coast to undertake national training to ensure they are in line with national standards and they need to be reimbursed for travel, accommodation and food while they volunteer their time.

Why didn't you fund that small investment to assist the training for volunteer advocates and do you contribute any funding at all for the training of mentors and advocates?

Mr BARNETT - Firstly, I want to acknowledge all the volunteers and the training and advocates that do work in Tasmania to support the veteran community. They do a fabulous job. I meet them on a regular basis. I get feedback from them and, of course, many of those are based out of the Veterans' Hubs, which have successfully been established in Tasmania after much lobbying by myself and the Tasmanian Government. That's well and truly appreciated and certainly, in terms of the federal government and providing mental health and wellbeing services, they do provide some support. We'd like to think that they can provide more support and there's opportunities through the Department of Veterans Affairs where applications can be made. We have the Teddy Sheean grants and other programs from time to time, but the federal government have much deeper pockets and they are primarily responsible for the services to our veterans and their families. We want to ensure that the federal government steps up as and where required and appropriate to support those advocates, the volunteer services, and the veteran services more generally.

Ms BUTLER - Sorry, can I interrupt, because we're running short of time. If I went back to the group that requested funding for the \$15,000, I believe for the whole year, it'd be a one off, and said that they might be eligible for a Teddy Sheean grant or another form of grant funding? They have tried federal funding for this and they've been unsuccessful. The state doesn't contribute anything at all to this. Would you be interested if I advise them that they could potentially put in a grant application for the Teddy Sheean grants? Is there other grant funding available?

Mr BARNETT - I'm not sure they'd be in the criteria in that Teddy Sheean grant.

Ms BUTLER - You raised that before.

Mr BARNETT - Yes, I know. They do provide some support. There are some wellbeing programs I'm advised of. Teddy Sheean does cover some of that wellbeing. I think you mentioned \$15,000, that cost would be outside of that budget. There might be part of that funding support if they put in an application for a wellbeing program.

PUBLIC

Ms BUTLER - I'll pass that on.

CHAIR - The time being 5.51 p.m. the time for scrutiny has expired.

Mr BARNETT - Chair, I thank those opposite at the table and those behind me supporting me at the table throughout the day.

CHAIR - I thank everybody for their cooperation today.

The Committee adjourned at 5.51 p.m.



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Jane Howlett MP

Wednesday 25 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Behrakis MP (Chair)
Ms Ella Haddad MP (Deputy Chair)
Mr Vica Bayley MP
Ms Kristie Johnston MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Janie Finlay MP
Ms Tabatha Badger MP
Ms Helen Burnet MP
Mr Dean Winter MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP
Ms Jen Butler MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. JANE HOWLETT MP

Minister for Primary Industries and Minister for Racing

Deidre Wilson

Deputy Secretary Primary Industries and Water

Rae Burrows

General Manager, Biosecurity Tasmania

Robin Thompson

Director of Racing

PUBLIC

The committee met at 9 a.m.

DIVISION 7

(Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania)

CHAIR (Mr Behrakis) - The time now being 9 a.m., the scrutiny of the Primary Industries and Water portfolio will begin. I welcome the Minister for Primary Industries and Water and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table from left to right, including names and positions for the benefit of Hansard.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. At the table with me to my right is Deidre Wilson, Deputy Secretary of Primary Industries and Water, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania; and to my left is Anita Yan, Deputy Chief Operations Officer, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water is two hours. We will take a short break for morning tea at 11 a.m. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question to the minister and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister for answer.

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

I'll just note as the last couple of days, the order provides for ratio of questions rather than number of questions, so I'll allow members to follow their lines of questioning as long as that proportionality is maintained. Rather than members seeking the call, we will just go around that rotation as we've been doing the last few days.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, Chair, thank you. The 2024-25 Budget focuses on the delivery of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. In my portfolio of Primary Industries and Water, the 2024-25 Budget delivers our important funding commitments. I'm sure many of you have heard me say that the agriculture sector is a lifeblood of our state and I will always back our farmers, which is what this budget does.

Tasmania's agrifood sector is critical in supporting private jobs and public services throughout our community. The most recent measures show that the agriculture and seafood sectors are worth a total of \$2.34 billion a year in raw value but more than \$5.5 billion a year when packed and processed.

Whilst some of our measures are responsive to current and recent circumstances, ranging from drought to flood in the same half-year, most of the funding is directed strategically

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towards continued growth as we strive to reach the target of an agriculture sector worth \$10 billion a year in farmgate value by 2050.

Already, the seasonal hardship grants program has paid nearly \$4.1 million for 549 grants to farmers on King Island and Flinders Island and on mainland Tasmania since the support scheme commenced earlier this year.

Looking ahead, the Budget backs important research and development, and it supports individuals or groups active in building agricultural communities. For example, there is a further \$2.5 million over three years to supercharge the highly successful strategic industry partnership program, which assists a variety of agricultural organisations to support producers and agribusinesses; and \$1.6 million for an agricultural innovation fund supportive project to help farmers better understand influences on irrigation efficiency, amongst other things. The Budget backs farm businesses to move up to the next level with low interest loans through the AgriGrowth Loan Scheme, as well as loans of up to \$250,000 under a Young Farmer Support Package.

The good management of Tasmania's freshwater resource is vital to both farmers and the rest of us, so there's an extra \$1 million over three years to implement the Rural Water Use Strategy, taking the total commitment to \$6.5 million. We are committed to our share of funding for the \$301 million Greater South East Irrigation Scheme. It's now up to the Australian Government to come to the party.

Also integral to our primary industries is our world-class biosecurity system. The government will invest almost \$13 million in biosecurity through this Budget, including a \$7.9 million boost for frontline biosecurity services, \$3 million over four years to strengthen resources and expertise, \$1.2 million over three years for additional biosecurity officers, \$500,000 over four years to support Tasmania farmers to continue to enhance on-farm biosecurity, and \$300,000 a year for three years so that industry groups like Fruit Growers Tasmania can help maintain community awareness.

Animal welfare gets a boost with \$3.2 million over four years for the RSPCA Inspectorate, and separately \$400,000 to attract and retain vets, especially in rural regional areas.

The 2024-25 Budget also funds a range of other election commitments: \$350,000 to support multi-use structure at Quercus Park, the home of Agfest, \$800,000 for farm-based education programs to inspire and engage students, \$340,000 to highlight the diversity of careers in the ag sector, and also \$1.5 million over three years to drive growth and sustainability in Tasmanian wine production. Something I'm particularly proud of in my electorate is a \$1.5 million investment into Tasmania's first shearing and wool handling innovation centre at the Campbell Town Showgrounds.

This government has a strong record of supporting our \$2.3 billion agriculture sector. I will always back our farmers. Our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future builds on that. With the investment that the 2024-25 budget provides, there is more in our Budget besides this. Chair, I welcome your questions.

Ms FINLAY - I want to point to some work we did in the parliament last year around the Water Miscellaneous Amendments (Delegation and Industrial Water Supply) Bill. I'm

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interested in the benefits that can bring to Tasmanian farmers, to my electorate of Bass to start with. I am wondering about the status of Tamar Irrigation Scheme and the benefits that can bring to those farmers in the area.

Ms HOWLETT - That's a very important question. We all know that irrigation is certainly a game changer to our farmers. The Tamar Irrigation scheme was originally designed as a 24,500 megalitre scheme. This was based on strong expression of interest. Water sales fell short of the required threshold to support a scheme of that size. The scheme was redesigned in 2023 as a 13,500 megalitre scheme covering the west and east Tamar regions, including Dilston, Rowella, Beaconsfield, and into Pipers River and Pipers Brook.

At completion of an extensive sales campaign in February, confirmed sales for the Tamar scheme again did not meet the necessary threshold. Demand expressed was only 39 per cent of the required irrigator funding commitment to justify a 13,500 megalitre scheme. Tasmanian Irrigation is now working with the Tasmanian Government, including Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania, to see whether a scheme that supports both agriculture and green hydrogen production is feasible. I believe minister Duigan spoke to this matter yesterday in his scrutiny.

Ms FINLAY - That was in the upper House. I'm interested to speak to minister Duigan this afternoon. The reality is that last year as a matter of urgency, there was an urgent announcement, there was urgent work, there was urgent drafting. We spent days in the parliament to pass the legislation to provide that connection between the industrial water and the Tamar scheme in order to deliver it. My question is, what are the impediments of delivering that? The water needed to be a game changer for the farmers in the Tamar Valley. We've already got Bell Bay, we've got funding at Bell Bay, we've got an industrial use for water and the need for the primary industries' use. What is stopping those projects coming together to deliver water to the farmers of the Tamar Valley? Specifically, what's stopping that?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said before, demand was expressed and we only had 39 per cent of the required irrigator funding commitment.

Ms FINLAY - I appreciate that. Because we already knew that the scheme wasn't viable on its own, there was urgent legislation passed through the parliament. That took days of effort of the parliament. It says that that's the purpose of bringing on the Tamar scheme. There is a need for industrial water. There is a need for water in the Tamar for our farmers. All the instruments are in place to do that; it just requires a decision. My question is: why have you not made that decision?

Ms HOWLETT - As you are aware, we have been out for water sales twice, and -

Ms FINLAY - Sorry, if I could ask a clarifying question?

CHAIR - Ask your question, but if you let the minister answer, you will get a follow-up question if you need to further clarify. Yes, ask your clarifying question, but if we can do this where there are as few interjections as possible.

Ms FINLAY - The clarifying question: I am fully aware that the water sales did not meet the mark required to deliver a standalone scheme. That is clear, because we spent days in the parliament moving new legislation. There is water required to be delivered to Bell Bay. If you

put those two things together, which was the purpose of the legislation, then you can deliver a scheme. As I understand it, there are no impediments to that happening. We had a purpose, we have delivered the instrument for that purpose, now it just requires a decision from you to say, let's put those two things together and deliver water so the farmers get the benefit on the way through. What is stopping that happening?

Ms HOWLETT - Tasmanian Irrigation is now currently working with the government - including, as I mentioned, Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania - to see whether a scheme that supports both agriculture and green hydrogen production is feasible. So, we are currently looking into that and working on that.

Ms FINLAY - If I could have that follow-up question, then? Thank you, Chair. That is all very clear. Everyone was very aware of that before we even put the legislation through the parliament. My specific question is: what is stopping that action happening to deliver that water? We already knew that we need to determine if it was feasible. That is why we put the legislation through the parliament. All the instruments are available. What is holding it up?

Ms HOWLETT - We are looking at all options.

Ms FINLAY - So, your inability to take action is what is holding it up?

Ms HOWLETT - Well, no -

Ms FINLAY - If you could get the job done and you deliver water to the farmers -

CHAIR - Order, Ms Finlay.

Ms HOWLETT - As I have mentioned, Ms Finlay, we are looking at all options.

Ms FINLAY - There are only limited options. The legislation is limited in terms of its target purpose; it is limited to industrial water and irrigation water. We have farmers, we have Bell Bay, we have a pipeline provider in TI, we have ReCFIT. They all need to come together and press the button and say 'go' to deliver water to farmers and also to Bell Bay. I am interested in understanding what is actually delaying this.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, I would not describe it or characterise it as a delay. I would characterise it as a process a well-trodden path for Tas Irrigation. Tas Irrigation goes to the market, it tests the scheme. If that scheme does not meet demand or it does not have enough demand, then it goes out again. In this case, that is what has happened, it is at 39 per cent and therefore, Tas Irrigation needs to, as the minister said, engage with the Renewable Climates and Industries Tasmania, our ReCFIT group, around what the options are.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you. That was actually my first question. It is like a jigsaw puzzle. You have farmers, you have industrial water, you have legislation that now allows you to link them because previous to the legislation you couldn't link them. There are users that need the water. There is a Bell Bay development that needs the water. You have been given all the processes that you need to deliver it. There is something that is holding it up. I would like to understand what that is. It is not about the process of asking for water sales. You have everything needed. As the minister, you can make the decision to press the green light and allow water to flow to the farmers and to Bell Bay.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Ms Finlay. I have provided as much information as I can, and I believe I have answered your question.

Ms FINLAY - Okay, thank you.

Ms BADGER - Minister, there have been multiple studies on the health impacts for the use of the chemical Paraquat. It is banned in 69 countries. What is the Tasmanian government doing in this space? What research are you doing in assessing the possible legacy impacts that it has on our farmers? Are you going to be following suit with many other countries and working towards banning it when there are other options now available?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. Paraquat is a broad-spectrum herbicide used to control a range of weeds, especially where there is resistance to other weeds. The Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority, APVMA, is currently conducting a review of the chemical, and that review is open for public consultation until the 29 October this year. Paraquat can be very dangerous as a chemical when not handled according to its label, which is why there are restrictions on sale and its use in Australia. The ABC recently ran a story on their *Landline* program linking Paraquat to cases of Parkinson's disease, and the APVMA Paraquat Review technical report of July this year indicates that there is currently no scientific evidence to support these assertions.

It is however very important to me and to this government that our farmers, farm workers and contractors, can conduct their work in a safe environment. Therefore, if any evidence arises that results in the APVMA changing its advice on this chemical, then we will be taking it very seriously. The use of such agricultural chemicals in Tasmania is managed under the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Control of Use Act 1995*.

Ms BADGER - Back to my original question, what is the Tasmanian government doing? It is under review. What are you contributing to that scientific research that you've stated is inadequate. It has been proven to have very detrimental health effects in other countries around the world, so we are really keen to hear what the Tasmanian government is doing as a part of the review.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. That review is open for public consultation until 29 October this year. I believe my deputy secretary will have some more information to share on that review.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. The APVMA as the federal agency is the appropriate agency to assess the safety of chemicals. They ensure there's a robust risk assessment process conducted and that they can be used safely in accordance with label directions. Within the minister's agency with Biosecurity Tasmania, we would always consider the outcomes of any APVMA process to ensure that appropriate protections are in place for our community.

Ms BADGER - To conclude on my first question, the Tasmanian government is not going to be participating in the review? You're just relying on the public to have input.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. I would have to take advice from our chief inspector of primary project safety. What I can tell you is that we engage in national forums

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around a range of matters and ensure that we are across any actions that have been any reviews that are taken by the APVMA.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, you'd be aware about the awful situation with the labradoodles at the puppy farm recently and that my independent colleague, Mr O'Byrne, recently tabled a petition from 6383 Tasmanians is calling on the Tasmanian government to end puppy farms. What is the government planning to do? Can you please outline the timeframes to end puppy farms?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank Ms Johnson for her question. Like you, I was absolutely horrified by the situation at Tasmanian Labradoodles. I thank the RSPCA who, with the support of Biosecurity Tasmania, shut down this operation. I also acknowledge the Tasmanian community who rallied behind this operation, through financial assistance to the RSPCA or taking care of one of the labradoodles. A massive thank you to each and every one of you.

This government is a great supporter of the RSPCA. Under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, the government has committed \$3.2 million in additional funding for the RSPCA to continue its vital inspectorate work and advise government on animal welfare matters.

On 20 June 2024 concerns were raised with my office about the welfare of dogs at Tasmanian Labradoodles, including the number of animals on site and feeding concerns. On that day I directed the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania to assist the RSPCA with their response. Biosecurity immediately provided staff, including vets, to help with the management and monitoring required by the RSPCA during the closure of the Tasmanian Labradoodles. I'm also aware that the RSPCA had concerns with Tasmanian Labradoodles for quite some time and the matter was also before the court.

As a government, we're taking long-term action to improve dog welfare in Tasmania. We're reviewing the *Animal Welfare (Dogs) Regulation Act 2016* to prevent overbreeding and improve animal welfare for dogs. The review proposed changes to the *Dog Control Act 2000*. It also requires dogs over 12 weeks of age to be microchipped. It will introduce new provisions to enable information sharing between councils and animal-welfare regulators to better identify any potential dog-breeding operations. In addition, the government has committed to enforcing a Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice with provisions around minimum standards for the care, housing, and health of dogs.

I'm working with the Minister for Local Government, who is the minister responsible for the *Dog Control Act 2000*. Public consultation on the amendments is this year and I encourage everyone to have their say. I put on record, Ms Johnston, that I never, ever want to see a situation like this occur ever again in Tasmania.

Ms JOHNSTON - I understand that minister, but can you go back to the original question about the timelines for action? When were these regulations? You've outlined some of the measures to be implemented around 12 weeks, microchipping, information sharing between councils, the Greyhound Welfare Code of Practice, and liaising with the Minister for Local Government around *Dog Control Act* amendments. What's the time frame for that? At the moment it's easy for people to set up puppy farms. We know that there are puppy farms still in existence. What's the timeline for implementing these changes?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll ask the deputy secretary to provide more information on that.

Ms WILSON - As the minister has indicated, the government has put forward policy positions. Those will be released as a discussion paper that will be released this year. What we'll do then is seek feedback and consultation on that discussion paper and, based on that, Biosecurity Tasmania and the agency would be providing advice to the government on updates to regulations.

Ms JOHNSTON - When can we expect that to be concluded?

Ms WILSON - The minister has been indicating to the agency she'd like it to be done as quickly as possible - yes, more than once, which is - and what we've done is - but we have to follow the process of development of regulations and also updating of legislation.

Ms JOHNSTON - Are we talking mid next year, end of next year, 2026?

Ms HOWLETT - I'd like to see it as soon as possible. There's a process that needs to occur and we need to take submissions as well, and I encourage everyone out there to please put a submission in. I never want to see a situation like this ever occur again. I want to see us have some incredibly tough rules around this.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, noting we've had recently decent rains across Tassie, we know it's been a hard year for farmers with the dry conditions, especially on King Island, as you mentioned in your opening address. Can you please outline the support provided in more detail by the government across Tassie, including initiatives in the Budget?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for the question. Despite recent rains, the effects of the dry and drought conditions continue to impact many Tasmanian farmers and rural communities. Our farmers know that this government has their backs because of the actions that we've taken throughout these difficult times.

I've met with many farmers and I know how the drought has added challenges to our livestock producers, including access to feed and fodder because, for example, stored feed had already been, as we know, used up. We need sustained, consistent rain to fill our dams and help with feed, now that we're in spring.

This government has been working since last spring with farmers, rural communities and support organisations, like TasFarmers, RAW (Rural Alive and Well), Rural Business Tasmania, and others to support producers. There is a range of challenges and we've acted. The government responded with our Seasonal Conditions Scheme, hardship grants and a series of other support and resilience measures over time.

My latest advice of the week is that Business Tasmania has provided around \$4.1 million to 549 businesses in hardship grants across King and Flinders Islands and also mainland Tasmania. These are farmers whose main incomes come from their livestock. In July we announced a further \$4.8 million in additional drought support measures reflected in the Budget, which includes funding for Rural Business Tasmania to help more farmers apply for federal and state government drought support grants and programs, and to connect to the Rural Financial Counselling Service. Rural Alive and Well has also extended their mental health and

wellbeing outreach services, and TasFarmers is expanding their community drought coordinator service across the state.

For farmers unable to access the hardship grant support, and following the closure of that program, up to \$5000 from the Rural Relief Fund has been available through Rural Business Tasmania and we have broadened the criteria for semi-commercial farmers to apply. We have supported shipments of fodder to King Island in collaboration with Lions' Need for Feed and also extra sailings of the Bass Island Line to help with stock and feed.

We will also continue to work with the TAS Farm Innovation Hub to share learnings and provide information and extension activities for farmers on how to best tackle and prepare for drought. The Innovation Hub's work has helped inform our investments, such as \$1.5 million for Bass Strait Islands Water Resilience program for water mapping and farm water infrastructure on the Bass Strait Islands.

Chair, the government has provided consistent support for our farmers impacted -

Ms FINLAY - Chair, it's a three-minute response.

Ms HOWLETT - -by the sustained dry conditions and we will continue to monitor conditions and response. We continue to keep backing our farmers and working with them in these difficult times, as outlined in our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

Ms FINLAY - Thanks, Chair. Back to the water miscellaneous amendments that went through the parliament last year. We've touched on the industrial water supply, but now to the delegation. As you would understand, there's a number of irrigators across Tasmania that we're keen to go into community management, Winnaleah being one of those.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Ms FINLAY - I'm aware of your work with Winnaleah, but there's still quite a number of questions around that scheme. Tasmania Irrigation (TI) assessed an application from the Winnaleah Irrigation Scheme to provide maintenance and operational services to the scheme, but the offer was rejected by TI. They claimed that it was too expensive. Can you please explain how it's a fair process, when TI is not obliged to submit its price for these services, along with what Winnaleah would have to do as an independent third party? It seems to me that that process is like one tenderer being able to understand the price of all the competitors then submitting a lower price. Just wondering, as minister, how you feel comfortable with this?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I thank the member for the question and her for the interest in the Winnaleah community and the irrigation schemes. It's well known that the Winnaleah Irrigation Scheme Ltd, known as WISL, and Winnaleah Irrigators have a longstanding connection to their local scheme. I know that WISL has a desire to take on greater responsibility.

When TI made the decision earlier this year not to renew WISL's contract for operations and maintenance of the Winnaleah scheme, I know that the WISL board had concerns that this decision would hinder its opportunities for future community management of the scheme. I'm advised that TI's decision was made purely for operational reasons and does not in any way prejudice a future application for community management. As you know, the government

introduced legislation late last year that enables TI to delegate some powers and functions to irrigator groups who want to take on greater levels of management of publicly owned irrigation schemes. In practice, this means irrigator groups can apply to TI for delegation to undertake functions that Tasmania Irrigation would otherwise undertake. The legislation does not facilitate the transfer of the responsibility -

Ms FINLAY - If I could, there are a couple of pages to go, but it's not going to the question. If I could seek clarification from the minister. I understand all the background. I've met with them and I know you have as well, and I understand the process.

My question is, as minister, do you feel comfortable with the process where someone is practically tendering for work where the tenderer themselves understands the costs of everybody else when they're competitive in the process as well. They don't disclose their financial information, but require others to do so, then they submit a price that is less. My question is, are you comfortable, as minister, in that process?

CHAIR - I draw the minister to the question.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I've written to TI and also indicate my willingness to work together to facilitate local management of publicly owned irrigation schemes. I'm pleased to advise, Ms Finlay, that I've informally received support for this approach and will keep working together on this.

Ms FINLAY - I will ask the question again, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Deputy secretary would like to add to that.

Ms FINLAY - I am not asking about options. I am not asking about future community management. I'm not even asking about whether they were granted the operations and maintenance licence. My specific question is, in a tendering process where somebody who is going to participate in the process and possibly end up as the person successful to deliver the service, which has happened in this case with TI, they have access to all the financial information of everybody, but they don't disclose their own, then they undercut the person who is seeking to provide the services. Do you, as minister, think that is fair?

Ms HOWLETT - I understand your question, but as you are well aware, this is an operational question for TI. You'll have the opportunity to ask that question in scrutiny in December.

Ms FINLAY - My question is to you as minister, as the overarching leader and person responsible for the behaviours of the way that farmers are treated. Are you comfortable that that process is fair and reasonable?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, that is an operational question.

Ms FINLAY - I'm not asking TI. I know that TI will believe that it's fair and reasonable. I'm asking you as minister: do you believe this process is fair and reasonable?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, that is a question for TI in scrutiny.

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Ms FINLAY - I'm asking you, minister, about the behaviours of the people that are treating farmers in my electorate of Bass at Winnaleah. Do you believe that process is reasonable and fair?

Ms HOWLETT - I have answered Ms Finlay's question.

Ms FINLAY - You have not, but you can choose to ignore it if you like.

Ms BADGER - Following on from Ms Finlay's line of questioning, it is rather putting the fox in charge of the henhouse with the system we have now. It was always the intent when these self-managed community-run irrigation schemes were set up that they were just that, community-run irrigation schemes. Can you, minister, specifically point to what is legislatively standing in your way from returning the RWE to WISL or the Winnaleah scheme?

Ms HOWLETT - As I stated before, member, discussions are taking place.

Ms BADGER - I understand an offer's been made and I've read your correspondence with the community group. It isn't specifically what they're asking for. It does seem rather tokenistic, although it is a positive step in the right direction. My question is, what is legislatively standing in the way of you returning the RWE to WISL for the Winnaleah scheme?

Ms HOWLETT - Discussions are taking place. I'll ask the deputy secretary to speak more to that.

Ms WILSON - Legislatively the framework was adopted by the parliament and the framework allows for self-management actions. At the moment, that's being progressed. Guidance materials and templates are being progressed and we can declare it as an irrigation entity under section 22(6)(b) of the act. We need to make a regulation setting application fees. The processes that parliament has agreed to formally allow this to happen. That process is able to be accessed by the Winnaleah scheme operators and, as the minister says, there are discussions occurring.

Ms BADGER - Not to return the RWE though. Will you begin those discussions to return the RWE to the Winnaleah scheme as the minister is permitted to do under the legislation.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister -

Ms BADGER - Not the test case that's been proposed.

Ms WILSON - As indicated the process for self-irrigation is as prescribed in the act.

Ms FINLAY - There are three different things. The question being asked - if I could be helpful, Chair - is what is stopping you returning the RWE to Winnaleah?

Ms HOWLETT - As I've stated - and so has the deputy secretary - discussions are currently taking place.

Ms FINLAY - Are they happy with discussions minister? Sorry, it's your question.

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Ms BADGER - No, that's okay. It's both of our questions. It's quite alright. I don't believe either of us are getting answers.

Ms FINLAY - That's a reasonable question. Are they happy with the conversations, minister? It is up to the minister, that's correct, so what's stopping you, minister?

Ms BADGER - Perhaps the question is, minister, will you return the RWE to the Winnaleah Irrigation Scheme?

Ms FINLAY - Yes or no?

Ms HOWLETT - As I've said, and I'll state it again, discussions are taking place. I've answered the question.

CHAIR - Any other questions?

Ms BADGER - Minister, we're hearing increasing reports from the community about the impact of feral pigs, and we know how incredibly detrimental they can be. They are just one of the increasing numbers of invasive species that we're hearing about. There are also reports of, for example, goats. Obviously, the tracking of these animals would be easy under the new PIC scheme coming in. From 2025 that would be easier.

When this happens, will the government be declaring unmarked roaming pigs and goats and other destructive animals as a pest under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations 2021 so that it will enable effective control of these animals?

Ms HOWLETT - Sorry, there were a few questions in that question, if I could just ask you to repeat it.

Ms BADGER - The guts of the question is, will the government consider declaring unmarked pigs and goats as a pest under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations 2021 so that it can enable effective control of these species causing damage.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, I'd need to get some specific advice about the status of pigs, but my understanding is that under the *Animal Welfare Act*, they're already listed as a feral species. Under the *Local Government Act*, domestic pigs are managed through the *Local Government Act* and those powers. We're undertaking, for example, feral pig management on Flinders Island. On the mainland of Tasmania, it will depend upon the status of pigs, but as far as Biosecurity Tasmania is aware there are no feral pig populations, as properly defined, on mainland Tasmania.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, deputy secretary. Just to add to that, under the *Local Government Act 1993*, councils are given powers to impound any animal straying or at large, either near a highway or on council owned or controlled land. Councils may also issue abatement notices to anyone who directly or indirectly creates a nuisance as well. As pigs are already listed on the pest register, I'm advised that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania does not consider that any changes to the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* are warranted at this stage.

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Would you like me to provide some more information to that? I can ask Rae Burrows to talk more to that.

Ms BADGER - I'm happy to take more information on notice if that's okay.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, that's fine.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, you've just outlined in the response to my previous question that the time frame for legislative and regulatory action on puppy farms is some way off. It's not defined. Are you aware of any puppy farms that are currently in existence in Tasmania? If so, what action is the department in liaison with - I am assuming with Biosecurity Tasmania and RSPCA - taking to ensure the welfare of the animals on those puppy farms?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you for your interest in this very significant issue. I will ask the deputy secretary to provide some more information on that.

Ms WILSON - The definition of puppy farms is one of the key issues. We need the community to define these, and the minister through the regulations. I'll just seek some further advice about what we know about large-scale puppy operations because I don't have specific numbers on on that. What I can tell you is that the *Animal Welfare Act* applies to those operators, as do the current Animal Welfare (Dog) Regulations. Also, the responsibility under our memorandum of understanding and grant deed with the RSPCA Tasmania is that if there are any complaints about domestic dog welfare, they would investigate.

As the minister has said, we support that through Biosecurity Tasmania, as we did with labradoodles. In this Budget, there was an increase to the RSPCA Inspectorate Service of \$3.2 million over four years, which will assist with that regulatory role. If I get any further information about what we know on the ground, during the proceedings -

Ms JOHNSTON - Are you happy to take that one on notice?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I'm happy to take that one notice. We'll try to provide you with that information by the end of the session.

Ms WILSON - In terms of what we know. The RSPCA will be the prime regulator, so we'll just see what we can provide.

Ms JOHNSTON - The RSPCA, with the highly publicised puppy farm issue, had a great deal of trouble trying to prosecute under that. The matter was in court for some time, which clearly indicates that the legislation is inadequate to have a successful prosecution. Again, my question is, what will be done to protect those dogs? The welfare regulations and the act, and *Dog Control Act* and dog regulations, are currently inadequate.

The condition that those puppies were kept in is not dissimilar to conditions that puppies are kept in across Tasmania in extensive breeding properties, and do not meet community expectation. What action are you going to take in the interim whilst you're waiting for consultation and to design your regulations? What actions are you going to take to try to protect those puppies who are in awful conditions that Tasmanians would hate to see?

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Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Ms Johnston. They certainly were in extremely distressing conditions. I'm not aware of any others that have been reported to NRE or Biosecurity, but if anyone is aware, can I ask that they please contact our office and we will investigate straightaway, as we did with Tasmanian Labradoodles?

Mr FAIRS - Minister, in 2015, the Tasmanian Liberal government passed special purpose legislation, the *Industrial Hemp Act 2015*, to remove regulatory impediments and recognise industrial hemp as an agricultural crop. That legislation recently has been reviewed, with changes made through the parliament under your leadership in the Industrial Hemp Amendment Bill 2024. Can you outline how this bill is going to make it easier for Tassie growers to get on with the job of producing hemp?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you for your interest in the Tasmanian industrial hemp industry. The Industrial Hemp Amendment Bill 2024, which has passed both Houses of parliament, delivers updates to the act to make it clearer and easier for our hemp growers to get on with the job. Industrial hemp has the potential to be a very important crop for the state. The industry is making a valuable contribution to the growth of the farmgate value of Tasmania's agriculture to \$10 billion by 2050. The stems and seeds can be used for a variety of purposes including textiles, paper, fuel and food. The *Industrial Hemp Act 2015* itself created a simple licensing framework to support the growth of the Tasmanian industrial hemp industry. Importantly, the review found that most issues raised by stakeholders can be addressed by updating licence conditions, developing policy and making it easier to get a licence.

Accordingly, the government's response to the review is twofold. First, we introduce legislative amendments proposed through this bill, including updates to the *Industrial Hemp Regulations 2016* to improve the effectiveness, transparency and clarity of both the act and regulations for the industry.

Second, we are updating licence conditions and developing policy guidelines to address practical matters and complement the regulation. This will support licences to get the most from their industrial hemp crop. It will also improve the application process and other compliance documentation to make it easier for industry to interact with the licensing scheme. Overall, this will improve increased flexibility, clarity, transparency and remove the perceived and actual barriers to greater value-adding for Tasmania's hemp industry, so this bill will support greater industry growth. We're aware that the Tasmanian Hemp Association would like to see further relaxation of industrial hemp regulations in Tasmania, including the use of non-medicinal extracts and resins.

Tasmania is limited in what activities it can allow without being inconsistent in the national and international drug control framework. Australia is a signatory to the United Nations Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs 1961. This is an international framework for the control of narcotic drugs. Australia takes its responsibilities to the Single Convention very seriously for our industrial hemp, medicinal cannabis and poppy industries.

The government has also committed to support industry to advocate nationally for greater use of non-medicinal products in a way that is compliant with the Commonwealth Drug Regulatory Scheme, just like we did with hemp in food.

Ms FINLAY - The whole process and feeling in the agricultural community around the community management of schemes has been a bit of a mess; I know it's been a nightmare for

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Winnaleah. I know that TI did community consultation around each of the schemes. I'm wondering how many other schemes and which schemes have expressed interest in community management. As minister, you must know.

Ms HOWLETT - I think the member well knows that that is an operational matter.

Ms FINLAY - My question is to you as minister for Primary Industries, who oversees irrigation, which you said in your introductory speech is a game changer for Tasmania, and you have no idea how many schemes have expressed interest in community management.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not going to disclose that information and that is a matter for TI and you will be able to ask TI those questions.

Ms FINLAY - I'm interested in your understanding of these concerns. It's a red-hot issue in the community.

My follow-up question, if you're unable or unwilling to answer that one, is that the *Water Management Act 1999* was amended last year, supposedly to enable irrigator groups to be delegated management functions by TI but section 226E states:

- (1) If an eligible body makes an application in accordance with section 226C to an irrigation entity, the irrigation entity is to make a delegation under section 226D to the eligible body unless, in the opinion of the irrigation entity -
 - a. the delegation could reasonably be expected to -
 - i. substantially reduce the viability of the irrigation entity; or
 - ii. reduce the capacity of the irrigation entity to ensure the performance of the functions of the irrigation entity under this Act or any other Act; or
 - ...
 - iv. result in a substantial increase in costs to the irrigation entity in relation to another irrigation district managed by the irrigation entity; or
 - v. result in a substantial increase in cost to -
 - (A) another irrigation entity ...

Can you please explain how on earth any application for a delegation would ever succeed, given the above criteria?

Ms HOWLETT - As you're aware, Ms Finlay, this was contested in parliament and it passed through the parliament.

Ms FINLAY - My question is-

CHAIR - Sorry, there's been interjections both ways.

Ms FINLAY - I thought she'd finished, sorry.

CHAIR - Ms Finlay was asking the question. If Ms Finlay can ask her questions in silence and then if the minister can answer the questions in silence, then I'll allow follow up questions.

Ms FINLAY - My mistake, Chair, I thought she'd finished her answer.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, Chair, and thank you, Ms Finlay. There are discussions with TI occurring and I believe the deputy secretary has more information to add to that.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. There is a process that's been put in place under the legislation and that is being progressed and there was a genuine intention in introducing that legislation to set up a framework, but it would allow for self-managed irrigation whilst also protecting the assets and ensuring that the scheme continues to function well, and that's in the interests of that irrigators.

Ms FINLAY - Can I ask a follow-up question then perhaps, minister? I've got a question out of that, but my next question is to the deputy secretary if possible: are you aware of the number of irrigator schemes that have expressed interest for community management?

Ms HOWLETT - The member is well aware that I've met with TI, I've met with the Winnaleah irrigators and discussions are being had.

Ms FINLAY - I was just wondering if there were any other schemes that have expressed interest.

Ms HOWLETT - And that is a matter for TI, and you'll have them at the table in December, Ms Finlay.

Ms FINLAY - I like that you're able to disclose that you've met with Winnaleah, but you won't disclose if you've met with any others or if any others have expressed interest. Minister, do you concede that self-management of irrigation schemes is achievable without ownership of the schemes needing to transfer away from the Crown, and the *Water Management Act* has sufficient and appropriate reporting requirements to ensure self-management irrigation schemes will not compromise assets, their future ability to deliver, their longevity or their safety?

Ms HOWLETT - As you're well aware, TI has undertaken consultation in recent times.

Ms FINLAY - This is not a question about TI.

Ms HOWLETT - I'll take that on notice and I'll get that information from TI on any expressions of interest.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you. I appreciate your response. That was my previous question, and I will put that in writing. This question is, as minister, do you concede that you don't need

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to transfer ownership away from the Crown and, in doing so, there are appropriate reporting requirements to ensure self-management won't compromise assets or the longevity or safety of schemes? This is more to your opinion, minister, whether you're comfortable with that.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not going to give my personal opinion on that, Ms Finlay and -

Ms FINLAY - I'd like your ministerial opinion, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - Would you? I'm sure you would, Ms Finlay.

Ms FINLAY - I would, yeah, and I'd like to see-

Ms HOWLETT - I'd like to ask you a few questions, but I won't, Ms Finlay.

Ms FINLAY - You're the minister. If you'd like to ask me questions as minister, I'm happy to change positions with you. However, today this is your responsibility and I'm asking you, as minister, whether you concede that schemes don't need to be transferred away from the Crown. There are plenty of protections in the act to ensure longevity and safety of assets in the operations of schemes.

Ms HOWLETT - We have answered that question, and -

Ms FINLAY - No, you haven't. Again, you're not willing to answer or unable to answer the question.

Ms HOWLETT - No, there's nothing more to add to it. There's nothing more to add to that question, Chair.

Ms BADGER - Minister, just a couple of questions about the impact that the salmon industry is having on Tasmania's native birds. Can you clarify how many native birds have been shot by the Tasmanian salmon industry since the start of 2024 and what weapon or implement was being used to shoot the native birds?

Ms HOWLETT - Okay. Just give me a moment. Thank you, Chair. A property protection permit may be issued under the Natural Conservation Wildlife Regulation 2021 to take wildlife to protect crops and/or stock and protect equipment and infrastructure. Applications are assessed prior to a quota being determined on a permit issued, and a permit holder must record and report the number of animals taken.

I am aware that my department issued two property permit protections to Tassal in December 2023 as a temporary tool to manage an unprecedented rise in interactions at a lease in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and the Huon River region. Upon investigation of this infrastructure and interactions by NRA Tas, the permits were issued as a last resort measure to allow for the development and installation of improved bird exclusion measures.

Ms BADGER - Great. That specific question was: how many native birds were shot, and what weapon or implement was used? Happy to take that on notice.

Ms HOWLETT - How many were shot, and what weapon or implement?

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Ms BADGER - Yes, thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - I will have to take that on notice, and I believe minister Abetz will -

Ms BADGER - Yes, on notice is fine. He has referred us down here for this, so, yes, happy to take that on notice.

The second question: is the government going to notify water users in the future - very importantly, such as boaters - if there is a shooting operation that is currently happening? And that is not what we saw at the Coningham lease, unfortunately.

Ms HOWLETT - That is an operational matter, and I will pass you over to the deputy secretary to speak to that.

Ms WILSON - What I can say is that the issuing of a property protection permit does not override the requirements to meet the *Firearms Act*, and, as for notification, I will need to take some advice on that. But the primary obligation is still to meet the specifications under the *Firearms Act*. The *Firearms Act* is not our legislation, but you do have to meet those requirements.

Ms HOWLETT - Can I just add to your comments, deputy secretary? The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania routinely publishes data on wildlife interactions in the salmon industry. This is actively disclosed. Marine farm operators must submit a monthly summary report for each marine farming lease, detailing all wildlife mortalities, injuries, entanglements, and entrapments detected. This includes wildlife exclusion netting, marine farming infrastructure, and the use of seal deterrent devices.

Any other information we can provide you with, hopefully, by the end of the committee.

Ms JOHNSTON - Back to puppy farming. When you outlined some of the changes to regulations that you foreshadowed might occur in response to the puppy farming incident, you did not mention capping of breeding bitches. I am assuming that this is something that would be fundamental to any changes that the government might make in this particular space, because that is what allows the proliferation of puppy farms. One of the challenges with capping breeding bitches and monitoring is the lack of information shared, and the lack of a breeder registration process. Is it the government's intention to introduce a breeder registration process?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Ms Johnston, for your question. The review will propose changes to the *Dog Control Act 2000* as well as requiring dogs over 12 weeks of age to be microchipped. It will also introduce new provisions to enable information sharing between councils -

Ms JOHNSTON - That is the answer you read out to my first question.

Ms HOWLETT - and animal welfare regulators to better identify any potential dog breeding operations, and I will certainly consider capping.

Ms JOHNSTON - As I've indicated, one of the challenges if we do cap the number of breeding bitches allowed on a property, is the lack of breeder registration. This would be

a mechanism whereby RSPCA and Biosecurity Tasmania can actually check to see who is breeding and we don't have that currently. At the moment, if there was to be a cap on breeding bitches, it would require investigators or inspectors to try to match up council records with their kennel licencing records and with their facilities records as well, and to try to then determine whether - with kennel license - are trying to profit from their puppies.

There's a desperate need for a breeding registration program. Would you consider introducing a breeding registration program as part of the suite of changes in response to puppy farmers?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll certainly consider that and I want to seriously consider capping the number of breeding bitches and the amount of litters that they can have. I'll hand you over to the deputy secretary for any more information that she may like to add to that.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, the critical issue that will be put forward in the discussion paper will be about the information-sharing and what information will be shared because dogs are already required to be registered with local government. There's already information that is available through dog registration and that will need to be taken into account in terms of what is a most efficient and effective model that ensures we have information that allows us to and the RSPCA to make sure that we've got appropriate animal welfare outcomes with breeders.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, Natural Resource Management (NRM) enhances innovative agriculture practises. Obviously, you're a hallmark of the government. I note that the Budget has increased funding for NRMs and significant funding for Landcare Tasmania. Are you able to outline what that funding will achieve and what areas, projects or grants are available to build community capacity, promote resilience and achieve on-ground results for our all-important environment?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question and his interest in Natural Resource Management projects in Tasmania. Healthy soils, farmland, rivers and other natural resources underpin Tasmania's world-class agriculture sector and a clean, green reputation. That is why our approach to Natural Resource Management brings together our farmers, local communities, peak bodies and conservation groups to make a practical difference on the ground.

That is also why this government is investing in our Natural Resource Management organisations, NRM South NRM North and Cradle Coast NRM. To back the agriculture sector, the government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future has committed an additional \$2.4 million as part of a package which provides a total of \$544 000 a year over two years to each of our three NRMs. This will enable our NRMs to continue to deliver their really important on-ground programs. This includes projects on waterway health, such as supporting significant wetlands and the Tamar Estuary and East Rivers program. This also includes land management projects such as learning about cultural burning from Tasmanian Aboriginal people, as well as the Farming Forecaster Tasmanian project to help build drought resilience.

Landcare is another organisation that the Tasmanian Liberal Government is a big supporter of. Landcare Tasmania plays an important role as the peak body representing and supporting the Tasmanian Landcare movement. With groups and individual members throughout the state, there are very few places that have not benefited over the last 30 years

from Landcare projects to improve the health of nature and primary production landscapes across our state. The Tasmanian Liberal Government has been a long-term supporter of Landcare Tasmania since it was established in 1994. Landcare not only improves landscapes across Tasmania, but is empowering people to care for our land and water resources.

The Tasmanian Government has committed more than \$1.86 million over three years to continue to support Landcare Tasmania's programs and initiatives. This includes core funding of \$155,000 per year over the next three years. We've also committed \$900,000 over three years towards a successful Landcare Action Grants program which has been running since 2018. The Landcare Action Grants program has been highly successful in delivering a wide range of projects. Some examples are weed control projects, fencing to protect areas with natural values and improving ground cover. In addition, there is also funding of \$85,000 per year to support for volunteers and what would we do without the volunteer army -

Ms BURNET - Point of order Chair. It looks like the minister has a lot to read and that's three minutes, so I just wonder if we could move on to the next question.

Ms HOWLETT - It's pretty important information, Chair.

Ms BURNET - Well, is it?

Ms HOWLETT - It is, actually. I would have thought it would have been a subject that would have been very interesting to you.

CHAIR - Order, one second, minister, the orders of this House are that there is three minutes to answer questions and one minute to ask them. It hasn't been enforced strictly up until now, there's been some very long-winded questions and some long answers. If the committee wishes to start enforcing them, that's fine, I can get the stopwatch out and we can start timing questions as well, because there have been some questions that have gone into the minutes. The proceedings have gone pretty well up until now but if people want to start enforcing timeline times, we can do that. Otherwise, I'll draw the minister to wrap up the answer if she can.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, I'll wrap up very quickly, thank you. We'll also provide a \$15,000 per year for three years for the biannual Landcare Conference and Awards and also invest \$200,000 towards a Land Care Community Support program to increase the program delivery capacity in northern Tasmania. Thank you, Chair.

Ms FINLAY - I'm interested to ask some questions around biosecurity and particularly in preparation for bird flu, unfortunately, as I understand it is not likely if but when, so I'm just keen to understand the framework response.

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her very important question. No strain of avian influenza has been detected in Tasmania yet and thankfully Australia is the only continent on earth which has not had an outbreak of the deadly H5N1. This government knows the value of protecting our state's unique environment from pest and diseases. Importantly, Tasmania's biosecurity system is well equipped to respond to an outbreak of bird flu and there are nationally agreed response procedures in place. Biosecurity Tasmania is actively monitoring the situation, including issuing advice to industry and the community.

Bird flu is a highly contagious viral disease. There are many strains of the virus that cause symptoms in birds, other animals and sometimes humans. With spring upon us and migratory birds returning to the state, the risk is increasing. We must be vigilant and I encourage everyone to report any sick birds to the emergency animal disease hotline.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you minister, I'm interested in the efficiency dividend and budget savings plans, and I'm particularly interested around biosecurity. Can you indicate if the efficiency dividend is being applied to biosecurity and if there's a budget savings plan for that section?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you for your important question and Chair, I will just ask the secretary.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. The 2023-24 Budget indicates the government would seek operating efficiencies while protecting frontline services. The efficiency dividend is to be achieved by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment and it's outlined in the budget paper. The department has commenced implementing initial savings strategies and they're achievable without compromising the department's capability. They'll not impact government's priorities and core services to the Tasmanian community nor will they impact the safety and wellbeing of staff. Importantly, the savings initiatives identified will be around streamlining processes and leading operations. The department will review how programs are administered to ensure they deliver value for the Tasmanian community. Our initial focus is on savings from discretionary expenditure on supplies and consumables, including consultants, travel, advertising, accommodation, and fleet.

Ms FINLAY - I appreciate that, but that wasn't my question. My question was very specific to biosecurity. My question was: has biosecurity been insulated from the efficiency dividend or their budget savings plans across biosecurity?

Ms HOWLETT - I believe the deputy secretary has provided that advice. I'm happy to add to that advice. Our government has a strong track record of responsible fiscal management. We've invested significantly in essential services since coming to government and we're continuing to invest.

Ms FINLAY - Sorry, Chair, this is not an answer to my question. Could I please restate the question?

CHAIR - I'll let you restate the question. I'll remind members that I cannot direct the minister to answer the question in a particular way. If members aren't satisfied with the responses, they can ask further questions or they can raise it as a matter of concern in the report. I'll let you ask the question again.

Ms FINLAY - You indicated that the answer had been given, but the word biosecurity wasn't used in the answer. I'm asking you specifically. Biosecurity is essential for Tasmania in terms of the health and wellbeing of our entire community, and particularly our agricultural community. You've already stated how important our response is for bird flu when it does arrive. My question is specifically: has biosecurity been shielded from the efficiency dividend or does biosecurity have budget saving measures?

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Ms HOWLETT - As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future -

Ms FINLAY - If she's not going to answer the question, I ask her to stop.

CHAIR - Order. Ms Finlay, she got three words in before there were interjections.

Ms FINLAY - She's reading the same brief.

CHAIR - I'll allow you to ask follow-up questions. Can the minister's answer please be heard in silence? I'll let you ask a follow-up question if you're not satisfied.

Ms HOWLETT - We are continuing to take clear and meaningful action to ensure that the state can provide essential public services and job-creating infrastructure on a sustainable basis, Tasmanians would expect departments to use their resources effectively and within budget. In developing the 2023-24 Budget last year -

Ms FINLAY - On such a critical issue.

CHAIR - Ms Finlay.

Ms HOWLETT - The government recognised that prudent, corrective action was required -

Ms FINLAY - I'm going to ask the minister to stop. She's not going to answer the question. Could I please ask my follow-up question?

CHAIR - I'll let the minister finish and then I'll let you ask your follow-up.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you.

Ms FINLAY - I just need to hear the word 'biosecurity'. Yes, or no? Is it shielded from the efficiency dividend?

CHAIR - She hasn't finished her question yet. I'll let you ask another question.

Ms FINLAY - Yes, or no, is biosecurity shielded from the efficiency dividends? Yes, or no?

Ms HOWLETT - In my opening statement, the honourable member heard me mention that we've invested almost \$13 million into biosecurity.

Ms FINLAY - I'm not asking about investments. I'm asking about a shield from the efficiency dividend. It's a simple question, yes, or no.

CHAIR - Ms Finlay.

Ms FINLAY - If the answer's no, just say it.

Ms HOWLETT - That is a question for my department secretary. I believe she has already answered that.

Ms FINLAY - Wow.

CHAIR - Did you have a final follow-up question?

Ms FINLAY - Yes, I do. Can you please confirm that biosecurity is not shielded from your efficiency dividend?

Ms HOWLETT - The department secretary has already -

Ms FINLAY - I'm asking you, minister.

CHAIR - Ms Finlay.

Ms HOWLETT - answered that.

Ms FINLAY - The answer is that biosecurity is required to find efficiency dividends?

Ms HOWLETT - The question has been answered, Chair.

Ms BURNET - I have some questions around crop overspray. One of our constituents has been patiently and politely trying to find out for years what the chemical makeup is in the spray that drifts over his property, his veggie gardens and his family. He has video footage and soil testing revealing amounts of dangerous chemicals. This testing isn't useful because by the time the departmental office does the testing, the active ingredients degrade. He's tried to write to the orchard to define what chemicals are used and what dosage. That request has been denied. He's tried writing to find out via RTI through the department, to work out what chemicals have been settling on his food that he grows and eats.

Why is he not allowed to have access to the spray register of his neighbour. Will you step in and demand that spray registers are made available on request?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. I'm aware that the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania has been investigating the complaints raised by Hayden Pearsons regarding spray over-drift. I'll hand over to the department to discuss the details of this investigation.

Ms WILSON - I'll talk at the principal level. Obviously, that's appropriate when we're dealing with any neighbourhood matters, and particularly any issues of that nature. As you know, the use of agricultural chemicals in Tasmania is regulated under the *Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1995* and its code and practices. It sits within a national framework, and that's actually quite important.

A review of that has commenced, but it has been paused at the moment. Biosecurity Tasmania is proactively reviewing our legislation with a view to incorporating any of the agreed national reforms, as well as any other improvements, to ensure the continued effectiveness of our agricultural chemical regulatory controls. It is important to note that we would undertake a consultation process around any such changes, and to ensure that all parties who might have an interest in that matter are able to put forward their views.

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Minister, unless there's something else?

Ms HOWLETT - No, you've answered the response thoroughly. Thank you.

Ms BURNET - As a secondary question into that, will you commit to reviewing and strengthening the conditions orchards operate under, and also commit to prosecuting those that contravene the standards? Is that part of the review?

Ms WILSON - Our reviews of legislation always look to where we can improve the regulations. We have an act at the moment, we do not have a gap. When we look at the review, we'll look at the agreed national reforms to see if they're appropriate to put in place in Tasmania. We will undertake consultation. On whether we would take particular action for contraventions - if someone raises a complaint with us, the agency investigates. The agency then determines if there is a potential breach or otherwise and would act appropriately.

Ms BURNET - Timeline? Sorry, I didn't understand the timeline with the review.

Ms WILSON - We've commenced the internal process of review, based on the national framework.

Ms BURNET - When is the end of that likely to be?

Ms HOWLETT - The process has commenced internally.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, in many ways, we went to an early election for failure to be able to provide adequate animal welfare in abattoirs. Can you update the Committee on whether every abattoir in Tasmania has 24-hour CCTV?

Ms HOWLETT - They certainly do. It was introduced on 31 June, and I can provide some more information on that.

Thank you, Ms Johnston, and thank you, Chair. I'm committed to getting this right for our producers and our important livestock industry, the jobs and family businesses that the industry supports. The Livestock Processing Taskforce has now developed new Tasmanian guidelines and a strategy to achieve strong animal welfare practices that meets the expectations of the community.

The guidelines follow the introduction of mandatory video monitoring to livestock processing facilities, which came into effect on 30 June. Tasmanian veterinary officers and an independent, recognised world expert on benchmark practices have provided input into the guidelines to ensure best practice animal welfare outcomes.

The taskforce has provided its final report guidelines and an implementation strategy and the government is working through its response to see the recommendations. I expect to release the taskforce final report, and the government's response, very shortly.

Ms JOHNSTON - It was implemented as of 30 June. How is the CCTV monitored? It is one thing to record it and to have it. How is it viewed, monitored and audited, the practices?

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Ms WILSON - The guidelines require the individuals, when there's a kill - there has to activities, I believe, to review daily. I would like to check that and confirm. The idea with the guidelines is to ensure that there's active management by abattoir owners and operators to ensure that we have the highest standard of animal welfare.

Ms HOWLETT - Can I please invite Rae Burrows to the table to add more information to that, because it's a really important question that you raised. Rae, could you say your name and title to the committee, please.

Ms BURROWS - Rae Burrows, General Manager, Biosecurity Tasmania.

Ms JOHNSTON - My question was how, and who, monitors the CCTV?

Ms BURROWS - The Video Monitoring Systems (VMS) guidelines specifically say that first, the video monitors must be in specific places in the abattoirs. In any area where there's a high risk of animal welfare issues, that's where a camera must be placed in the first instance. They have to retain the video footage for 30 days. They are required to check the video footage themselves every day so that they can instigate any continuous improvement to their practices. Remember, this is about improving the animal welfare culture for processing facilities. It's not the government coming over and saying, 'You must do that', because we can't be there 24/7. It's for them to actually step up and bring humane animal welfare outcomes to the forefront of their thinking.

Ms JOHNSTON - It is largely self-monitored, as you indicated, they are required to check the footage every day themselves. Is there any kind of independent oversight of that or audit of that externally from the abattoirs themselves to check?

Ms BURROWS - The domestic abattoirs are the subject of both announced and unannounced visits of Biosecurity Tasmania staff both in our food safety area and in our biosecurity inspections area. Our export facilities, which we have three, as you're probably aware - Greenham, JBS and TQM - are monitored regularly by the federal government, and they're required to have an on-site vet and other requirements. It is domestic abattoirs that Biosecurity Tasmania will have oversight of.

Ms JOHNSTON - Can I ask how many unannounced visits of domestic abattoirs occurred in the last financial year?

Ms BURROWS - In 2024, there were 11 *Primary Produce Safety Act* (PPSA) audits, that's food safety audits. As I say, the PPSA has animal welfare requirements in it as well. There were four federal audits, that's of the export facilities. There were 27 sale yard visits, there were 52 restricted animal materials inspections, seven intensive animal production inspections, 215 investigations of animal welfare reports, 17 unannounced visits, one announced visit and 90 third-party food safety audits in 2024.

Ms JOHNSTON - Were there any adverse findings as an outcome of any of those inspections or any breaches?

Ms BURROWS - The investigations of the five abattoirs that were the subject of the FTP video investigations, there were certainly findings in those -

Ms JOHNSTON - All five abattoirs had adverse findings?

Ms BURROWS - There were five abattoirs that were the subject of the FTP video footage that we were particularly concerned about. The others, we've investigated all of them.

Mr FAIRS - The state government has had a strong focus on managing the state's freshwater resources now and into the future through the Rural Water Use Strategy. Can you outline the key initiatives and investment being delivered under the strategy that are enhancing our understanding and management of water resources and strengthening collaboration between both water managers and water users?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question and his interest in Tasmania's river health. The government knows that healthy rivers underpin the state's economy, environment and our way of life. This government is investing in the Rural Water Use Strategy as our blueprint for managing Tasmania's water resources. The strategy will ensure sustainable outcomes and build resilience for our rural water users, communities and environment in a changing climate. There are 15 key projects currently underway, including initiatives to improve river health, groundwater assessment and review the science underpinning our water allocation framework.

Yesterday, I released the Rural Water Use Strategy Progress Report for 2024, highlighting key achievements for the year. These include:

- Completion of the review of Tasmania's water accountability framework and commencement of stakeholder engagement to implement findings from the review.
- Development of a 3D geological model to better understand the groundwater resource in the Smithton syncline groundwater area in north-west Tasmania.
- Commencement of a new initiative to undertake groundwater investigations and develop water security strategies for King Island and Flinders Island.
- Commencement of a review of Tasmania's water management planning framework.
- Delivery of the *Water Miscellaneous Amendments (Delegation and Industrial Water Supply) Act 2023*.

The Rural Water Use Strategy provides a comprehensive framework for the future of water management in Tasmania. The strategy aims to ensure integrated, fair and efficient regulation of water resources, deliver sustainable outcomes for rural water users, communities and the environment, and maintain Tasmania's competitive edge in the face of climate change.

To support ongoing delivery of the strategy, the Tasmanian government is investing an additional \$1 million. We've also recently leveraged an extra \$5.9 million through the

Australian Government's National Water Grid funding, including \$4.58 million for TasWater to develop a business case for the North West Water Supply Scheme to streamline water supply, and \$1.3 million to assist the department in the next phase of the Catchment Yield Science Update project to update its hydrological models so that water management information reflects the effects of climate change. The government is also committed to supporting further investment for irrigation infrastructure development including the Greater South East Irrigation Scheme.

The Tasmanian government has also responded to the difficult dry conditions on King Island and Flinders Island, including immediate support and long-term measures to improve resilience and drought preparedness. The government has provided \$1.5 million for the Bass Strait Islands Water Resilience Program to develop water security strategies for the islands. The funding is also supporting the King and Flinders Island Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme to assist producers with the purchase and installation of water infrastructure.

Delivery of these important projects cannot be undertaken without the ongoing support from our key stakeholders in water management. I'd like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the Rural Water Roundtable and the Water Management and Data Custodians Working Group, who come together to support the strategies, objectives and delivery. Collaboration will play a crucial role in continued delivery of the strategy and we will continue to work with our water managers to progress this important work.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, I want to go back to the efficiency dividends. Can you outline the budget savings plan for the sections under your responsibility, and whether you can give a figure on how much is being asked for you to include in your budget savings plan?

Ms HOWLETT - The Tasmanian government in February 2023 announced additional biosecurity funding to bolster emergency preparedness. This initiative will support border personnel and industry engagement, along with traceability planning, supply chain engagement and emergency animal disease risk preparedness activities.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, I think your chief of staff is trying to get your attention.

Ms HOWLETT - As part of this budget initiative -

Ms FINLAY - In the last round of questions, I asked about biosecurity. This round of questions is actually on efficiency dividends. What is the budget savings plan for the areas under your responsibility and, specifically, what figure have you been asked?

Ms HOWLETT - As part of this Budget's initiative funding of \$490,000 that was provided in 2023-24, increasing to \$700,000 in 2024-25 and across the forward Estimates to fund five permanent staff.

Ms FINLAY - In biosecurity?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, in biosecurity.

Ms FINLAY - Okay, fantastic. Thank you for your answer to - well, it is not even an answer to previous questions. My question was, since you are willing to talk about biosecurity now, you are showing an increase in the number of people. Is there - no, I am not even going

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to ask that question again. My question is: across all of your areas of responsibility, so including biosecurity, but Water and Primary Industries, what is the real term figure you are being asked to reduce in terms of your efficiency dividend? What is your budget savings plan?

Ms HOWLETT - I will refer you to the deputy secretary.

Ms WILSON - If you look at table 7.2 of the output group, you will see that the biosecurity integrity budget increases throughout the out years.

Ms FINLAY - Fantastic. I love biosecurity, I am very interested in biosecurity, it is very important to Tasmania. You, as minister, what is your expected budget savings plan across all of your responsibilities to do with Primary Industries and Water? What is the figure?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Ms Finlay. I will take your question on notice.

Ms FINLAY - Okay, great. I am going to move now to the impact on primary producers to do with significant infrastructure to the benefit of Tasmania, particularly the North West Transmissions Developments. I would like to understand your current position in terms of the strategic benefits payments to farmers, with particular comment around the expectations of farmers being advocated for by TasFarmers, and the current position the government holds?

Ms HOWLETT - As the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, I expect that farmers are heard loud and clear, and treated with respect, and that government companies can continue to work effectively in partnership with private land owners. I will always back our farmers. I have listened to TasFarmers. Any decision relating to strategic benefits payment will be a decision for the Energy and Renewables minister, Mr Duigan, and Cabinet.

Through our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we have committed to update the 2019 charter for working on private farmland to ensure it remains contemporary, and to consider the TasFarmers Farm Access Code of Conduct as part of that uptake. I am working with TasFarmers to progress this update. The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania is leading that work. The agency officials here may wish to add to this response.

Ms WILSON - We have been asked to look at the charter for working on private farmland, as the minister has said. My understanding is we have a meeting in the diary of the key original participants in our charter - the GBEs and with TasFarmers. We will be meeting with them. I don't have the date. I will see if I can get it, but we were planning to meet with them very soon.

Ms HOWLETT - It's in the coming weeks, I think.

Ms FINLAY - Given that there's a meeting very soon and you've deferred to minister Duigan in terms of the strategic benefits payments, in your conversations with minister Duigan and with your conversations with farmers, I'm wondering if you have a targeted time frame for determination on your position with strategic benefits payments and I'm wondering at the moment how you feel about the numbers that are being discussed for those payments?

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Ms HOWLETT - As as I started before, that's a matter for TasNetworks and minister Duigan, but we've certainly had a meeting and we're working our way through it and we're constantly in discussions with Tas Farmers.

CHAIR - Your last question then we'll go to Ms Burnet.

Ms FINLAY - Given that it's strategically important that you've been having meetings, you have been having the discussions, my question is specifically how are you currently feeling about the options on the table, the actual figures being proposed for the strategic benefits payments?

Ms HOWLETT - That's that's not a matter for me, Ms Finlay, that is a matter for TasNetworks.

Ms FINLAY - As farmers advocate, as the minister for farmers, I am wondering how you are feeling about the number that is on the table at the moment for strategic benefits payments. It is actually a matter for you, because farmers are your people. You said that you will stand up for them.

Ms HOWLETT - And I will always back our farmers.

Ms FINLAY - So, how are you feeling about this?

CHAIR - Ms Finlay, I will let you have that last interjection. Can you let the minister answer, please?

Ms HOWLETT - Discussions are occurring, Ms Finlay.

Ms FINLAY - The question is how are you feeling about it?

CHAIR - Ms Burnet.

Ms BURNET - Chair-

Ms FINLAY - You can feel positively or negatively but you don't actually have to shake your head at me.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms BURNET - I note that the State of Environment Report is looking for a comprehensive water management strategy, but I wanted to get on to the issue of river health. Minister, your department spent years working on a landmark report on river health in Tasmania.

When it was finished, the office of former minister Guy Barnett decided the report should never see the light of day, and it wasn't until the Greens did an RTI while the government was in caretaker mode, that the temporal and spatial patterns in river health across Tasmania and the Influence of Environmental Factors report was released.

That detailed report looked at the period up until 2018 and found serious declines in river health across the state. What have the trends in river health been in the past six years since that report?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you Chair, and I thank the member for her interest in this. Collectively, Tasmania's water monitoring programs provide wide coverage and long-term monitoring records for Tasmanian catchments. River health is of interest to all users of Tasmanian water resources. Healthy rivers underpin the state's economy, environment and our way of life.

Since 1994, the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania has conducted broad-scale monitoring of river conditions in Tasmania under the river health monitoring program. This monitoring provides important data sets on the health of rivers in Tasmania. The Rural Water Use Strategy is delivering several waterway health projects focusing on enhancing sharing of data information, developing a new statewide water quality monitoring program and enhancing the understanding of the drivers of the river.

Deputy Secretary, would you like to add any more detail to that?

Ms WILSON - Yes. Monitoring under the river health monitoring program has been done on a biennial frequency since 2010. So, the frequency of monitoring has not changed. Importantly, under the rural water use strategy project, we've got no drivers of change of the waterway health project. What's happening is we're doing a suite of physiochemical parameter testing, turbidity, dissolved oxygen, pH, electrical conductivity and water temperature, along with nutrients monthly at 50 sites across the state between July 2023 and July 2025.

As we've noted under the River Health Management Monitoring Program, the above suite of physiochemical parameters are being measured seasonally, biennially, as I said, spring and autumn at 53 long-term monitoring sites. Furthermore, sampling in spring and autumn is occurring also occurring at an additional 28 sites in four case study areas, Upper Ringarooma River, Pipers River, Mountain River, River Leven under the drivers of change and water health project between autumn 2023 and autumn 2025.

Ms BURNET - A point of order, though, and back to my original question, which was: what have the trends in river health been in the past six years? I'm glad to hear all that monitoring of chemicals is occurring as well, but what have been the trends in the past six years?

Ms WILSON - I would have to look at our reporting on the River Health Monitoring Program, but we do put information onto our website. What I can tell you is that the river health project that we're doing - the drivers of changes in waterway health project - we'll do that for two years, and that will allow us to do an assessment against the baseline that you referred to.

Preliminary analysis for the first 12 months demonstrate 64 per cent of sites have experienced an improvement or minimal change in nutrient conditions and nutrients since the baseline water quality monitoring program finished in 2003 and 2008 datasets. But it's the first year of results. We need to wait for the second year of results, and then we'll be releasing that information, which will then inform the trend data.

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Ms BURNET - Okay, thank you. My second question, minister. The department's own major report on river health showed nearly half of monitoring sites were actually in decline. Much of this decline was in the four or five years leading up to 2018. So, you can see why six years later we were concerned to find out if that trend has continued - very important information.

Does the department have a broad understanding of the statewide trends in river health since 2018, and can they be shared with us, please?

Ms WILSON - The river health monitoring program was set and is done in the biennial frequency and there are some reports that are put out. The purpose of our drivers of change of waterway health project is very specific. It's been funded by the government to actually look at the drivers of river health change, and that will be informative to the issue you've raised.

Ms BURNET - So we can have some information to the committee, please?

Ms WILSON - We've got preliminary analysis. We will be looking at the full set of figures, otherwise it's not robust.

Ms BURNET - Sure. I understand that, yes.

Ms WILSON - What I can also tell you - the minister has mentioned this - is that we are doing a new statewide water quality monitoring program design. It's really important because we've reported at previous committees that we were looking at a river health water quality monitoring program, but we're looking at a broader suite, and the reason we're doing that is we've spent quite some time reviewing data from members of the Data Custodians Working Group to see what actual information is available. Taking that, we're expecting to take a design for the water resource monitoring program to the Data Custodian Working Group over the coming months. It's a very exciting time in water. Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - It is and just to add to that, Chair, we've got 15 key projects that are currently underway, including initiatives to improve river health, groundwater assessment and to review the science underpinning our water allocation framework. Thank you

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. Minister, the general manager of biosecurity helpfully went through a list of all the inspections that have been conducted. Is that list able to be tabled? It is a very long and detailed list. It would help us with our records if that list could be tabled, please.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, we can table that, no problem.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. That'd be lovely. My second question, minister, is I want to ask you about seal control and dispersal by the salmon industry. How many seal crackers were used by the salmon industry over the past financial year to disperse the protected fur seals, and how many reported deaths of seals have there been by the industry over the same period of time?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Ms Johnston, I do have that information. Just let me track it down. I've got the exact data on it, too, just give me a moment. Sorry, yes, I found it.

Ms JOHNSTON - I am happy for it just to be tabled as an answer, or I'll take it on notice as I'm mindful of the time.

Ms HOWLETT - That's okay. As I said before, marine farm operators must submit a monthly summary report for each marine farming lease detailing all wildlife mortalities, injuries, entanglements and entrapments. This includes wildlife netting, marine farming infrastructure and the use of seal deterrent devices as a range of strict controls are in place around the use of sealed deterrent devices, which is outlined in the Seal Management Framework.

For the 2024-25 year -

Ms JOHNSTON - Can I get the 2023-24 figures and then if you have updated 2024-25 because we're only just in the 2024-25 financial year.

Ms HOWLETT - For the 2023-24 financial year no specific circumstances aquaculture related relocations have taken place. No seals have been destroyed through the frameworks protocol for the humane destruction of seal application process. The marine farming industry has reported usage of the following deterrents against seals on marine farm leases: 3502 seal crackers; 172 bean bags; and zero seal scare caps. Two sedations have been undertaken to remove a fur seal from a fish containment pen and nine seal mortalities confirmed resulting from interactions with marine farming operations or infrastructure have been recorded.

So, this year so far, none have been recorded.

Ms JOHNSTON - But the figures you quoted before were 2023-24?

Ms HOWLETT - That's right.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you.

CHAIR - Any further questions? Mr Fairs.

Mr FAIRS - Thank you, Chair. This is a sector I'm very interested in as well; wine. Our 2024 wine vintage looks like being the best yet, which is fabulous news, but the industry does face challenges, we know that. What's the government doing through its 2030 Strong Plan to help sustain the Tasmanian wine sector and find new export markets to secure its future?

Ms HOWLETT - I'd like to thank the member for his question and I know he has a particular interest in this.

As we know we produce some of the world's finest quality wines from our cool climate. Not only do we support our growers and winemakers, but the sector also provides a massive boost for tourism across our state, including the activities of cellar doors or agritourism. The wine industry is a major element of the Tasmanian government's AgriVision 2050 target, which aims to increase our annual farm gate target to \$10 billion a year by 2050. The wine sector today in Tasmania has 185 licenced wine producers, 230 individual wine vineyards, 90 cellar

door outlets, and over 2400 hectares under vine. That's a wine industry which I'm proud of and we all should be proud of.

As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we've backed the wine industry and we're investing \$3 million into two areas to work with Wine Tasmania on priorities for them over the next three years. This includes to support the sector with its long-term sustainability as well as to expand the trade and export opportunities. Our funding will enable Wine Tasmania, and the sector, to build workforce skills and training development, as well as the launch of a new Tasmanian Wine Academy focused on customer facing staff. The sector will also focus on sustainability procedures to be adopted by wine businesses including carbon emission reduction activities and initiatives. It will build technical viticulture and winemaking support and resources. It will create a specialist cool-climate wine research hub to improve the long-term viability of the industry and secure its future. It will also include a partnership with collaborators such as the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture and international research partnerships. The department has started work already with Wine Tasmania getting these activities underway.

Chair, I finish by saying that it was only a couple of months ago in London that Ed Carr, chief winemaker of House of Arras, was named the IWC Sparkling Winemaker of the Year, and that was an international honour. We beat the French, and it is only the second time in the competition's 40-year history that the accolade has gone to a producer outside the region of Champagne, and the first ever in Australia. Recently, I attended the 2024 Australian Sparkling Wine Show, held here in Tasmania for the very first time, and the national award for the 2024 Best Wine in Show was awarded to Tasmania's House of Arras's Grand Vintage 2015.

Ms FINLAY - I track back to a question just asked by the member for Clark about tabling of that chart. Is it possible for that to be physically tabled?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, that's fine.

Ms FINLAY - Yes. I'm just clarifying the process; does it physically have to be tabled before we complete the committee? That is all. Otherwise we were not taking it on notice; it was an agreement to table it.

CHAIR - It is either tabled or it is taken on notice.

Ms HOWLETT - Ms Finlay, I will ask Rae Burrows to come to the table and we will table that document.

In response to a question from Ms Badger earlier, I am advised that there were three property protection permits issued for cormorants in 2023-24. Two were for the Tassal company. NRE Tasmania has recently returned information for one of these. For great cormorants, the quota was 50, and they shot 50. The second permit was then issued with a quota for 30, and no return has been received on this one to date.

Ms BURNET - No return? What does that mean?

Ms WILSON - It just means the take return has not yet been received by the agency.

Ms FINLAY - On the meat processing line of questioning, I know that in regional communities, it is complicated for small producers to get access to slaughter and processing, and I know that the skills and opportunity are something that we are losing in our regional communities, and the planning processes for that is also complicated.

I know that you are aware of concerns in the community around this, and I am wondering what work you are doing to facilitate the amendment of legislation to ensure that we can get on-farm, local and regional slaughter and processing of product. I am wondering what you are doing to progress that.

Ms HOWLETT - I have certainly had meetings, as I know you have as well, and that is something that the department and I are working with. I might ask Rae to come to the table and speak more to that question. But, yes, we certainly have been working with small producers.

I will provide that table to Ms Johnston and Ms Finlay, as well.

Ms FINLAY - Is that to the committee? It was submitted to be tabled to the committee?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes.

Ms BURROWS - Can you repeat that question, please, Ms Finlay?

Ms FINLAY - My question is more around small producers and their ability to access slaughter and processing. There is a desire to have some on-farm approvals for on-farm slaughtering and processing, so that you can have regional local product. I am just wondering what is being progressed in preparing amendments for legislation to ensure that is possible.

Ms BURROWS - As you are probably aware, there are a few very small processors that provide that service right now. One of the things that we are currently doing is to ensure that they too meet the animal welfare outcomes that the other larger ones are also required to do.

I believe there's been a suggestion previously that a mobile service might work. As you can probably appreciate, Ms Finlay, the food safety standards that need to be met to ensure the safe production of food are very high. If people are just doing service kills for their families, that's not quite so critical, but if they start having them in any commercial way whatsoever, they must meet the fairly high food standards and hence the mobile abattoirs can't meet that sort of requirement. But as I say, there are service kills. These very small abattoirs that are dotted around the state can also meet those requirements for animal welfare, not on farm, but the smaller numbers of animals going to those smaller processors.

Ms FINLAY - Thank you for the answer. Minister, I know that you've had meetings - have you put your mind to the requests from small producers where there is a willingness to have a conversation - obviously meeting the standards - and being able to have on-farm slaughtering and processing so that we can have wholesale or retail in local communities and the local brands in Tasmania with our beautiful produce.

I'm wondering if you're progressing any amendments to legislation in order that we can meet the food standards, waste standards and all of those things that go with it as well, but also deliver that service to regional local communities.

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Ms HOWLETT - As I started before, Ms Finlay, we're having those discussions and I'm having those discussions at a departmental level. Rae has said that there are some issues with food safety and they're issues that we are currently working through, and we will see how we can assist these smaller on-farm abattoirs to meet those standards. That's something that we're working through and if we can come to a conclusion, then we will certainly make legislative changes.

Ms FINLAY - Do you see that -

CHAIR - Sorry, Ms Finlay, I am noting the time. Do you have that document to table?

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, can I please table those documents. We are just getting it printed.

Ms FINLAY - You do have it because you read from it and you committed to tabling it.

Ms BURROWS - We're committed to tabling the information that was shared.

Ms FINLAY - No, that's not correct. The question was, could you table the document?

Ms HOWLETT - I will take that information on notice and provide it back to the committee.

CHAIR - With the last minute, I might just let Ms Burnet finish off.

Ms BURNET - Minister, we will go back to the health of the river. On the department's website, it says that four case studies on river health will be completed in 2024. Are you on track for that time line and will you commit to publicly releasing the results of these studies in full upon their completion?

Ms WILSON - As noted, that study is on our website and is one of the programs that is funded through the Rural Water Use Strategy. My understanding is, subject to my team and making sure there's nothing about not getting to certain sites because we need to make sure the information is robust, that we are aiming to do it within the project time line and that the information would be made available.

Ms BURNET - Thank you, in full.

CHAIR - The time being 11 a.m., the time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Racing. We will now take a short break. As time taken for breaks must be made up. I encourage members to be as quick as they can, so no more than 10 minutes. Thank you.

The Committee suspended from 10.59 a.m. to 11.10 a.m.

CHAIR - The time being 11.10 a.m., the scrutiny for the Racing portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table including names and positions for the benefit of Hansard.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you Chair; we commence. Can I table these documents please from the previous committee?

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms HOWLETT - At the table with me, to my right is Deirdre Wilson, Deputy Secretary, of Primary Industries and Water, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania, and to my left is Anita Yan, Deputy Chief Operations Officer of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Racing is three hours. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. I would like to thank you and members of the committee. I grew up around racing and it's always been part of my family life. That's why I know that it's a really important part of many regional Tasmanian communities. I love its animals and its people. I'm pleased to be here today to talk about racing, which generates more than \$208 million in economic activity for Tasmania annually and involves 6400 people across the state, directly or indirectly.

The Tasmanian government is a proud supporter of the Tasmanian racing community and the passionate Tasmanians who are part of it. I know that some members hold opposite views and I respectfully accept that, but the government wants to provide the Tasmanian racing industry with a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose model for regulation and integrity to strengthen all three codes of racing in Tasmania and to see them thrive. That's because we know how important it is to the families, communities, local jobs and businesses that it supports.

In recent weeks we have taken a big step forward in delivering our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future in racing. The passage of the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill 2024 and the Racing Regulation and Integrity Consequential Amendments Bill 2024 delivered an important part of our plan. The delivery of this reform will provide the Tasmanian racing industry with a modern, effective and fit-for-purpose model for regulation and integrity. It incorporates the recommendations from the independent Monteith Review for a best practice integrity model and reflects the feedback received from stakeholders and the community. This has been the result of two years of work to introduce the biggest reforms in decades for the Tasmanian racing industry. I thank my colleagues for supporting these improved reforms to deliver the key policy commitment.

Chair, at this point I want to recognise and thank members of both Houses who worked constructively with the government during the passage of the legislation. They provided important scrutiny and feedback and in a number of cases helped to improve the legislation through amendment. We now look forward to implementing this legislation so that we can continue to progress this work and help rebuild trust and restore faith in racing across all three codes and see them thrive. The 2024-25 Budget drives the delivery of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future by supporting measures to improve animal welfare, integrity and the overall wellbeing of the industry. It delivers funding for implementing the reforms across all three racing codes as we continue to support this industry.

The 2024-25 Budget delivers \$1.9 million to progress a new integrity model over the next two years. This funding will help establish the independent Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner to oversee the administration and regulation of the Tasmanian racing industry.

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The new model will also see a specific role for the RSPCA in the provision of animal welfare advice relating to racing. Importantly, the RSPCA will also retain its powers.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Chair. There is three minutes to provide answers, the minister's been going for three and a half minutes so far.

CHAIR - Do you have much more to, minister?

Ms HOWLETT - I have a fair bit of relevant information.

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, three minutes for the opening statement is what we've had at Estimates, that's the practice.

CHAIR - If the minister can wrap up and then we can move on to questions, please.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. Thank you, Chair, and thank you for the committee's indulgence. As I said, we have developed the biggest reforms in decades to the Tasmanian racing industry and I look forward to taking questions on that.

Mr WINTER - Thanks. Minister, the ABC released its report which outlined allegations of race fixing, animal welfare issues and team driving 18 months ago today. Today is 18 months exactly since the ABC produced that report. Since then, Ben Yole has moved his horses into his father's name, they're still trained at the same hellhole at Sidmouth as they were before. There's been no changes in terms of animal welfare regulations. The same drivers, Nathan and Mitch Ford, who were found to have participated in team driving, are still driving.

Minister, in terms of the Murrihy Review, in the scope of charges Mr Murrihy outlines that the terms of reference did not include laying necessary charges and that's why he didn't. Can you confirm that Mr Murrihy was asked to lay charges at the end or nearing the end of his work, but he refused to do so.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for his question. Our government released in full with no redactions, the final report from Mr Ray Murrihy. Importantly, the implementation of our response to the Murrihy Review is well underway. The secretary of NRE Tasmania is overseeing an implementation committee that reports directly to me and is progressing the findings in the Murrihy Report.

The second quarterly progress report was published in full on the NRE Tasmania website in June. The progress report also detailed that the chair of the independent stewards board has advised more time was required to consider evidence and to make a finding into every matter under investigation by that panel. The final report will be provided to me on 30 September. It's important that the work of the independent stewards panel can continue without any political interference and I won't comment any more on these matters.

What I will say is that I back the actions of Tasracing and that licensed participants with adverse findings following the investigation, should be held accountable. I note Tasracing and industry have also made changes to improve on-track competitiveness by implementing a revised Equality in Participation policy. This supports Mr Murrihy's advice that the greatest safeguard against adverse integrity matters is increased competition.

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The Greens and others have publicly called on me to respond; well, the government has responded with our election policy and our commitments delivered in our first 100 days and that's why we've set a new course to address the failures identified and which will ensure that accountability and transparency underpins our racing industry. This includes a new legislation that will provide the Tasmanian racing industry with a modern fit-for-purpose model.

Mr WINTER - Point of order, Chair. We've been going for two minutes.

CHAIR - I think the minister has just finished.

Mr WINTER - Just to remind the minister that the question is, was Mr Murrehy asked to lay charges at the end of his work and did he refuse?

Ms HOWLETT - As I stated before, Chair, this was an independent review, so I have no visibility of that.

Mr WINTER - No, the question, minister, was did NRE Tasmania or the Office of Racing Integrity ask Mr Murrehy to lay charges and if so, did he refuse?

Ms HOWLETT - Deputy Secretary, would you like to add any more? As I have stated, it was an independent review and I have no oversight of that review.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, the terms of reference to Mr Murrehy's review are on the department's website.

Mr WINTER - The question I asked was did NRE or the Office of Racing Integrity or the minister at the time ask Mr Murrehy to lay charges at the end of his work and did he refuse, citing the terms of reference? Perhaps you could take on a notice if you don't know the answer.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not taking that on notice, chair, as I have already provided my answer.

Mr WINTER - No, you haven't provided the answer to the to the question. This is really critical, minister, because at this point in time -

Ms HOWLETT - It is very critical and as I have stated, it's an independent review and I have no oversight; as you know, I have no oversight of that review.

Mr WINTER - The question is about the interaction between the department, NRE, and the person asked to do the independent review. The expectation from industry, from myself, was that Mr Murrehy would lay charges. He made findings against four participants. All four are still allowed to race in Tasmania. Two of them were driving on Sunday night. Minister, is it a fact that Mr Murrehy refused to lay charges after having been requested to do so by NRE Tasmania and all the minister's office?

Ms HOWLETT - I have answered your question and I have nothing further to add.

Mr WINTER - No, you have not. You can't just say you have answered it and not answer the question. It is a yes or no.

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CHAIR - Order.

Ms HOWLETT - I had no visibility over that and it was an independent review.

Mr WINTER - We know it is an independent review.

Ms HOWLETT - And you know that I have no oversight over that review.

Mr WINTER - The NRE did have oversight over the independent review; that is how it was commissioned.

CHAIR - Order, Mr Winter. There are interjections going both ways. I will let Mr Winter ask his questions without the minister interjecting, and then likewise if the minister can answer the questions, I will allow Mr Winter to follow up with supplementary questions and I will remind people I cannot direct the minister to respond to questions in any particular way. If members are not satisfied, they can ask further questions, as I am allowing, or they can raise it as a matter of concern in the report. One more additional question, and then we will go to Dr Woodruff.

Mr WINTER - Minister, do you accept that the failure to include laying necessary charges in the terms of reference was a massive oversight that has led to an additional almost 12 months of uncertainty and those participants continuing to participate in our industry despite those findings of animal welfare breaches, team driving and race fixing being made against them?

Ms HOWLETT - I have answered your question, Leader of the Opposition, and as I have stated -

Mr WINTER - No, you have not. That is a different question. How could you have answered it?

Ms HOWLETT - I look forward to 30 September when the independent stewards panel -

Mr WINTER - Is this how this is going to go all day? You are just not going to answer any questions?

Ms HOWLETT - Probably. We'll see.

Mr WINTER - 'Probably'? So, you are not going to answer any questions at all today?

CHAIR - Order.

Ms HOWLETT - I am waiting for the independent stewards panel review to be handed down on 30 September -

Mr WINTER - This is going to be a long three hours, minister.

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff.

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Ms HOWLETT - And I will not do anything to prejudice that -

Mr WINTER - I know you will not do anything, minister, we have seen that enough.

Ms HOWLETT - Oh, really

CHAIR - Order.

Ms HOWLETT - Withdraw that comment, please.

Mr WINTER - No. You are a witness here, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - I take deep offence to that.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, this report. A Few Bad Apples is being released today by Animal Liberation Tasmania. I can't table it, but I could hand you a copy if you would like to receive it. It is being released today and it is a very deep independent review of 19 properties in government data that has been compiled on deaths and injuries in the greyhound industry. It paints a terrible and accurate picture of what is happening in greyhound racing in Tasmania.

It quite clearly sets out some devastating statistics. Five per cent of the 750 dogs that have been raced in Tasmania in the last year alone have died on the track, and over 10 per cent of them have suffered serious injuries requiring more than a three-week stand-down period. Half of them have died aged three years or younger from injuries sustained on the track, and over half have died from injuries on the track or from trialling or at trainers' properties.

Minister, it is clearly not just 'a few bad apples' that are creating this intolerable situation for gentle greyhounds, is it? These are the facts of what is happening in greyhound racing in Tasmania. You should not need to get advice about this. It is clearly a systemic issue: 750 dogs, 5 per cent of them in this year alone have died, and 10 per cent of them have suffered serious on-track injuries. It is not just a few bad apples, is it?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. I respect that we have different opinions, and what I will say is: the majority of whether it be greyhound owners, thoroughbred owners, or harness owners and trainers do the right thing, and they look after their animals. The majority do the right thing. You just handed me this report that Animal Liberation Tasmania have commissioned. As I said, the majority of owners and trainers do the right thing in all three codes in the Tasmanian racing industry.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well minister, the facts speak for themselves. When you've got 748 dogs that have been racing this year, 5 per cent of them have died from on-track injury, 10 per cent of them have suffered serious track injuries, many more of them have suffered lower level track injuries. This is the reality of the industry: it's broken. Its daily operation and survival depends on cruelty and pain and suffering of incredibly gentle dogs and their premature deaths, not to mention the public funds that are required to prop it up.

How can you say that this is an industry of animal lovers? And how can you pretend that it's not systemic?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and thank you, Dr Woodruff. As I said, the majority of racing participants love their animals and any fatality, whether it be on-track or off-track, is heartbreaking for owners and trainers. I am absolutely committed to ensuring contemporary animal welfare outcomes are met by all three codes and to ensure full transparency regarding animal welfare. Tasracing is providing information in their annual report on equine and greyhound track injuries, euthanasia, retirement, and rehoming statistics. As confirmed by the leader of the Greens during the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill debate, all this information can be gathered from the Office of Racing Integrity and Tasracing's public disclosure. There's no hiding behind any information. It's transparent and it's available.

Our legislation will result in stronger animal welfare standards and increased transparency across the industry and I look forward to that being enacted very soon. I can table you any statistics or read them out to you as far as greyhound mortality notifications from the 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, if you would like.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, thank you. I've got them all and they're compiled in this report. I'll move to my question. This is available from public data, but what has never been available is the independent evidence that's provided through video footage of just the last year alone of the intolerable conditions that greyhounds are subjected to living in across Tasmania. These are 19 properties. This is not just one person. They all show conditions which are absolutely deplorable. And the question is, is the reality of the pain and suffering that is required for the greyhound racing industry to continue the reason that you didn't include the word humane in the racing act changes that went through in that legislation? Is that why you can't actually require that this industry is humane because if you did it would have to close down?

Ms HOWLETT - No, that is not the reason, and Dr Woodruff, can I thank you for your report.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's the report of Animal Liberation Tasmania, their independent work.

Ms HOWLETT - I can't read that report now, but I will take the time and consider and read the report that you have provided through Animal Liberation Tasmania.

Dr WOODRUFF - But, in answer to the question, is this reality the reason that you can't actually require this racing industry to be humane because if it was required to be so then it would not survive because it survives for profit on these horrible conditions that greyhounds are subjected to and their premature death.

Ms HOWLETT - Dr Woodruff, you've heard me say this many, many times: the Tasmanian government is absolutely committed to improving animal welfare outcomes in the racing industry across all three codes. I've said that so many times. Kennel and stable inspections are a key tool in ensuring animal welfare at training facilities are met. Contemporary standards and that these facilities -

Dr WOODRUFF – But they don't.

CHAIR – Order.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. These facilities are compliant with the rules of racing.

The Office of Racing Integrity conducts risk-based and targeted inspections of licensed racing premises, ensuring that racing animals are properly cared for and licensed participants are complying with animal welfare legislation and the rules of racing. In the 2023-24 financial year, stewards from the Office of Racing Integrity conducted 437 inspections of licensed training facilities compared to 392 in the 2022-23 financial year. Under the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill 2024, inspections will continue under the new integrity model.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, I appreciate you haven't had the opportunity to read Animal Liberation Tasmania's report, A Few Bad Apples, but as Dr Woodruff has outlined, it is a disturbing report talking about serious animal welfare concerns in the greyhound racing industry.

You just outlined that you have mortality statistics. I can indicate to you that those statistics are only a small portion of what Animal Liberation Tasmania has been able to provide with their calculations, as they're looking at the greyhound racing industry more broadly than Tasracing does.

Minister, do you consider and accept that the act of greyhound racing is inherently dangerous and risky for greyhounds?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. Stewards have the power to inspect, search premises, examine any horse or greyhound on the property, and seize anything considered necessary. All new training licence applications must have a satisfactory inspection of their training facility conducted by the stewards before being granted a licence.

Inspections of training facilities include a review of registered animals present, focusing on animal welfare; treatment areas and treatment logbooks; stables, yards, kennels and runs for animal safety and suitability for purpose; fencing; feed rooms; water reticulation and air circulation; general facilities; cleanliness and suitability for purpose; and, when needed, the Office of Racing Integrity works collaboratively with local government authorities, Fire Security Tasmania and the RSPCA in ensuring that the regulatory regimen is stringent and relevant intelligence is shared.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, that wasn't my question. My question was, do you accept that the act of greyhound racing is inherently risky and dangerous to the welfare of greyhounds.

Now, as Dr Woodruff has indicated, the report before you says that 5 per cent of all greyhounds raced in Tasmania in the prior season are now listed as deceased, 50 per cent of those deaths are related to injuries sustained on track, on private straight tracks and at trials. They have died because of racing.

Do you accept that the act of racing a greyhound poses a risk to greyhounds' welfare?

Ms HOWLETT - As I've said, Ms Johnston, previously and many times, and you've heard me say this, I believe that whether it be greyhound, thoroughbred or the harness industry, the animals are loved very much by the trainers and owners, and the majority of them are looked after incredibly well.

Ms JOHNSTON - That's not an answer to my question. I asked about the 'risk' of racing, not whether they're kept in conditions, but the 'risk' of racing. Do you accept that there is a risk when they race that they will be injured or killed?

Ms HOWLETT - I don't believe I'm going to answer that question.

Ms JOHNSTON - Are you denying the fatalities on track?

Ms HOWLETT - The statistics are there across all three codes, Ms Johnston, regardless of whether it's greyhound, thoroughbred or harness -

Dr WOODRUFF - And of deaths and injuries, that's right.

Ms HOWLETT - That's right.

Ms JOHNSTON - There is a risk.

Ms HOWLETT - All three codes. I'm not sure why you are just focusing in on the greyhound code.

Ms JOHNSTON - Would you consider that a risk?

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - Let's just start with greyhounds.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm sure you will. I am sure that will occur, Dr Woodruff.

Members interjecting.

Ms HOWLETT - Would you like to add anything?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr FAIRS - Thank you, Chair. Minister, can you please provide an update on the government's response to the recommendations of the Murrihy report?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you for the question. I recognise there is considerable and understandable interest in these matters both here in parliament and in the Tasmanian community more broadly. Our government released in full, with no redactions, the final report from Mr Ray Murrihy. Importantly, the implementation of our response to the Murrihy review is well underway. The secretary of NRE is overseeing an implementation committee that reports directly to me and is progressing the findings of the Murrihy report.

The second quarterly progress report was published in full on NRE's Tasmanian website in June. The progress report also detailed that the chair of the independent steward's panel has advised more time is required to consider evidence and to make a finding into every matter under investigation by that panel. The final report of the independent steward's panel will be provided to me on 30 September. This final report will coincide with the next progress report

on NRE's Tasmanian website with an update on all recommendations. As I've said before, Chair, it's important that the work of the independent steward's panel can continue without any political interference and I won't comment any more on these matters.

Key progress highlights against recommendations to date include a draft equine code of practice. Tasracing and the Office of Racing Integrity have collaborated to produce a draft equine code of practice, which is being considered by the industry. A process to report animal welfare concerns in relation to racing has been developed using the report at rspcatas.org.au portal and Tasracing's Off the Track program will be expanded with the engagement in July 2024 of a consultant formally responsible for setting up Racing Victoria's Off the Track program and amended equity in to participation policy as well.

Professional development of steward's has been progressed with engagement of a highly experienced international steward as a mentor for a period of time, facilitating cadet stewards to work with racing regulators in other states, and through development of a manual of a steward's procedure.

My very clear expectation is that industry will support this new direction with the leadership and commitment required to ensure harness racing, greyhound racing and thoroughbred racing thrive in Tasmania. I understand and appreciate the significant interest in these matters and I'm looking forward to the report of the independent stewards' panel being released on the 30 September, which is very soon.

Mr WINTER - Spot on, three minutes. Well done to the advisors for getting that perfectly spot on to waste the time. Minister, you just said that the Murrhiy review is well underway, which means it is laughable. We still have the same participants participating in this industry who were 18 months ago when these allegations were publicised. It is laughable. Minister, one of those participants is Nathan Ford. Are you friends with Nathan Ford?

Ms HOWLETT - It's Tasmania, Leader of the Opposition, I know lots of people. What do you define as a friend? A friend on Facebook, a friend if you see them at the races, or a friend that you have coffee or dinner with? No, I certainly don't have coffee or dinner with Mr Ford. If I see Mr Ford at the races, I say hello to many people at the races and I think I have 5000 friends on my Facebook and I can tell you now, I don't know the majority of them.

Mr WINTER - On 12 February you posted a message on Mr Ford's Facebook page wishing him happy birthday. That was two weeks after the findings of the Murrhiy review were publicised. How have you gone about dealing with the conflict of interest that you might have given your personal relationship with Mr Ford and you're having to deal with these matters?

Ms HOWLETT - I certainly don't have a personal relationship with Mr Ford, Leader of the Opposition.

Mr WINTER - You just alluded to having some kind of friendship with him.

Ms HOWLETT - I did not allude to having some kind of friendship with him at all.

Mr WINTER - Right.

Ms HOWLETT - I alluded, I say hello to many people at the races, Leader -

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - That's the Facebook post. Do you do that to everybody?

Ms HOWLETT - I actually do to everybody. When I wake up - you can go through my Facebook and I say happy birthday to everyone that comes up on my -

Mrs PENTLAND - I do that too.

Ms HOWLETT - Yes, you do it too. It's just a habit -

Mr WINTER - Have you sought to declare any form of conflict of interest around that or any other relationships that you've got within the racing industry in relation to dealing with these four people named in the Murrihy review?

Ms HOWLETT - I don't have a personal or friendship with any of those people listed in the review.

Mr WINTER - Minister, did you have a conversation with Wayne Yole at Elwick this year at any point in time?

Ms HOWLETT - I have conversations with many people. As you know - I'm not quite sure what this has got to do with the Budget, but Chair -

Mr WINTER - So you did have a conversation with Mr Yole?

Ms HOWLETT - I don't - this is about the Budget -

Mr WINTER - Are you being coached by the deputy secretary here? This is highly unusual.

Ms HOWLETT - and my family's involvement in racing is a matter on public record, Mr Winter. I have no direct interest in the racing industry. I'm not a direct beneficiary, financial or otherwise.

Mr WINTER - Did you ask Mr Yole how Ben was?

CHAIR - This is the last, and then we'll move on to Dr Woodruff.

Ms HOWLETT - I provided you with an answer.

Mr WINTER - For the record, the minister's being coached by the advisor behind giving the words for her to say. Also, that the deputy secretary's been providing some coaching and advice.

Minister, did you say to Wayne Yole that if Ben had anything he needed that he should give you a call?

Ms HOWLETT - I wouldn't think so.

PUBLIC

Mr WINTER - Is that a yes or no? Unless they were there, minister, it's really a question for you.

Ms JOHNSTON - A pretty straightforward question.

Mr WINTER - You are like Madeleine Ogilvie asking whether she'd been to the races.

Ms HOWLETT - I've answered your question.

Mr WINTER - No, you haven't. It's a yes or no answer.

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I've answered the question.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, back to the the terrible reality of the conditions that greyhounds that are involved in the racing industry in Tasmania suffer everyday, the injuries that this report compiles - and as you said before, this is all government data but it's never been collected together in a place that is so clear - it shows the the horrible scale of cruelty that occurs on a regular basis.

At almost every race there is a dog injured at the track. In fact, it would be exceptional if it didn't happen. Some of the figures over just this last year - one year in the greyhound racing industry in Tasmania - in one quarter, 71 dogs were injured, 63 were injured and eight were seriously injured and had to be stood down for a period of three weeks or more. In the previous quarter, 88 injuries, with 77 so-called minor injuries, and 11 are so serious that they had to be stood down for three weeks. We know from the evidence of this report that greyhounds that suffer injuries at the track go on and can subsequently die from those injuries because it can take weeks for their death to occur.

Minister, this is the reality of the greyhound racing industry in Tasmania. Do you accept that it has cruelty baked into the heart of it?

CHAIR - Before the minister answers that question, I know that there's been requests for me to rein in the length the minister's taking to answer some of the questions. That question took a minute and a half and there's been quite a few that have gone over a minute. I'm happy to keep the timings of answers, but that'll include keeping the timings of the questions too. I'll just make that point.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and that's why our new legislation will provide the Tasmanian racing industry with a modern, effective, and fit for purpose model for regulation integrity, including improvement to animal welfare outcomes.

The government and Tasracing now invest more than \$1 million to support animal welfare every year. I want to ensure that dogs are treated with dignity and care before, during and after their racing days, and I welcome the shared interest from the Leader of the Greens, Dr Woodruff, and also the independent member for Clarke on this.

To ensure full transparency regarding animal welfare, Tasracing is providing information in the annual report on equine greyhound track injuries, euthanasia, retirement, and rehoming statistics. As confirmed by the Leader of the Greens during the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill 2024, information can be gathered by the Office of Racing Integrity and Tasracing public

disclosures. I've stated before, there's no hiding of any information. It's transparent and it is available.

That is why the government provided \$200,000 in grant money last year to RSPCA towards several animal welfare initiatives, including for the RSPCA to analyse lifetime traceability options for greyhounds as well as adoption processes and linkages to local government. I am advised that options for electronic lifetime tracking of greyhounds similar to a system utilised by the New South Wales Greyhound Welfare Integrity Commission are actively being considered. We have announced additional funding for the RSPCA to access an investigation management system for their animal welfare officers. This system will align with those existing in our agencies and will ensure more consistency in information management.

I'm advised that the RSPCA and ORI will provide their recommendations for lifetime traceability options for greyhounds and adoption processes to me, as the Minister for Racing, in the coming months. This includes a new traceability option for noseprint technology that the Office of Racing Integrity is exploring. I look forward to receiving their report and recommendations, and working with the RSPCA and industry on their implementation.

Improvements in traceability relating to rehoming are important in building transparency and trust. As Racing minister, that's my priority. I want to rebuild trust and restore faith in the industry. We are getting on with the job. I look forward to the new legislation being enacted very soon.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, what we've got is 5 per cent of the greyhounds that started racing over the last year are now deceased and 10 per cent of them have suffered serious injuries. According to your own data we've had something in the order of 300 that have suffered injuries of some type. This is out of 748 greyhounds. Do you accept that there is inherent risk for dogs racing in the greyhound industry?

Ms HOWLETT - Deceased, accidental causes, were a total of seven; deceased, illness or age, were a total of seven; deceased, natural causes, were six; deceased within 14 days after track injury were one, deceased, injury, was one; euthanised at track due to -

Dr WOODRUFF - Chair, point of order, standing order 45. It's not the question I asked.

Ms HOWLETT - This is important information.

Dr WOODRUFF - I've just quoted the statistics to the minister about the number of deaths and injuries.

CHAIR - I can't direct the minister to answer a question in a particular way. I'll draw the minister to the question, but I'll allow you to ask additional questions and follow a line of questioning, if you can please let the minister answer in silence.

Ms HOWLETT - Deceased, injury, one; euthanised at track due to injury, two; euthanised within 14 days after track injury, four; euthanised due to illness or age, 22; euthanised due to injury, 14, euthanised due to not suitable for racing, zero; euthanised due to not suitable for rehoming, two. The number deceased is 66 from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.

Dr WOODRUFF - And?

Ms HOWLETT - I've read you the stats I have.

Dr WOODRUFF - My question remains. You haven't answered that yet. I've been waiting patiently.

Ms HOWLETT - I just read you my stats. I have not had the time, as you would be well aware, to read the report you have presented to me. I will do so in due course.

Dr WOODRUFF - You still have not answered my question, minister. The question was: there are, by your government's information - and you've got some of it that you've just read out, 5 per cent of all the dogs that have raced in the last year have died as a result of track injuries. There is another 10 per cent that have suffered serious injuries. Do you accept that there is an inherent risk to dogs racing in the greyhound industry, including all the information you've just read out? Or do you think that that's an anomaly, that this year is somehow different to every other year for the greyhounds in this industry?

Ms HOWLETT - Dr Woodruff, as I said, euthanised at track due to injury were two and euthanised within 14 days after track injury were four.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is deliberately not listening to the question and answering it. I'm slightly embarrassed on your behalf. Will you please answer the question?

Ms HOWLETT - I've answered your question.

Dr WOODRUFF - You think there's no risk?

Ms HOWLETT - I've answered your question. Dr Woodruff. Chair, I've answered the question.

CHAIR - Last question and then we go to Mrs Pentland.

Dr WOODRUFF - On the racing legislation that's been through, can you describe to me the current situation about who undertakes inspections for greyhounds at properties, how they're housed? As it stands, it is ORI that undertakes the inspections.

Ms HOWLETT - Announced and unannounced.

Dr WOODRUFF - ORI is being axed and replaced with the Animal Racing and Welfare Commissioner, if I remember correctly. This is moving to a sort of self-regulation where stewards who are employed by Tasracing will do the welfare checks on track. Who is doing the property checks under the new legislation?

Ms WILSON - The bill that was passed moves the stewards into the Tasracing integrity unit, which is headed by Tasracing chief racing integrity officer. That group is set up to report to a board, which has two independent officers. The most important thing I would like to say is that the Tasracing integrity commissioner will be setting animal welfare standards. Under the bill they will set standards for numbers of inspections and they can undertake an audit function.

PUBLIC

Dr WOODRUFF - Who will do the inspections of properties?

Ms WILSON - It will continue to be stewards but I would also note that if there's -

Dr WOODRUFF - They will inspect trainers' properties and owners' properties?

Ms WILSON - As they do now.

Dr WOODRUFF - So, the industry will self-regulate itself when it comes to animal welfare conditions?

Ms WILSON - I will go to the facts around the bill, rather than any commentary. The bill sets up a Tasmanian racing integrity commissioner who can set standards and can audit. In terms of the regime, it has important checks and balances.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, in 2021-22, 4078 swabs were taken and the positive detection rate was 0.34 per cent. By 2022-23 this had reduced to 3829 swabs with a lower positive detection rate of 0.23. In 2023-24 the number of swabs decreased again to 3519, yet the positive detection rate significantly increased to 0.74. Given this clear rise in positive detections, what is the rationale behind reducing the number of swabs over this year? Does the department believe fewer tests are adequate to ensure the integrity of the racing industry, especially when there is a rising trend in positive results? Shouldn't more swabs be conducted to address this concern?

Ms HOWLETT - Detection of prohibited substances which may alter the performance of animals or their handlers is an important component of ensuring integrity in racing. The Office of Racing Integrity (ORI) stewards conduct random and targeted sampling for detection of prohibited substances during race meets, trials and also on their property inspections. The Office of Racing Integrity annually invests around \$602,000 in testing for prohibited substances, which is undertaken accordingly to nationally accredited protocols including sample-handling procedures which ensure maintenance of chain of custody, and the use of NATA accredited laboratory methods. Under the rules of the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill 2023, stewards will continue to enforce the rules of racing through the Tasracing Integrity Unit.

Deputy secretary, would you like to speak more on the swabs?

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, we do report on the number of swabs taken. In 2021-22 there were 39 human - I'm assuming that's where you're going?

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes, it was the outputs.

Ms WILSON - In 2022-23 it was 95; 2023-24 was 67. You can see that there is a trend to undertake those swabs and they're still undertaken as required.

Mrs PENTLAND - But even though there's an increase in positive swabs, the number of swabs decreased by 500 over 4000.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, I'm just going to check this year's figures because I think I've got some -

Mrs PENTLAND - They're outlined in the budget papers, if you -

Ms WILSON - I appreciate what you are saying. I'm just checking to see.

From the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, 3519 racing animals and humans were tested for prohibited substances.

Mrs PENTLAND - That's correct, and in 2021-22 there were 4078, but then the positive detection rate was 0.34. Then, in 2023-24, the positive detection rate was 0.74. Obviously, there is a higher positive detection rate, yet we're conducting less swabs, a lot less swabs.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, the figures in terms of the actuals for 2021-22 to 2022-23 have changed, but it's still very high numbers of swabs taken by stewards at 3519. The fact that there is a higher positive test result means that the stewards are finding and are able to take action. Obviously, what would happen is once you start to see these kinds of numbers, the Director of Racing and stewards could do a review to determine if they need to increase swabbing or whether they take a more risk-based approach.

Mrs PENTLAND - Do you have a break -

Dr WOODRUFF - There's only two questions, only one question.

CHAIR - As I said earlier, if you ask a number of questions, I am keeping track of them.

Mrs PENTLAND - That was the one question really, I just wanted -

Dr WOODRUFF - You get one question.

Mrs PENTLAND - Just to follow up, if we could get a breakdown -

Dr WOODRUFF - No, actually Miss Johnston asked a question -

CHAIR - That's the second question -

Dr WOODRUFF - and Mrs Pentland asked a question and there's two questions to the independents and the JLN at the Chair's discretion but not more. It has already been two.

CHAIR - What I've been doing every single time around is a ratio - not number of - a ratio of three to Labor, two to the Greens, two to the Independents and I've been interchanging between each Independent - the Independents as a whole. Ms Johnston went on the last rotation, Mrs Pentland's on this rotation. I'm allowing her a line of questioning as well according to the ratio. Then it'll be Mr Fairs and I'm keeping a record of that. You asked more than two questions as well, which is fine. I'm allowing Mrs Pentland a line of questioning. This will be your last question and then we'll go to Mr Fairs.

Dr WOODRUFF - I just wanted to clarify, thank you, Chair, you're doing a good job.

CHAIR - I appreciate that.

Dr WOODRUFF - It is the difference between an interjection and back and forth on the same question that's asked, as opposed to a second completely different line of questions, that's the point I'm making.

CHAIR - Okay, look, I'll -

Mrs PENTLAND - This is in reference to the same question.

CHAIR - This is why the interjections make it difficult for Hansard, it makes it more difficult for me as the Chair. If we can keep the interjections to a minimum. I'm allowing people to ask follow-up questions to pursue a line of questioning. If we can keep the interjections to a minimum it'll make it a lot easier for the proceedings of today to continue.

Mrs Pentland, you have one more question and then we'll go to Mr Fairs.

Mrs PENTLAND - I wanted to see if it was possible to have a breakdown of the positive swab detections - what code of racing they belong to, whether they're the greyhounds or the trots or the horseracing, if that was possible.

Ms HOWLETT - As far as drug testing in the harness sector, we had 1748; greyhound we had 612; thoroughbred we had 1092; and human testing was 67. The total tests conducted were 3519. I note that we had a target of 3500, so we exceeded our target with swabbing.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, in your opening statement you talked about the positive economic impact of the industry. Could you expand a bit more on that, please, and also how the industry is supporting regional communities and job creation?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair. I thank the member for his question and recognise his interest in supporting the longevity and sustainability of an industry that generates close to \$208 million in economic activity for Tasmania, and which involves more than 6400 people across the state. The industry is critical for the state, generating economic activity, importantly, in our rural and regional communities.

On 23 August the Size and Scope report produced by IER, and based on consistent methodology, provided data that in 2021-22 the Tasmanian racing industry generated total direct spending of \$189.6 million. This expenditure was responsible for creating a direct value-add impact in terms of wages, salaries and profits of \$111.3 million. The flow-on effects linked to this expenditure increase the size of the industry's value-added contribution to \$207.5 million. Around 40.3 per cent of the total value-added impact occurred in regional areas of Tasmania, whilst 39.6 per cent occurred in Hobart, and 20.1 per cent in Launceston.

The economic output generated by the Tasmanian racing industry was directly responsible for sustaining 993 full-time FTE jobs across the state. When flow-on employment impacts are considered, the total FTE impacted generated by the Tasmanian racing industry rose to 1735 jobs. This total represents the employment sustained within the industry, as well as the employment that is sustained in supply industries who meet the demand created by racing industry activity.

In 2021-22, close to 110,400 attendances were recorded at thoroughbred, harness and greyhound race meetings in Tasmania. More than 77 per cent of these attendances were made

at Metro racecourses in Launceston 43.8 per cent, and Hobart 33.4 per cent, with the remaining 22.7 per cent occurring in regional Tasmania. In total, there are over 6400 individuals who participate in the Tasmanian racing industry. Many of these people enjoy gainful employment of their specific skill set, particularly in the breeding, training and racing-related disciplines.

The industry is supported by close to 1100 people who volunteer their time and resources. For many of these people, local racing clubs are an important part of their community and provide valuable opportunities to stay active and engage with people from all walks of life.

Owners race for close to \$29 million in prize money and bonuses that are on offer across the three codes.

Mr WINTER - Minister do you deny telling Wayne Yole to tell Ben Yole to give you a call if he needed anything?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I have lots of conversations with people across many meets, whether it be harness, greyhound, thoroughbred. I attend the races regularly, as do you, and I'm sure you have many conversations as well.

Mr WINTER - Not with people who have been warned off the racetrack, minister, I don't. Have you had any conversations with Ben, Tim or Catherine Yole since you returned as Racing minister?

Ms HOWLETT - I have many conversations with many people across all three codes, and I've answered that question before, Chair.

Mr WINTER - Specifically, the question was, have you had any conversations with Ben, Tim or Catherine Yole since you returned as Racing minister?

Ms HOWLETT - I talk to lots of people across all three codes in the racing industry and so do you, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - I don't have conversations with people who've been warned off racetracks and been found to have belted animals, to have race-fixed. Are you defending them now? Is that your role?

Ms HOWLETT - I am not defending anyone?

Mr WINTER - By not saying whether you've spoken to Ben, Tim or Catherine Yole, it leads me to believe that you probably have. If you hadn't, you would just say you haven't. What was the nature of those conversations?

Ms HOWLETT - I speak to many people across the industry, across all three codes.

Mr WINTER - Is it that you can't recall, or is it that you're just not saying?

Ms HOWLETT - As I said, Mr Winter, as do you, you speak to many people across the industry, whether it be at industry nights or race meets, or at the track.

Mr WINTER - This is really concerning, minister, that you are refusing to say whether you've had conversations with these people. There have been serious findings made against Ben and Tim Yole in relation to the abuse of a horse in a wash bay. There have been serious findings against Mitch and Nathan Ford in relation to having team-driven in order to fix races. These have been findings made by an independent review, and yet you're refusing to say whether or not you've had conversations with them. Have you felt the need, at any point, to declare a conflict of interest in relation to the conversations you're having with these disgraced racing personalities?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, let me be very clear. The opposition understands and knows the process here. Let me be clear, what he's doing now is nothing but political opportunism, and it is nothing but rank. He chooses rank political opportunism in perpetuating misleading reports about racing licencing, because he's being nothing but a rank political opportunist, Chair.

Ms BUTLER - You're reading that, minister. Excuse my interjection.

CHAIR - Order. Can the minister finish her answer? I'll let Mr Winter continue a line of questioning. It might be easier if the minister isn't inciting interjections with her comments, but I will ask that the minister be heard in silence and then I'll ask Mr Winter if he has a follow-up question.

Ms HOWLETT - I've answered Mr Winter's question.

Mr WINTER - Minister, how can the industry have confidence - an industry which has led the change around the reforms to racing, about getting Ben Yole out of the industry. How can they have confidence in you if you're refusing to say whether or not you've had conversations with him or other family members since you became Racing minister again?

Ms HOWLETT - Thanks, Chair, and I thank the member for his interest in this. This is an independent review. The review will be handed down on 30 September and, like many people in the racing industry, I am very much looking forward to seeing the independent stewards report on 30 September.

What you are doing is interfering politically, and it's nothing-

Mr WINTER - It's quite a serious allegation to make, that I'm interfering. I'm not interfering. I'm asking you a question. I'll keep going with a line of questioning, if that's okay with you, Chair?

CHAIR - Last question and then we will go to Dr Woodruff.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the Murrihy review clearly demonstrates a regulator that has serious issues relating to complaints handling, lack of policies and procedures, a lack of leadership, accountability and transparency. Does the fact that you and your government have had to bring in an independent stewards panel to undertake this investigation, rather than ORI's own stewards, demonstrate that you have no confidence in the Office of Racing Integrity and its stewards?

Ms HOWLETT - I think that question is irrelevant now, with the new legislation.

Mr WINTER - It's about your independent inquiry, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - This is about to occur, and the independent stewards review, as I've stated, and I'll state it again, I look forward to the handing down of the report on 30 September.

Mr WINTER - Do you have confidence in the Office of Racing Integrity?

Ms HOWLETT - I think that question is completely irrelevant now. We've changed the legislation.

Mr WINTER - It's still operating today, minister, it's not irrelevant. They're still conducting race meetings. They are still overseeing race meetings. It's not irrelevant. It's happening. Nothing's changed.

Ms HOWLETT - We have made the biggest legislative reforms in decades towards the Tasmanian racing industry.

Dr WOODRUFF - And they're not in place.

Ms HOWLETT - We are doing everything possibly that we can to make sure they are in place as soon as practicable.

Mr WINTER - Unless it disadvantages the Yoles.

CHAIR - Mr Winter, let the minister answer.

Ms HOWLETT - I confirm we are recruiting for the commissioner. We are interviewing next week. We have identified three people and as soon as we can appoint someone we certainly will and make these significant reforms.

Mr WINTER - The question was, do you have confidence in the Office of Racing Integrity?

CHAIR - Mr Winter, I will give the call to Dr Woodruff. We'll get back around to you, Mr Winter.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, currently the Greyhound Local Rules of Racing have it that the Director of Racing, the head of the integrity body ORI, signs off on killing dogs, so-called euthanising. The Greyhound Adoption Program or the head of Tasracing has to apply to ORI to have a greyhound killed. That is the current situation. The new act, which you've talked about a number of times, has, as I understand, responsibility for this decision moving to Tasracing. Can you clarify if that's the case?

Ms WILSON - TasRIC will set the animal welfare standards, which can go to matters, and would go to matters, such as euthanasia. We don't have the system in place, but there will be an integrity unit and a chief racing integrity officer, and there will be appropriate controls in place around the matter you've raised.

Dr WOODRUFF - Our concern is that, fundamentally, this moves it from a separate integrity body into a regulation within the Tasracing body, which is the racing industry body. We are concerned that it puts the extra pressure to fast-track the killing of dogs because we know from leaked documents from the Greyhound Adoption Program that Tasracing has been in a process of reassessing their so-called throughput policy which includes the possibility of killing more dogs. This was something from March 2023.

Under the new act, Tasracing will now have the power to kill dogs. We know that there is great pressure for them to do this because the list for greyhounds to access the GAP is so long. When trainers can't get their dogs into GAP because of the long waiting list, they're responsible for keeping that animal, protecting it and feeding it. Minister, we are deeply concerned that this will add more pressure from an industry-run body to fast-track the killing of dogs instead of rehoming them because we simply have so many greyhounds.

CHAIR - Noting it was the Greens who were originally asking me to pull the minister up on answer times, that was a minute-and-a-half question. I haven't actually heard a question yet.

Dr WOODRUFF - The question is: can you see the concern that this is going to have with the pressure to kill more dogs?

Ms HOWLETT - When it comes to processes for and influences on any rules of racing, the bill provides for the commissioner's oversight and influence. The commissioner will review, endorse or refuse to endorse an annual integrity and animal welfare plan, including budgets, from Tasracing. I note that a lot of your questions were in relation to the GAP facility and Tasracing, and we'll have that opportunity in GBE scrutiny in December. A DA has been submitted to Southern Midlands Council to increase the greyhound adoption facility to allow for more greyhounds to be adopted through that facility.

Dr WOODRUFF - Reading from the GAP Throughput Working Group in March 2023, Tasracing said it recognised the importance of GAP operating 'effectively and achieving a desired volume of adoptions consistently', and that there is 'a strong feeling of frustration from greyhound participants towards GAP'. Then they went on to say that:

GAP will adjust to function in alignment with the following key principles. One of them is difficult end-of-life decisions will need to be made. It is recognised a small number of greyhounds will not be suitable for rehoming via GAP and in some cases euthanasia will be an appropriate step.

We now have Tasracing responsible for making this decision instead of the Office of Racing Integrity, the killing of greyhounds. Don't you agree that this increases the risk from industry pressure for more dogs to be killed?

Ms HOWLETT - As I explained to Dr Woodruff earlier, that is a matter for the scrutiny of Tasracing in December.

Dr WOODRUFF - You are the minister.

Ms HOWLETT - We have a very strong focus on animal welfare and we're investing more money on animal welfare than ever before. As I mentioned, there is a DA currently at the

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Southern Midlands Council to increase the GAP facilities there. Would you like to add any more?

Dr WOODRUFF - I'll ask a follow-up question to you, minister. You're the one who set up the legislation, so this is not about kicking it off to Tasracing to answer. You've set up the legislation that moves that decision for when dogs are euthanased from ORI, the separate integrity body, into an industry body, Tasracing, to make that decision. That increases the risk of greyhounds being killed because of the huge pressure from the industry itself for this to happen for more dogs to move through fast. Don't you agree?

CHAIR - It's the last and then we'll go to Ms Johnston.

Ms HOWLETT - Would you like to speak about the Chief Veterinary Officer?

Dr WOODRUFF - It's to you, minister; I'm interested in your views about this.

Ms HOWLETT - I will defer that question to the deputy secretary to talk about the Chief Racing Veterinary Officer, Dr Martin Lenz, who plays a vital role.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's not about that, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - It is about that, actually. He plays a vital role.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's about your legislation.

Ms HOWLETT - Also the Tasracing Integrity Unit as well as the appointment of the Tasracing Integrity Commissioner.

Dr WOODRUFF - All under the industry body, Tasracing.

Ms HOWLETT - That's not true. The Tasracing Integrity Commissioner is not under Tasracing.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's within it.

Ms HOWLETT - No, it's not within it.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms WILSON - Just so everyone's clear and I think most would remember from the debate, there's a Tasracing Integrity Commissioner, which is outside of Tasracing and within Tasracing is the Chief Racing Integrity Officer, the CRIO. On the legislation and the checks and balances that are put in place, as the minister has identified, there will be a requirement to develop an annual integrity and animal welfare plan, which is submitted to the TasRIC. There were some changes made to the bill based on the debate so that if there's an investigation, that would be tabled.

I consider the bill to be robust, but controls will be put in place. It would be the integrity in animal welfare plan. It's the audits that TasRIC can do. It's the investigations that the TasRIC

can also undertake and the reporting that is required. There's an annual report required from TasRIC.

I'd also add that we that there's still the role for the independent RSPCA in animal welfare matters and also for Biosecurity Tasmania if there needs to be an animal welfare investigation.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, it is my understanding that to attain a trainer's licence, whether it's initial application or renewal, there is a requirement that the person is a fit and proper person. Minister, do you consider Ben Yole a fit and proper person given that you have a deep understanding of the matters raised in the Murrihy Report and information that's been provided to you as minister? Is Ben Yole a fit and proper person, in your view?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not going to make my personal opinions known on an investigation that is current and due to be handed down on 30 September.

Ms JOHNSTON - No, I'm not asking about the investigation.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not going to jeopardise that. Licensing and registration of animals and participants is a key tool to supporting racing integrity. It ensures all animals can be traced and their identity determined. Licensing of personnel ensures that they can be held to account for their actions against the rules of racing and associated legislation.

The director of racing, supported by a licensing and registration officer, has a statutory responsibility to make determinations regarding registrations for racing animals and licences for people to conduct activities under the rules of racing.

Under the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill, the Tasracing integrity unit, under the directions of the chief racing integrity officer, will be responsible for approving registrations and granting licences under the rules of racing.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, I did not ask what ORI considers but what you consider. I'm confident that most members of the community can make an assessment on what a fit and proper person is. You haven't given a view, but can you express a view whether you think, given all the information you know about Ben Yole, he is a fit and proper person. Would you consider him a fit and proper person?

Ms HOWLETT - There is an active investigation going on and I am not going to express my opinion. I do not want to jeopardise an investigation that is going to be complete and handed to me on 30 September.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, you're clearly not going to answer that question. Perhaps, you might answer this one. Do you consider that the actions of Ben Yole have brought the industry into disrepute?

Ms HOWLETT - There is no doubt that the industry has taken a hit over the last couple of years. There's absolutely no doubt at all. That's why we have put through the biggest legislative reforms in decades through both Houses of parliament and we are recruiting for our Tasracing integrity commissioner position. It's my job as minister to rebuild trust and faith, and integrity in the industry. That's what I'm here to do and that's what I will do.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, I don't want to put words into your mouth, but it sounds to me as if you've just answered, yes; you believe that the actions of Ben Yole have brought the industry into disrepute. These are the actions around the Murrihy investigation into race fixing and animal welfare concerns. Does that not indicate to you that he has brought the industry into disrepute from those actions and that he is not a fit and proper person to hold a trainer's licence?

Ms HOWLETT - I am not commenting on any names or individuals. I'm not going to do anything to jeopardise this independent stewards' report.

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm not asking you to jeopardise the report. I'm asking for your view on the fit and proper person test for the issuing or renewal of a licence. If you can't answer it because you're saying it's an investigation, will you commit to immediately releasing the independent stewards' report when you receive it on 30 September? Or will you sit on it like your predecessor did for some months on the Murrihy report?

Ms HOWLETT - I will receive that report on 30 September. I believe that's a Friday. We will have time to consider the report over the weekend and I would imagine we would release it as soon as practicable.

Ms JOHNSTON - Have you seen a draft?

Ms JOHNSTON - No, I haven't seen a draft, absolutely not.

Mr FAIRS - Animal welfare has been well and truly discussed today. We are improving it, and I know we are moving in the right direction, which is which is good. Can you provide an update on how the government has committed to improving animal welfare outcomes by regular inspections of where the animals are homed in stables and kennels throughout Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - The Tasmanian government is committed to improving animal welfare outcomes in the racing industry across all three codes. Kennel and stable inspections are a key tool in ensuring animal welfare and training facilities meet contemporary standards and that these facilities are compliant with the rules of racing. The Office of Racing Integrity conduct risk-based and targeted inspections of licensed racing premises, ensuring racing animals are properly cared for and licensed participants are complying with animal welfare legislation and the rules of racing.

In the 2023-24 financial year, stewards from ORI conducted 437 inspections of licenced training facilities, compared to 392 in the 2022-23 financial year. Under the Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill 2024, inspections will continue under the new integrity model.

ORI uses an electronic data management system called Comtrac to schedule and record inspections of racing facilities using a risk-based procedure. While the aim is to undertake most inspections as unannounced visits, this is not always possible for practical or several reasons. These reasons include to better manage the workplace safety or personnel attending an inspection and to avoid repeatedly travelling a long distance to a low-risk participant who is infrequently or irregularly at the licenced facilities.

ORI stewards have the authority under the rules of racing to enter at any time any property under the control of a licenced person. Several stewards are also appointed as

authorised officers under the *Animal Welfare Act 1993* and stewards have the power to inspect and search premises, examine any horse or greyhound on the property and seize anything considered necessary.

All new trainer licence applications must have satisfactory inspection of their training facility conducted by the stewards before being granted a licence. Inspections of training facility include a review of registered animals present, focusing on animal welfare, treatment areas and treatment log books, stables, yards, kennels and runs for animal safety and suitability for purpose, fencing, feed rooms, water articulation and air circulation, general facility cleanliness and suitability for purpose. When needed, ORI works collaboratively with local government authorities, Biosecurity Tasmania and the RSPCA in ensuring that the regulatory regime is stringent and relevant. Intelligence is also shared.

CHAIR - Before I go to Mr Winter, there was some talk before we kicked off about taking a very short comfort break, noting that any time will be need to be made-up, two to three minutes so people can grab a drink and go to the bathroom. A very short break. If everybody's okay with that, I'll stop the broadcast and just ask people to be back as soon as they're as soon as they're able to. Stop the broadcast.

The Committee suspended from 12.27 p.m to 12.32 p.m.

Mr WINTER - Minister, the Murrihy review reports on five specific races that needed to be investigated; three were from ABC reporting and two others selected from a bunch of races that were referred to from almost 50 representations. All five of those races were chaired by Roger Brown, one of the stewards. As part of that, Ken Rattray spoke to the ABC and he said - and this is in relation to Reds Good To Go:

A nag that hadn't won a race in almost a year finished at least 50 metres in front, blitzing the Burnie field at a race mile less than a half a second shy of the track record. Once it got out the driver couldn't stop the horse even if she tried. This horse doesn't do that. The horse was backed into \$7.50 from \$21.25 minutes before the race. Remarkably, someone backed it quite heavily.

Then if I go to the findings by Mr Murrihy, he says on page 42 of the inquiry:

The review found that the performance of Reds Good To Go clearly met the bar of a form reversal that should have been investigated by stewards.

And he goes on to say:

The explanation of the stewards as to why they did not contemplate more rigorous sampling measures is not found to be plausible by this investigation.

Meaning, Mr Murray didn't find it plausible that the Chief Steward would choose not to do that.

Given that Mr Brown was the Chief Steward on all five of those races, three of which had findings made against them by Mr Murrihy, has any investigation or any action been taken against Mr Brown in relation to that finding?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question. We've implemented all the recommendations from the Murrihy report, and as I said, I'm very much looking forward to the independent steward's report on 30 September.

Mr WINTER - I have an independent steward's report in front of me which is from -

Ms HOWLETT - I'll ask the deputy secretary to provide further advice.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. The stewards are appointed by the secretary under the act. Any issues relating to the steward's code of conduct would be a matter for the secretary and it's not a matter for the minister.

Mr WINTER - That's why we're here, of course. It's to inquire into the way that racing's been being regulated through the budget papers.

It's quite serious. The findings say that the explanation of the stewards as to why they didn't contemplate more rigorous sampling measures is not found to be plausible, meaning that Mr Murrihy didn't believe Mr Brown's explanation as to why he didn't sample a horse which had performed incredibly well - nearly broken the track record, having not won a race for a considerable amount of time. My direct question, through you, minister, perhaps to the deputy secretary is, what was ORI or NRE Tasmania's response to that finding? What have been training actions, reporting being taken given that finding by Mr Murrihy?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll ask the deputy secretary to seek some information on that.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, I would need to take some advice on that, but what I would say is it would not be appropriate for me to comment on any specific employment matters. The department would, however, ensure that any matters that required consideration in terms of the steward's code of conduct would be appropriately actioned.

Mr WINTER - Have there been any referrals to police or any other integrity bodies arising from the Murrihy review?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll seek advice from the deputy secretary on that question.

Mr WINTER - Just to repeat the question: have there been any referrals arising from the Murrihy review in terms of police referrals, integrity bodies anywhere, anything else apart from the independent stewards panel?

Ms WILSON - Through you minister, I will take some advice on that. We didn't refer matters to the RSPCA. The animal welfare matters were referred to the RSPCA. They were also considered by the by the Biosecurity Tasmania and we have the independent stewards panel that are considering all relevant matters from the Murrihy inquiry that needed to be further investigated.

Mr WINTER - In this case, there are clear findings here in particular to this one that are not actually so much about the performance of trainers or drivers. This is actually a finding about the stewarding in Tasmania and particular the chief steward in this case, which was Roger Brown, who was also the chief steward on four of the other races that were investigated,

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two of them which had findings made against them. Why hasn't there been training offered or police referrals or anything out of this in relation to the performance of the Office of Racing Integrity?

Ms HOWLETT - Would you like me to read through the recommendations?

Mr WINTER - I definitely don't want the recommendations read into *Hansard*.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister. The interim report of the very highly credentialed independent stewards panel -

Mr WINTER - Mr Murrihy was highly credentialed too, but you just ignored that report.

Ms WILSON - As a result of the review conducted by the independent stewards panel, there was a range of recommendations in terms of develop of training program, templates and examples and stewards report summarising trainers, drivers and explanations, and the purpose of that was to ensure that there was adequate information available for those to understand the decisions of stewards. I'd also point out that the Murrihy inquiry had a range of recommendations which the government is implementing in terms of ORI complaint management system and resourcing and training of steward-

Mr WINTER - Has there been any referral -

CHAIR - Last one, and then Dr Woodruff.

Mr WINTER - Thank you. I appreciate that, Chair. Has there been any referral or any investigation undertaken into ORI in relation to betting records, relationships with trainers or drivers? Has anything like that occurred?

Ms WILSON - The Murrihy report outlines the steps that Mr Murrihy took in his independent review, which was comprehensive. All relevant findings regarding staff were reviewed by an independent. As I said, it's not appropriate for me to comment on any specific employment matters.

Mr WINTER - That's my point, because he's actually found the explanation of stewards as to why -

CHAIR - Order.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thanks to the Greens greyhound inquiry in 2015, it is now a requirement that greyhounds exiting the greyhound racing industry must be rehomed and the Greyhound Adoption Program is tasked with this work. Can you tell me whether Tasracing will be conducting inspections of GAP under the new legislation?

Ms WILSON - The integrity unit and the current chief vet in Tasracing would be able to ensure that there was appropriate oversight of the GAP facility, but, as noted, there's also the new TasRIC, who would have independent investigation powers, will be setting animal welfare and integrity standards. They will be supported by an animal welfare and integrity committee, which has RSPCA on it, and we've also got the capacity for independent investigation by RSPCA Tasmania and by Biosecurity Tasmania.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, deputy secretary. My question is: will there be regular inspections of GAP by Tasracing? Not 'these other bodies are just advisory bodies' or 'there might be inspections'. Will there be regular mandated inspections of GAP?

Ms WILSON - The bill provides for the setting of standards by the commissioner. If the commissioner determines that there's a requirement for a standard relating to inspections of not only racing participants but other facilities that were within their scope of power, then that's a possibility. So, I think that provides an adequate oversight - the model for.

Dr WOODRUFF - The Greens are on the record for being concerned with that, because it is within an industry body that is - Dr Lenz, who you mentioned before, was the person who wrote the GAP throughput working group, recommended the update in 2023, was the person who has proposed an increase in cases of euthanasia as an appropriate step in response to the frustration, as that document says, of greyhound participants towards GAP; the very vast numbers of greyhounds that are not able to be rehomed in a timely fashion, compared to the numbers that are coming out of the industry.

So, there is a concern, minister, that this is not the body that's going to be able to do the inspections that need to be done, and it is within the industry, closer to the industry than it currently is. Aren't you concerned about the impacts on those greyhounds? The situation is already terrible, and you're moving it to worse.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff. The deputy secretary has some more information that she would like to add.

Dr WOODRUFF - Sorry, maybe I'll provide more context. Under the rehoming of notice requirements in the local greyhound rules of racing, at the moment all power to sign greyhound death warrant sits, at the moment, with the director of racing. When will the local rules be changed? Can you confirm who will replace the director in making that decision?

Ms WILSON - The model sets up roles for particular parties. At this stage, the model is there. Through implementation, there'll be determination about where some activities sit. But, what the bill does do - sorry, the act once it's in place - is set up a robust framework, because of the role of the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner, because that is a new role and it has new powers to set animal welfare and integrity standards, and, as I've said - as I might repeat what I've said before - but all those other things that sit around that, in terms of the framework.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, and through you, minister, too, she didn't answer that question. So, when will local rules be changed? When will the local rules of racing be changed? And, who will replace the director in the current role of the rehoming of notice requirements, the signing off of the power to sign greyhound death warrants? At the moment, it's with the director of racing. When will you confirm this change, and when are the local rules going to be changed?

Ms WILSON - As part of implementation of the act, there needs to be a process of reviewing the rules. At the moment - and this will stay the same - the rules of racing are solely a matter for Tasracing. That review will then determine some of the roles that sit under the

rules. But, it needs to take into account the new model. So, that's how that will work. We'll undertake a review.

Dr WOODRUFF - Until then, what will happen? When the new law changes, what will happen to the situation about who? Like you said, this process has to happen, blah blah. What will happen once this law gets royal assent in that space before all that work is done? Will everything remain as it is, in terms of those decisions?

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister: the chief racing integrity officer would replace the Director of Racing in most instances, I would assume, in the rules of racing, but that process has not been undertaken, as I indicated. If the decision-maker sits in the Tasracing Integrity Unit, there is oversight from the Tasracing Integrity Commissioner which provides an extra framework and a series of protections under the new regime.

Mrs PENTLAND - Thank you. In the break, I did ask if it was possible to get the breakdown of the positive swabs of those numbers that you shared with us before. I don't know if you're able to provide that or not.

Ms HOWLETT - We will just confirm. Are you asking for them to be tabled?

Mrs PENTLAND - If it's possible, or if you could just read them out.

Ms HOWLETT - Does the member mind if I seek to table that? We're just confirming figures.

Mrs PENTLAND - That's fine. Minister, what would it take for Tasmania to attract a Group 1, a lucrative gallops race? Are we at risk of being left behind by other states because we don't have a marquee event in Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - We have an incredibly good summer carnival of racing coming up very soon. Group 1 race meets are a matter for Tasracing, as they schedule the meets. You'll certainly have the opportunity to talk to Tasracing about the possibility of Group 1 meets when they're in front of you in scrutiny in December.

Mrs PENTLAND - Are you having those conversations with Tasracing in December?

Ms HOWLETT - It is a matter for Racing Australia as well as Tasracing. We've got harness, the Hobart Thousand is a Group 1 race, and also the Tasmanian Cup in harness - not in thoroughbreds, but we do have one in greyhounds.

Mrs PENTLAND - I specifically asked about the thoroughbred race. Will that ever be -

Ms HOWLETT - Anything's possible and I'm certainly happy to have discussions with Tasracing and Racing Australia in relation to a Group 1 thoroughbred race.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, the breeding sector obviously is vitally important to our industry, we all know that. What is the government doing to help this. Can you give us some more information, please?

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Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the Tasmanian breeders organisation for the work and the advocacy they do to promote this vital part of our industry, both within the state and also to a national audience. A healthy racing industry requires a strong and vibrant breeding industry. The Tasmanian breeding industry supports job creation and also economic activity, particularly in regional Tasmania. The Government is providing additional support to the thoroughbred and harness breeding sectors, with \$350,000 allocated in the Budget: \$300,000 to the Thoroughbred Incentive Scheme and \$50,000 to harness breeding incentives. I'm proud that this money has been included in the Budget to continue to support the TasBred Incentive Scheme and to reward those participants who invest their hard-earned money on Tasmanian bloodstock.

In May I was pleased to meet with leading figures in the thoroughbred breeding sector including Bart McCulloch of Grenville Stud and Dave Wishaw of Armidale Stud. We discussed how we can move forward the very successful TasBred Incentive Scheme. The success of this scheme is something I'm very proud of from my first period as Minister for Racing, and the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future supports breeding as a vital sector of the industry and backs in our breeders, who are the lifeblood of the industry. I welcome you to attend the Magic Million sales coming up in February next year. It's a great day.

Mr WINTER - Has Roger Brown chaired any recent harness meetings?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm unsure of the answer to that and I'll have to ask the department.

Mr WINTER - Do you think it's appropriate that he continue to steward, given the findings in the Murrihy review? I will refer that question to the deputy secretary.

Ms WILSON - I am not aware of his current activities, in terms of the first part of your question. The second part is that there is -

Mr WINTER - On that, the director of racing is usually sitting at the table. Is there a reason why that's not occurring?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm happy for the director of racing to come to the table.

Mr WINTER - That question will be well answered by the director, I'm sure.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm very happy to ask Robin Thompson to come to the table. When you get to the table, you might state your name and your title.

Mr THOMPSON - Robin Thompson, Director of Racing.

Mr WINTER - I will repeat the question. Has Roger Brown chaired any recent harness meetings, and does the Office of Racing Integrity see it as appropriate to continue to chair or conduct harness meetings, given the findings in the Murrihy review?

Mr THOMPSON - No, Mr Brown hasn't been chairing recent harness meetings given that recent meeting in the last six months or so. The second part of your question?

Mr WINTER - Is that in response to the findings within the Murrihy review?

Mr THOMPSON - No, it's not in response to any specific findings made against Mr Brown, and it's inappropriate, really, to discuss any issues associated with Mr Brown as a steward.

Mr WINTER - I'll ask it more broadly, then. Have there been any actions taken against any stewards in relation to the findings of the Murrihy review?

Mr THOMPSON - The findings in the Murrihy review currently being investigated and done by an independent stewards panel would include any issues that may or may not be associated with the actions of stewards. That is still being undertaken by the independent panel, who will report very soon.

Mr WINTER - Does the Office of Racing Integrity consider Mr Murrihy's findings in relation to race fixing, team driving and animal welfare abuse to be findings? If that is the case, how is it that the Office of Racing Integrity continues to licence individuals who've been found to conduct this sort of behaviour?

Ms HOWLETT - Can I ask Mr Winter to address his question through to me.

Mr WINTER - Through the minister, of course.

Mr THOMPSON - The Murrihy Review identified a number of issues that I appointed an independent panel of stewards to investigate, and that's what they're doing and that's what they are reporting upon. We'd find that the independent panel of stewards is probably the most experienced panel of stewards operating locally, and certainly nationally. Collectively they have around 90 years' experience in race stewarding and sports law. I believe they are well credentialed to undertake those investigations and report upon them. They are progressing through that process and will report shortly.

Mr WINTER - Mr Murrihy, is one of the most respected and experienced stewards in Australia, and his findings are found within a final report that was produced and given to the government nearly a year ago. Why are his findings not enough to lay charges in the first place? Why do we need to have an independent review of an independent review?

Mr THOMPSON - I appointed the independent panel of stewards, as you are aware, under the Australian Harness Racing Rule 181 in February this year. That appointment is a direct response to the Murrihy report. I'd like to quote some of the findings that are listed by Mr Murrihy. He says, and I quote:

It's important that if charges are to be laid they are heard and determined in a separate forum to this more general and wide-ranging inquiry.

I note that Mr Murrihy was a panel of one steward. Under the Australian Harness Racing Rules a panel of at least two stewards are necessary in order to hear and investigate a matter related to harness racing. I go on with the quote from Mr Murrihy. He says that:

Where this investigation expresses its determination of noncompliance with the Australian Harness Racing rules it does so on the evidence which it has before it. It does not make positive findings on formal charges, rather it makes determinations of noncompliance with the Australian Harness Racing

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Rules, based on the evidence before it and the enquiries it has made, noting it has afforded those who have faced allegations of noncompliance an opportunity to answer these allegations.

These findings are not to be interpreted as positive findings which a stewards' panel would make upon the determination of a formal charge and to which penalties and consequences would attach.

And that's exactly what the independent panel of stewards is undertaking at the moment.

Mr WINTER - Through you, minister, the question was actually about charges. Why do we need to go through another process to make charges? Also, did the director of racing sign off on Ben Yole being a fit and proper person? Did he approve the trainer's licence he has for this year?

Ms HOWLETT - To you.

Mr THOMPSON - Minister, yes, I did sign off on Mr Yole being awarded a harness racing trainer licence this year.

CHAIR - Last question.

Mr WINTER - Thank you, I do appreciate it. I appreciate the patience of my colleagues here and I'll be the same.

How did you decide that Mr Yole was a fit and proper person, given that he had admitted to injecting horses whilst he wasn't a vet in contravention of the law; that he admitted to parts of the allegations in the wash bay where he was abusing horses and where there is evidence from drivers that he organised for races to be fixed? Given all that evidence, how is it the Office of Racing Integrity has determined that he is a fit and proper person to participate in this industry?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question. I'll hand over to the director of racing.

Mr THOMPSON - The Office of Racing Integrity operates a system to ensure that there is due process and procedural fairness and that's what we do with every application that's received for licencing or whatever else it may be and Mr Yole's application is no exception. As I said before, Mr Murrihy noted a number of issues, but these issues are being investigated by an independent panel of stewards and I have no power to direct that independent panel of stewards to do anything. At the moment there is no reason why Mr Yole isn't -

Mr WINTER - Through the minister, he admitted to breaking the law. He admitted to breaking the racing regulations. How on earth is he possibly participating in this industry? How can you be so naive to this, through you, minister?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms WILSON - Might I add, because the director is independent, it is important to note that the legal basis for the quashing of the warning-off notice, which was considered by the

Tasmanian Racing Appeal Board, covers many of the grounds why the warning-off notice was not upheld. At the moment, we have a stewards' panel under 181 and the independent stewards' panel in its interim report indicated that at this stage they saw no grounds to suspend Mr Yole, but if charges were to be laid, they'd consider that matter at that time.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, I want to understand what happens when the new legislation comes into place with the Tasmanian Greyhound Local Rules of Racing. When there's no longer a Director of Racing in the Office of Racing and Integrity, will there no longer be a requirement to rehome greyhounds in the way that it is currently set out in the Local Rules of Racing?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. There absolutely will be a rehoming policy through the new structure. I'll hand you over to the deputy secretary to add more information to that.

Dr WOODRUFF - To be clear, I'm talking about the space between when the legislation gets royal assent and when the final system is established, what will happen to the local rules of racing as they stand on rehoming? Will it be an independent person who decides the fate of greyhounds?

Ms WILSON - Through the minister, we need to have in place the statutory office holders before the act is in place. The act will receive royal assent but it's it will come into play upon proclamation. We have a transition team who are working through all the aspects of the transition, including matters such as the regulations, the rules of racing. The aim is that it flips on the day it's turned on into the new regime. That is the plan.

Dr WOODRUFF - On that day when it receives proclamation, ORI ceases to exist and the stewards move across to Tasracing and you're saying that there will be absolutely no gap at all in the period until proclamation after royal assent there will be the same situation in place in terms of ORI remaining and being responsible for decisions about ending the lives of greyhounds that are surplus to the industry and that there is great pressure for them to be euthanised more quickly.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Dr Woodruff, for your important question. There will be a transitional phase-in process. I'd like to hand over to Anita Yan and also thank her for her incredible work that she's been doing in relation to this. I'll ask her to speak to your question.

Ms YAN - Through you, minister. Yes, we do have a transition project that's established that will consider all matters relating to the implementation of the new bill. That will include a number of matters including the appointments as the minister has mentioned before. Until those appointments are made, the operations and responsibility will remain with the Office of Racing Integrity.

Dr WOODRUFF - When will it flip over and what's your expected timeframe or the expected date, through you to Anita, and who will the new statutory officer be?

Ms HOWLETT - I wish I knew. Thank you, Dr Woodruff, for your question. I'll talk very briefly before I refer to Anita on that. As I mentioned, we are well underway in recruiting for the Tasmanian Racing Integrity Commissioner. I'm not involved, but I believe there are interviews being conducted next week and the following week. How long that will take to

implement? I would hope to have someone here by the beginning of November. I believe the three people who are being interviewed are interstate, so we would need to allow for relocation, et cetera, as well for those people. I'll hand you over to Anita to speak more to that.

Ms YAN - Through you, minister, the appointments will also be subject to notice periods. We are endeavouring to make those appointments as soon as possible in addition to the new commissioner will also have the appointments to the Racing Integrity Committee and we are going through an expression of interest process and interviews for that. Tasracing is also in the process of recruiting the chief racing integrity officer (the CRIO), and the department's also working with the Office of Parliamentary Counsel to remake and update the regulations. We're endeavouring to make those as soon as possible, but those appointments will be subject to the successful candidates' availability.

Dr WOODRUFF - You think November, but that may not actually happen in November. Confirmation may need to be later than that because a person will need to be in place. That's what you're waiting for?

Ms HOWLETT - What is today - 25 September? So, Anita, if interviews are next week or the week after, when would you have thought?

Dr WOODRUFF - Maybe next year.

Ms HOWLETT - I would certainly hope not.

Dr WOODRUFF - It would depend on when a person is available to take up that position.

CHAIR - Last question.

Ms HOWLETT - I certainly hope not next year, Dr Woodruff. That's not my target. I'll hand over to Anita to speak a little bit more to that question, because it is a very important question.

Ms YAN - Yes, we are working to have those appointments in place as soon as we can, but there is a process that has to be followed.

CHAIR - Before I go to Ms Johnston, can I ask people at the table when we're moving around, for the benefit of the hard-working Hansard team, if people could be mindful of their microphones.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Through you, minister, to the director of racing: in your view, director, what matters or issues should or would preclude a person from obtaining or renewing a trainer's licence under an assessment of a fit and proper person?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank Ms Johnston for her question. I believe that relates to a fit and proper person, and I'll -

Ms JOHNSTON - What's the test for it?

Ms HOWLETT - I will refer to the director of racing to answer your question.

Mr THOMPSON - Under section 6(2)(f) of the *Racing Regulation Act*, I as director am empowered to issue various classes of licences. Under this act, there's no explicit legislative requirement or definition that a person be a fit and proper person to have a licence granted.

However, the rules of racing do or do also apply. For greyhounds the rules of racing are very explicit in that they explicitly provide for the controlling body, in this case the Office Racing Integrity, to consider whether a person is fit and proper to hold a registration under the rules of racing. For harness and two thoroughbred codes, the controlling body can refuse or grant a licence without assigning any reason.

So the fit and proper person test, in my opinion, is a multi-factorial and multi-dimensional test. It looks at things including - this is what I look at:

- the physical and mental health of the applicant.
- the respect of the applicants for compliance with our rules of society and also the respect of the applicant for compliance with the rules of racing.
- living according to the principles of honesty, ethics and and morals where we generally expect in the community.
- financial sufficiency to meet the requirements of a licensed person, because that brings with it the responsibility to provide feed, veterinary expenses et cetera for a racing animal.
- and actions and history sometimes that the person has undertaken that will not bring the racing industry into disrepute. So, it's social licence and it's generally gained through a police inspection, a national police check.

Those criteria have been what I've been using as director of racing, and it's what was recently used and tested through the Tasmania Racing Appeal Board and found to be appropriate not only by the board but also by the appellant.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, director. That seems to be a very extensive list of matters to be considered or factors to take into consideration. You listed there rules of society, so I assume that means laws of Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - Can you just repeat that?

Ms JOHNSTON - The director listed in one of those factors rules of society. I'm assuming that means laws of Tasmania, rules of racing, which obviously are set rules relating to ethics and conduct and also actions in history in terms of whether the industry is brought into disrepute. Director, can you explain, then, why individuals such as Anthony Bullock and Ben Yole, who fail at every one of those particular tests, have continued to receive trainer's licences and have their trainer's licence renewed?

Mr Yole doesn't have a workers' compensation policy holding. He's clearly breached the rules of racing on a number of occasions. Ben Yole, likewise, has breached the *Dog Control Act* on numerous occasions by failing to have kennel licences. He's breached planning permits numerous times and continues to breach planning permits. Why have they been issued renewals

of their trainer's licence when they clearly are bringing the industry into disrepute by their actions and also breaching rules of law?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for her question. I will ask the director of racing to respond to Ms Johnson's questions.

Mr THOMPSON - Regarding the insurance issue with workers' compensation, I have advice which says that workers compensation insurance is not a licensing matter.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's a rule of law though.

Mr THOMPSON - It's a rule of law and this means, from my advice, that holding a workers' compensation insurance is not a prerequisite to applying for a licence or in fact being granted a licence. This matter of workers' compensation insurance is still before the courts. I don't believe that the responsibility is with WorkSafe Tasmania to prosecute any cases according to this, and, at the moment, that process hasn't finished.

I note that Australian Harness Racing rule 90(6) provides an applicant for a licence or an existing licence holder shall if found guilty of a crime or offence which is punishable by a term of imprisonment, immediately notify the controlling body or stewards of that finding of guilt. As director, I'm monitoring the court case that is currently being undertaken in respect to workers' compensation insurance, and we'll make a determination on the outcome of that court case.

Ms JOHNSTON - Can I just clarify, then, when you talk about rules of law as being a factor, you don't consider all laws in Tasmania to be relevant? It's only ones relating to racing. So, criminal matters, matters around workers' compensation, planning permits, all those kinds of things, are they rules of law that ought to be taken into consideration when you're determining whether the person's fit and proper?

Mr THOMPSON - Certainly, we do a national police check and we get many and varied responses. You have to look at the time and the date of those offences that may or may not have occurred. One does the crime and one does the time, so to speak.

Ms JOHNSTON - Those relating to dog control, for instance. With Mr Bullock, he failed to have a kennel licence for a number of years despite it's an obvious requirement to have. That would be a breach of the law. Why was he still issued a licence renewal?

Mr THOMPSON - Having a kennel licence is an issue for local government and I believe that he didn't refuse to have such a licence. I believe he now has a current licence with the West Tamar Council for a kennel that allows him to keep 91 greyhounds and four other dogs of other breeds at his premises at 2616 West Tamar Highway.

Ms HOWLETT - Can I add to that, the member mentioned WorkSafe. I would like to state that, in May 2024, WorkSafe Tasmania commenced a workers' compensation work health and safety compliance program across all three racing codes.

This program aimed to audit compliance with the *Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1989* and the *Work and Health Safety Act 2012*. As of 12 August 2024, 48 compliance inspections have been completed with no contraventions identified under either

of the above legislation, and the inspections of the Greyhound Code identified most operators are hobbyist and not employers.

Fatigue was certainly identified as a significant risk for many workplaces in the racing industry. Whilst no notices have been issued in relation to fatigue management to date, inspectors are looking closely at what systems employers in the industry have in place to manage fatigue and the compliance program is ongoing, with an anticipated completion date at the end of October 2024. That that was a really important question.

Mr FAIRS - As we know, cadet stewards is the way moving forward for the industry. It's of paramount importance obviously, just like in other businesses and industries, workforce development and training is a challenge, you know that. Can you provide the committee with any update as to how this Budget is helping to support developing more of these key workers because as I said, it's paramount moving forward.

Ms HOWLETT - It certainly is, Chair, and I thank the member for his question and recognise his interest in workforce training and the renewal for stewards and integrity staff, and how the 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future can support improvements in stewarding for the industry.

The government is a strong supporter of the Tasmanian racing industry which makes a vital contribution to our economy and employment, particularly in regional Tasmania. The government continues to invest in workforce renewal, including our successful cadet stewardship program. The Budget is supporting workforce development and renewal with \$100,000 over two years to ensure that Tasmanian stewards have access to professional development and training. This investment allows participants in the community to be reassured that our stewards have the skills and knowledge required to maintain the rules and integrity of racing. Importantly, this supports a recommendation by Mr Murrihy in his final report that an adequately resourced and well-trained stewards panel is fundamental to the effective performance of the Tasracing Integrity Unit. Mr Murrihy also recommended opportunities to enhance training for stewards by utilising online delivery of established stewards training courses and short-term professional exchanges with stewards from mainland states, which this funding could support.

The Monteith Review also specifically proposed better formal training for stewards which is supported through this investment. We will continue to invest in workforce renewal including the successful cadet stewards program with funding of \$250,000 per year. The cadet steward's program is an essential strategy for ensuring we have skilled and capable stewards to support the racing industry in Tasmania into the future. Given the national shortage of stewards, our policy is to home-grow them with support from national colleagues who provide development opportunities such as attendance at interstate race meetings and mentoring.

The cadet stewards program ensures cadets are sufficiently experienced to be competitive and when permanent stewards positions become available at the Office of Racing Integrity or Tasracing, these cadet stewards will transition to Tasracing as part of the reform output of staff and resourcing. Cadet stewards always work with more senior stewards undertaking office duties, routine inspections and race-day duties focusing on one of the racing codes for a three-month period in order to consolidate learning and experience.

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The department currently has three cadet stewards. The roles are entry-level positions and are paid at a salary equivalent to the Tasmanian State Service Award band 1 with cadet employment across the Tasmanian State Service. With the extension of this funding commitment, recruitment for a further appointment is in its final stages and I look forward to welcoming the next cadet steward supported through our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future.

Mr WINTER - Was former chief harness steward Steve Shinn investigated for tampering with swabs?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question and I will ask the deputy secretary to respond to that question.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, it's not appropriate for me to comment on any specific employment matters. Mr Shinn is no longer employed with us and as I say, it's not appropriate to comment on any specific employment matters. What I can tell you at the highest level and at the principal level is that if matters are raised with the secretary around potential breaches of the Stewards Code of Conduct, appropriate action is taken and appropriate actions are then implemented. Our public servants and stewards have the right for any specific employment matters to be dealt with confidentially.

Mr WINTER - Can you confirm there is CCTV footage of a very senior steward tampering with swabs?

Ms HOWLETT - Chair, I'm not quite sure that Mr Winter's question is related to the Budget which we are here to scrutinise.

Mr WINTER - It is the operation to the Office of Racing Integrity. That's what this is. Every line of questioning has been about the operations of the Office of Racing Integrity, minister.

Ms HOWLETT - How is it related to the Budget, Mr Winter?

Mr WINTER - Because the Budget funds the Office of Racing Integrity and we're asking, that's what we've been doing all week.

Ms HOWLETT - I'll ask the deputy secretary to respond to your question.

Ms WILSON - I believe that I've answered that question. It's not appropriate to comment on any specific employment matters. If any matter is raised with the agency, then it is appropriately investigated and appropriate steps are taken. The secretary takes this responsibility very seriously and would adhere with all principles of natural justice. But as I've indicated, it's not appropriate for me to comment on any specific employment matters.

Mr WINTER - Every year I come to this table, to the racing estimates and it gets worse and worse. Minister, you've said during this that it's irrelevant because we're moving to a new model, well, the model that we're currently under, the Office of Racing Integrity, is failing the industry right now. We're seeing that through the inability to answer questions about the embarrassment that we've seen through the operations of this industry's regulator.

How can the industry possibly have confidence in the Office of Racing Integrity and in their own industry when you've got issues like tampering with swabs, when you've got a Director of Racing who is licencing people who've been found to have abused animals and who clearly don't hold workers compensation? How can the industry possibly have confidence in this industry that you're overseeing given the state of the Office of Racing Integrity?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank Mr Winter for his question. Look, I'll go back and I'll say it again, that's why we have delivered the biggest reforms in decades, Mr Winter, and I look forward to enacting that legislation as soon as possible and we are pursuing everything we can to fast-track that. As I said, that's why we have made significant reforms and changes, which I know will be extremely welcomed by everyone in the racing industry.

Mr WINTER - Let's move back to, and it'll be through you, of course, minister, but the Director of Racing may be able to help with this, it's about the licencing of Robbie Walters in his application. I'd like to understand how it could possibly be that Mr Walters applied for a trainer's licence and was granted one, despite having been found to have forged documents and having been found to have evaded and then found to have taken illicit substances before participating in racing? To go to that point about what's a fit and proper person, how is it possible that Mr Walters was able to be granted a licence? I know you intervened afterwards minister, and I wish you'd intervene a bit more to be honest, but how is it that snuck through, that he was able to be licenced in the way that he was?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for his question. In relation to Mr Robbie Walters' application for a Trainer A licence in Tasmania and the race nominations of Mr Walters, I can again provide the following information. At a licence panel hearing conveyed on Monday, 17 June, Mr Walters application for a Trainer A licence in Tasmania was rejected. As a result, Mr Walters was immediately prohibited from training activities in Tasmania. For the avoidance of doubt it supersedes the previous recognition of his Victorian licence that I referred to in my previous advice to parliament. I'm further advised that Mr Walters will not be able to reapply for a Trainer A licence in in Tasmania for a period of six month commencing on 17 June.

Mr Walters was advised of his right of appeal and appealed the suspension and represented himself at an appeal in a hearing on 26 July. The appeal against a decision of the Director of Racing to refuse to grant a Tasmanian training licence was dismissed by the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board (TRAB). The TRAB were not satisfied that Mr Walters was a fit and proper person to take on the significant responsibility of a trainer in Tasmania and should not therefore be granted a Trainer A licence. While I can't comment on the specifics of the decision, what I will say is that I firmly believe that in order to rebuild trust and restore faith, only fit and proper people should be involved in the racing industry.

Mr WINTER - Thank you minister, I appreciate that and you -

CHAIR - Last question.

Mr WINTER - Thank you Chair, again, for your excellent work. Minister, you intervened on this matter. My question is in relation to Ben Yole, his relicensing. If you were prepared to intervene on Mr Walters, why haven't you been prepared to intervene on Mr Yole,

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and has that got to do with those conversations that you had at Elwick in relation to offering him and his family support if they needed it?

Ms HOWLETT - Absolutely not, Mr Winter, and look, I'm not sure what conversations you're actually referring to, I have many conversations. I am not going to intervene in a process where there is an independent stewards' panel and we are so close -

Mr WINTER - It's not about the independent stewards' panel, it's about the licencing, which is decision made by the Director of Racing in the same way as he made one on Mr Walters.

CHAIR - Mr Winter, order.

Ms HOWLETT - so close to that report being finalised on 30 September. As of last week, there was still hearings being carried out by the independent stewards panel and I'm not going to say or do anything to jeopardise that independent stewards report that I know you are looking forward to, and certainly, I am.

Mr WINTER - But have you spoken with Mr Ben Yole or not?

CHAIR - Order. No, we will go to Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, the director's comments at the table just earlier in relation to the matter of a fit and proper person sounded like a licence might be considered to be given to a person who had a criminal record. I think that the words were 'if you have done the time, for the crime', as though that's something that's in the past. Do you think that that would also be case for someone who is charged convicted for crimes under the *Animal Welfare Act*?

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank Dr Woodruff for her question. I'll ask the deputy secretary to make further comment on that.

Ms WILSON - The fit and proper test has a common law and a lot of case law and it does go to a range of factors. It does come down to the particular circumstances, but what I would say is that there is case law around the country around if some people have found guilty of serious animal welfare offences that racing bodies take that very seriously. There's precedent for that being taken very seriously in terms of decision making.

Dr WOODRUFF - You wouldn't think it should be an automatic disqualifier?

Ms WILSON - Through the minister, to make it automatic disqualification the Rules of Racing would need to make that the case. As I said, there is strong precedent and strong precedent in the racing industry in terms of actual decisions that if there are serious animal welfare matters and where there is a successful prosecution, but it's still under the fit and proper test and just legally, lawfully it will still come down to all of the relevant circumstances.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, there is a person called Nicholas Howlett who attained a licence in February 2023 and he was suspended in November 2023 for presenting Blackpool Poppy with cocaine metabolites in that dog's system. He returned in June 2024 with a licence and has since been suspended for two months for failing to provide appropriate vet care for

Blackpool Trip, who subsequently had his tail amputated recently. Is that person any relation to you?

Ms HOWLETT - Yeah. Look, I will certainly put on record that I found out recently - as many things are hidden from you when you're a child - that my father's parents, my grandmother, was married previously and had a son and my father's father adopted that child. They then had a child called Peter Howlett, who I believe, is the grandchild of Peter Howlett.

Dr WOODRUFF - Not a person in your close family circle is what you're trying to say?

Ms HOWLETT - No, no.

Dr WOODRUFF - Thank you, minister.

Minister, the report that I provided you this morning - the great work of Animal Liberation Tasmania, the 19 reviews of properties and the evidence of the 748 dogs who have raced this year - contains the story of Zipping Princess. On 10 September 2023, she was offered, for free, by the Williams and McCrickard syndicate owners on Gumtree. She was in a terrible state, in a very, very unwell - was totally distressed - and she was rushed to the vet surgery. Three days later she subsequently died. The evidence was that she had adhesions that strangled her bowel and evidence of animal cruelty was profoundly written on her beautiful body. She was only three years old and the Gumtree listings and the record of exchange of Zipping Princess shows that many dogs like Zipping Princess are being privately rehomed out of the industry, with a third of greyhounds who retired out of the industry in the period of April to June last year being privately rehomed.

One of the recommendations of this report today is that there should be a ban on the use of Gumtree for the rehoming of greyhounds. Do you agree? Yes, you're nodding.

Ms HOWLETT - I do agree, Dr Woodruff, I do agree with that.

Dr WOODRUFF - That is very good news. Is it your intention to make sure that the new arrangements would include such a ban?

Ms HOWLETT - I look forward to whoever -

Dr WOODRUFF - There's one there today, Ms Johnston is just passing me the information.

Ms HOWLETT - whoever the TasRIC may be when they start having those conversations and seeing what we can do to have better outcomes for the racing industry. Deirdre, would you like to say more?

Dr WOODRUFF - Here we are today, minister, we've got the evidence of another dog and we've just heard from Anita next to you that it's going to be months and months.

Ms HOWLETT - Hopefully not.

Dr WOODRUFF - Sure, but can't you step in now and ban this practise? You've got that power?

Ms HOWLETT - I can certainly have a discussion with Tasracing about that. It's how we enforce that power that I will need to have the discussions about. Deputy Secretary?

Ms WILSON - Minister, with your indulgence, because you did mention the Zipping Princess matter, I've just got a short update. This issue has been in progress for a protracted period due to associated legal processes. These processes are now almost finalised and the result of the steward's inquiry on this matter will be published in due course. Because it is still active, we can't make any other comment at this time as it would be inappropriate.

In terms of the other matter, in terms of Gumtree, I think that as the minister said, it would be a matter for discussion at this stage with Tasracing.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's just blatant, isn't it? It should be illegal and it's happening. It's good to hear that you're going to do something.

Ms HOWLETT - There are certainly things that we can do a lot better, Dr Woodruff, a lot better.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Minister, I've just forwarded you that Gumtree advert for your information so you can see it.

Minister, back to the matter of Nicholas Howlett - and as Dr Woodruff indicated - Nicholas Howlett was the trainer who last presented a greyhound to a race with cocaine in its system just three months after being granted a trainer's licence.

He has again been suspended, this time for something far more serious, and he only received a two-month suspension. Mr Howlett failed to take a dog with an injured tail to the vet for at least 10 days - that he's admitted to - resulting in the dog's tail having to be amputated. He only took her because a steward directed him to, and for this he's only received a two-month suspension. In the inquiry, it was revealed that whilst the dog had to have its tail amputated, he also gave another dog's antibiotics to this dog. Quite serious matters here relating to animal welfare. He only received a two-month suspension for that breach in particular. Do you believe that this meets community expectations when it comes to sanctions around serious animal welfare issues and breaches of racing regulations?

Ms HOWLETT - I might ask the Director of Racing to come to the table. Ms Johnston, in answer to your question - no, I don't. I want us to have the most significant animal welfare laws that we can possibly have in the racing industry. We need to have that. We need to have strong mechanisms around that in order for me to rebuild trust and faith in the industry. No, it's not good enough, and I have said on so many occasions that I want anyone that is doing the wrong thing out of the industry. I'm sure the director can confirm what I've said, because I've said it many, many times.

Ms JOHNSTON - I think you've answered my questions. I asked about your view about community expectations and whether you're satisfied. Clearly, I take it at face value, you're not satisfied by that particular sanction that was issued against Mr Howlett.

Minister, are you concerned that the Office of Racing Integrity has taken action over whistleblowers and has found them guilty in relation to posts of what I would describe as - or

what they have described as - 'inappropriate internet posts'? They've applied harsh penalties to those whistleblowers, when those who have not complied with basic animal welfare requirements have got off pretty much scot-free?

Ms HOWLETT - I'll refer that question either to the deputy secretary or to the Office of Racing Integrity. I think that would be more appropriate. Thank you, Robin. If you could stay at the table, Robin, I'd appreciate that.

Mr THOMPSON - I've made a determination on the matter with Mr Cooper and that determination is now subject to an appeal to the Tasmanian Racing Appeal Board. That process is still active, so I can make no further comment.

Ms JOHNSTON - Mr Cooper?

Ms HOWLETT - I think that's a name that you know quite well, Leader of the Opposition.

Ms JOHNSTON - Through you, Minister, can I get an indication from the director of how many individuals the Office of Racing Integrity has taken action over, whether that's been calling for an inquiry or formal action in relation to their social media posts, or comments or whistleblowing activities on what's occurring in the industry?

Ms HOWLETT - You have been responding to some of Mr Cooper's accusations on -

Mr WINTER - I am happy to be forthcoming with who I've spoken to, Minister, if you're happy to be forthcoming with who you've spoken to.

Ms HOWLETT - I speak to lots of people, as do you.

Mr WINTER - Nathan Ford?

CHAIR - Order. If we can have no interjections either way and perhaps no inciting of interjections. I'll let the minister answer the question in silence.

Ms HOWLETT - I will refer that question to the Director of Racing.

Mr THOMPSON - Yes, social media is a relatively new form of communicating and, of course, it has its difficulties in proving a source and, I guess, attribution of comments that are made on it. We are very conscious that the identities in racing, the controlling body and stewards are not adversely attacked by social media or, in fact, any other way. That is what's led our action against Mr Cooper and that's the only action that we are currently publicly investigating. We are very aware that social media can be a very vicious media for attacking personalities - both through the controlling body and as participants in the racing industry, and it's not condoned by the rules of racing or by our values at ORI.

Ms HOWLETT - Nor should it be. I think everyone in this room has witnessed social media attacks, and I don't think it should be condoned in any industry.

Ms JOHNSTON - Just to clarify, I'm not talking about current investigations, I'm talking previous investigations. Do you have a number of how many people you've investigated? That was the original question.

Ms HOWLETT - On social media?

Mr THOMPSON - Is this just social media?

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes.

Mr THOMPSON - The one that we've prosecuted is Mr Cooper, but we've looked at many others and perhaps haven't progressed to prosecution.

Ms JOHNSTON - Brooke Hammond?

Mr THOMPSON - I can't give you a number, but we look at every one in its entirety to determine if there's enough evidence to progress to an inquiry and charges and ultimately sanction. As I said, the one with Mr Cooper has been investigated and now the decision is appealed.

Ms JOHNSTON - Just to clarify, minister, given you've said a number of times in this hearing today that you have a strong desire is trying to clean up the industry and to reinstate trust in the industry. Are you concerned that whistleblowers who have called out wrongdoing in the industry - that has been found to be correct - have been subject to sanctions for the actions of blowing the whistle on issues in the industry? Is that a concern to you?

Ms WILSON - First of all, in terms of the director, the director acts independently and must ensure the rules of racing are applied in a manner that ensures procedural fairness. If racing participants are aggrieved by a decision of the director relating to public statements or public behaviours, there is a right of appeal to the Tasmanian Racing Appeal Board. That's what has occurred with the case that the director is talking about.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, the Tasmanian Racing Appeals Board, or TRAB, as we know, is an important part of the industry framework. Will TRAB continue under the new model, and can you provide details about its structure and independence?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question and his interest in TRAB. Under our *Racing Regulation and Integrity Bill 2024*, the TRAB continues. The TRAB, being a specialised independent appeal mechanism established by the act, is not subject to direction or influence by any person. Appeals may be lodged with TRAB:

- against a decision of Tasracing Pty Ltd or a registered club to issue a person with a warning-off notice;
- against a decision of stewards to impose a fine, suspension or disqualification;
- against a decision of the Director of Racing to impose certain licence conditions; or

- if a person is in a dispute with a bookmaker regarding a wagering dispute.

To lodge an appeal, the appellant applies within the prescribed time and pays a deposit as follows:

- within seven days, a \$200 deposit for a minor appeal where the fine did not exceed \$500 or suspension did not exceed 30 days;
- within 14 days of a \$500 deposit for a major appeal. For all other penalties, sanctions, deposits may be refunded in whole or in part as provided by the Act, pending the outcome of the appeal.
- The TRAB may suspend the operation of a penalty, pending the hearing, appoint a panel to hear the appeal, cause notice of the appeal to be given to the parties and published, and after hearing the appeal, affirm, vary or quash the decision that was subject of the appeal.
- All hearings and outcomes are published on the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania on the website page relating to TRAB.

Chair, between 1 July 2023 and June 2024 there were 30 applications for appeals lodged to the TRAB board.

Mr WINTER - Minister, to go back to an earlier line of questioning, do you deny offering, via Wayne Yole, the opportunity for Ben Yole to give you a call if he had any issues?

Ms HOWLETT - I speak to many people at the races-

Mr WINTER - It's quite specific. You would know, right?

CHAIR - Mr Winter.

Ms HOWLETT - As do you, Mr Winter, I speak to many people. Whether it be at training facilities, at kennels, or at race meets. I speak to many, many people.

Mr WINTER - It's quite specific. You would remember it, though. Do you deny that you had that conversation?

Ms HOWLETT - As I've said, I speak to many people, Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - Okay. I'll move on, because you're obviously not going to answer the question and we have a short amount of time.

Chair, one of the major bumbles by Mr Helmich in his former role was the standing down of steward Janet Ainscow, the brave whistleblower who blew the whistle on many of the activities of the Office of Racing Integrity. That was done initially on the basis that Ms Ainscow had complained about conditions at the Yole's Sidmouth property. Now, given that the findings

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in the Murrihy review back in exactly what she said, why has Ms Ainscow not been reinstated to act as a harness racing steward?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question, and that is an operational matter for the Office of Racing Integrity - for the secretary, sorry - and I will pass over to Deidre to make comment to your question.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister: I'm going to attempt to answer this without referring to names - I think that's appropriate - but as you've mentioned-

Mr WINTER - Ms Ainscow has been very public. She's been on TV.

Ms WILSON - And I thank you pointing that out. As the secretary outlined last year, she has not been stood down. The then-director of racing was simply managing a potential conflict of interest. Management of conflict of interest, especially in regulatory roles, is a fundamental principle to ensure confidence in the regulatory system. I'm sure you would agree that managing conflict of interest is paramount to maintaining the integrity of the racing industry.

As you've just identified, it's publicly known that the person has made numerous comments around a harness racing participant. This may create a perception of a conflict of interest, should they continue to undertake stewarding duties within harness racing.

I'm sure you would agree that a steward actively and publicly supporting a particular participant is inconsistent with the behaviours that you would expect of a steward. I'm sure you can then appreciate that it would be entirely inappropriate for a steward to be presiding over races that involve participants that the same steward has made public allegations and complaints against.

Given this, the staff member has been assigned to stewarding duties across a different code. Reassigning of duties within the scope of a role is an appropriate mitigation to manage a potential conflict of interest.

I'd like to state again: the stewardess simply has been reassigned to another racing code. I'd also like to make clear that, besides managing the potential conflict of interest, the steward has not been treated any less favourably than any other ORI staff member.

Mr WINTER - The steward has been clearly disadvantaged by blowing the whistle. The steward was acting as a harness racing and thoroughbred racing steward beforehand, and she now, as I understand it, was receiving very few race meets in which to preside over.

I understand about managing conflicts of interest, but, following your logic, given that the participants she was complaining about were stood down for a period of months, why was she not reinstated while they were stood down?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank Mr Winter for his question, and I'll ask -

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, the steward was not stood down, and the duties, I understand, were continued. The duties as a casual steward continued.

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Mr WINTER - Minister, do you see it as a problem that your own stewards at the Office of Racing Integrity reported on numerous occasions that everything was fine at Ben Yole's Sidmouth property, but that Mr Murrihy then found that stocking density was too high, it was poorly drained, the feeding regime was inadequate, and there wasn't protection from the weather?

Two things: has any of that changed since Mr Murrihy's review, almost a year ago? Second, don't you see that as a problem that the stewards said everything was fine when Mr Murrihy said that it absolutely wasn't? What does that say about your stewards?

Ms HOWLETT - I thank the member for his question, and I will pass to -

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister: I might start, and then the director may have something to add about current inspections of the property. Mr Murrihy, in his report, explicitly states that the issue is that stewards can only enforce the rules of racing and that currently that the rules of racing did not allow for actions by stewards. I am paraphrasing, so sorry I'm not quoting specifically, but it is in his report, and that's why part of his recommendations was for the equine code of conduct to be progressed as a priority and to be enforceable.

Mr WINTER - Well, on the equine code of conduct, since you've mentioned it, the code was committed to 18 months ago by the former minister, two ministers ago, Madeleine Ogilvie. Why is it that we still don't have an equine code of conduct so that we can look after these horses that are currently living in a mud hole at Sidmouth. It is a hell hole for animals there and it seems like nobody in the Office of Racing Integrity or NRE or you, minister, or anyone cares.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for his question. The equine code of racehorse welfare is publicly available and I will pass it to you. This is a draft copy. It's out for consultation and -

Mr WINTER - Eighteen months later we've got a consultation draft.

Ms HOWLETT - We progressed.

Mr WINTER - It's like the slowest snail in the world.

Mr THOMPSON - Through you, minister, the code of of conduct has been out for consultation, the Office of Racing Integrity has worked very closely with the vet Dr Martin Lenz at TasRacing to develop the draft code, which has been consulted widely through industry and it will now go, I believe, to the rules and policy committee of the racing industry for ratification.

Regarding the inspections at Yole's stables, my office is very aware of the conditions that apply there. We have treated the inspections of those facilities as a really high priority and to date all inspections have determined that the trainer is compliant with the rules of racing and that the conditions observed during the inspections did not breach the *Animal Welfare Act*.

Now that's of course in the absence of the code of practice, which may well impose different levels of scrutiny and levels of practice that will need to be complied with, but, at the moment that is not implemented.

Since 1 January 2020 until 30 June 2024, a total of 63 inspections have been undertaken at the old premises, and most of those inspections have been taken either by a regulatory veterinarian or the veterinarian in accompaniment with stewards, and the steward undertaking those inspections have been rotated around to ensure that different stewards have the opportunity of having different perspectives of what they see.

This is not the only property that is regularly inspected by our stewards and our regulatory vet and similar regimes are followed by a number of other properties in Tasmania.

Dr WOODRUFF - Mr Winter's comments before, we absolutely agree with, about the hell hole conditions that animals are subjected to surviving in under the horse racing and the greyhound racing industry. This report makes it so clear that the conditions exist on 19 properties and they have found enormous evidence through drone footage of the conditions that greyhounds are subjected to living in at Barry Haywood's property, bare concrete floors, no bedding, poor conditions, signs of chewing their beds. At the Nichols and Nash property at Birrallee, where it can get down to minus five degrees overnight, where Zipping Princess had her last days. Also, slime water, freezing cold conditions, rundown sheds, no bedding, signs of chewing. There are many, many more examples in this report.

One of the recommendations is to have a cap on the breeding of greyhounds. This is an obvious thing -

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, can we get to the question?

Dr WOODRUFF - The over-breeding of greyhounds is driving enormous numbers into this industry and there's no traceability. Do you agree and will you support a move to cap the breeding of greyhounds for racing?

Ms HOWLETT - There already is a cap on the amount of litters that a greyhound can have and I'll pass over to Robin to speak to that.

Dr WOODRUFF - No, it's the number of animals, minister, that are going into the industry.

Ms JOHNSTON - They are only bred for the industry; you can't buy a greyhound puppy just for pleasure.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you. Deputy secretary?

Ms WILSON - I have to look it up. I don't know if it's a local rule or a guideline. I'll have to find that for you.

Mr THOMPSON - It's a rule. I might mislead you if I tell you what I think it is.

Ms WILSON - We have to check the exact details of that. There is a local rule around capping the number of litters and the age of the breeding dog. There is already a local rule that applies.

Dr WOODRUFF - There's an enormous number of animals that are being bred only for the purpose of racing and being a by-product essentially of a profit-making industry. Why are there no photos on Facebook of baby greyhounds? Why is it impossible for anyone else in the community to buy greyhounds as puppies. They are only bred for racing and yet there is no traceability from birth of these dogs. Traceability and breeding caps together are what's so critical. Are you looking at traceability? Is that something which is critical? Is it something you will commit to bringing in?

Ms HOWLETT - As I mentioned before, we're looking at the nose print technology that's being looked at nationally, and traceability.

Dr WOODRUFF - Will you introduce that into Tasmania?

Ms HOWLETT - We already have extremely tight laws around the age of bitches when they can have litters and also the amount of litters that a bitch can have; it is extremely low. I don't have that information in front of me but I do know is when we're looking at puppy farms et cetera and the amount of litters a bitch can have, we would have to make greyhounds exempt.

Ms WILSON - Through you, minister, greyhounds already have a stringent regimen and that will become part of what will come forward in our discussion paper to indicate that's their current regimen. What we want to do is look at what will also apply to all dogs, so that we're looking at dealing with some of the animal welfare issues that members have already raised today and that the minister has addressed.

Dr WOODRUFF - The clear gap, minister, is the traceability from birth to death of greyhounds.

Ms HOWLETT - We're certainly looking at that and I believe with microchipping, and please correct me if I'm wrong Rob, I believe it's three months of age - and I think nose printing, the new technology that they're looking at, is available from around six weeks of age you can do nose print technology, but these are options that we are currently looking at a national level.

Mr THOMPSON - Through you, minister, in November this year the use of ear tattoos is being ceased by the greyhound industry. The only form of identification will then be the microchip. The industry is looking at whether that microchip, as a single identifier coupled with the marking up the colour patterns et cetera and gender of the dogs, is sufficient to ensure the identity of that individual animal. As the minister has said, nose printing technology, which looks at the hills and valleys, if you like, of the prints on the nose, which is unique to each animal, as a second identifier. There's a way to go with that technology as to whether it's going to be embraced by industry, both from a practical perspective but also from a cost perspective. That nose print technology could be something that local councillors may also use in the Dog Control Act, but it does come with a cost, and we're still uncertain about what that cost might be and the technology to support it at the moment is microchipping after the end of November.

Ms HOWLETT - Just to your point there, Robin, accurate identification of greyhounds is essential input to racing integrity and animal welfare. Greyhounds have traditionally been identified using ear tattoos and implanted microchips. Some welfare advocates see tattooing as cruel and microchipping as invasive surgery. Greyhounds Australasia has adopted a policy to phase out ear tattoos as a greyhound identifier, leaving microchips as the single identifier. If a microchip fails to read or becomes damaged, there is no definitive way of identifying a dog,

hence such an animal would not be allowed to race, and also has traceability impacts. Most prints are unique to individual dogs and cats; they're akin to human fingerprints, offering accuracy of identification of 99.75 per cent. Greyhound Welfare and Integrity Commissioner GWIC has proposed to introduce the use of nose prints as a secondary greyhound identifier.

Dr WOODRUFF - Will Tasmania go ahead of the national laws or rules in this regard? Will we not wait for all the other states to come on board? It's obviously something that we can and should be doing immediately.

Ms HOWLETT - This is a national model and this is something that we're currently looking at the moment.

Ms WILSON - The other thing that I might add is that there was some funding provided to the RSPCA to look at traceability. My understanding is that by Biosecurity Tasmania will be working with RSPCA to consider their report and I'm looking forward to reading what they propose but that was from funding from the government to get that reporting done and see what they propose and what might be practicable. It was in recognition of exactly the issue you're talking about, which is what do we do around traceability with greyhounds and what's practical with that.

Ms JOHNSTON - I reiterate the concerns of my colleagues Mr Winter and Dr Woodruff around the conditions of those horses at Yole's property and also note that the report released today by Animal Liberation Tasmania outlines a 'hell hole' that hundreds of dogs live in; in Tasmania, on a number of properties. Why does it take so long to establish equine codes of conduct or greyhound welfare standards and I'm particularly interested in greyhound welfare standards. It's almost as if greyhounds and horses are unique to Tasmania. Surely these standards must be in place elsewhere and I do recognise that greyhounds are only allowed to race in eight countries now across the world. I can't understand why we could not have taken best practice models from other jurisdictions and implemented them very quickly and why it takes so long to do consultation on this. Surely, we just determine what the best practice is and the industry complies with best practice. It's not a matter of consulting and watering it down.

Ms HOWLETT - Thank you, Chair, and I thank the member for her question and I'll refer to the deputy secretary to speak more after that.

Ms WILSON - This is a Tasracing process, but what I can say is that the *Animal Welfare Act* still applies in terms of horses, in terms of the broad requirement for an appropriate duty of care, so that still applies, it's not that it's there.

Ms JOHNSTON - Which is woefully inadequate in itself.

Ms WILSON - As I say, it is a matter for Tasracing in terms of the time frame but the standards are under consultation. It's really important that they are based on that best practice but also enforceable - and my understanding is that's being led by the Tasracing chief veterinary officer with a strong focus on good animal welfare.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you for answering that question. The answer was Tasracing is leading the process and there lies the conflict of interest, I think.

Minister, another question I have is in relation to education and training of participants in the industry. The Joint Select Committee in 2016 recommended that mandatory education and training of contemporary animal welfare standards and the provision of the *Animal Welfare Act* be required for all licensed participants within the greyhound racing industry. Minister, can you confirm that every licensed participant in the greyhound racing industry has undergone that training and if not, why not?

Ms HOWLETT - I'm not sure if that's a Tasracing question or an Office of Racing Integrity question.

Mr THOMPSON - I can say that the regular inspections that take place by ORI stewards to the training facilities on all three codes, include an educational component, whereby the stewards confer with the trainers, et cetera, and educate them according to what the expected standards are and use that process as education, if you like, as the first step in compliance. Then if those steps are not taken that are dictated by the stewards during those inspection processes, then some corrective action notices are issued which are then followed by more serious charges should the corrective action notices not be adhered to.

Ms JOHNSTON - To clarify, minister, your government in a status update in May 2022 in response to the education and training requirements said:

Tasracing are currently in negotiations with TasTAFE in relation to delivery of improved training for the greyhound racing industry, where expanding education options with a view for TasTAFE to support animal welfare training, as well as mandatory drug and alcohol training for the racing industry.

It's not just education taken ad hoc when stewards have the opportunity to interact with the licensed participants, it is formal training through TasTAFE, or some other accredited training organisation. Have industry participants engaged and has everyone engaged in an Animal Welfare Standards and Contemporary Practices Training program?

Ms HOWLETT - Unfortunately, we don't have that information as that's a GBE Estimates question for Tasracing. However, I can try and seek that.

Ms JOHNSTON - Could you take that one on notice please?

Ms HOWLETT - I don't know that I can because it's not relevant to this.

Ms JOHNSTON - It's relevant because they had to be licensed participants, so surely, it's a requirement of their licence that they've conducted the relevant training and the licence is issued from ORI.

Ms WILSON - Only if it's a requirement in the rules of racing for greyhounds. We would have to check. That's the connection. The director is able to license, as the director said, under the act, but it's in accordance with the particular rules.

Ms HOWLETT - Before we run out of time I need to table a document too.

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Mr WINTER - In relation to that, I asked earlier, have there been any referrals from the Murrihy or elsewhere to police, and the response was, 'I'd take advice on that'. I just wondered if you could take it on notice so that I can table it.

Ms HOWLETT - I'm happy to take that on notice.

Mr WINTER - Is it up for my call as well?

CHAIR - Yes, but I think the minister had some stuff to table.

Ms HOWLETT - Mrs Pentland asked for the swab data earlier to be tabled for the committee. Can I please table that document?

CHAIR - Noting we finish at 2.15 p.m., I'll go straight to Mr Winter.

Mr WINTER - On 12 December last year, Jaron Urquhart was involved in a horrific workplace incident while working at Ben Yole Racing. The accident occurred at Mr Yole's property where Mr Urquhart fell off the back of a car that he was sitting on. He was subsequently run over by a horse float. His injuries included severe gravel rash requiring a skin graft, broken tibia, fibula, pelvis and ribs. It was a shocking incident. He alleges that he'd been paid in cash for six months before the accident. I shouldn't say accident, the incident. He also possessed an audio recording where licensed trainer Ben Yole can be heard saying, 'I don't have any insurance mate' immediately following the accident, Mr Urquhart was then moved without his consent.

Given that evidence that's been provided to the Office of Racing Integrity, Mr Yole's failure to hold workers' compensation insurance when the crash involving Lily happened, how is it that Ben Yole Racing continues to be seen as a fit and proper person by the Office of Racing Integrity?

Ms HOWLETT - As I stated before, WorkSafe Tasmania is responsible for regulating the *Workers Compensation and Rehabilitation Act*, (WRCA), and for ensuring compliance, including investigating alleged breaches of the act.

I'm not sure if the Office of Racing Integrity has anything more to add, or the Deputy Secretary?

Mr WINTER - I have another question in relation to workers' compensation. In an RTI that I received earlier this year, we RTI'd around workers' compensation claims and [inaudible] correspondence that shows that Tasracing inquired as to the workers' compensation in relation to Ben Yole Racing and, therefore, Wayne Yole Racing, who was then the licensed trainer, and Tasracing seems to be indicating that they believe Wayne Yole should have workers' compensation insurance, and the director of racing at that time responds and says that he doesn't need it because Wayne Yole doesn't have any employees.

Given that Wayne Yole, as to my understanding, trains over 100 horses, and my understanding is he couldn't possibly do that without having employees, how is it that the director of racing and the Office of Racing Integrity have allowed him to continue to operate without workers' compensation insurance?

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Ms HOWLETT - I thank the Leader of the Opposition for his question and I'll hand over to the Office of Racing Integrity.

Mr THOMPSON - Thank you, minister. The time line that we're looking at here is important. I think when that RTI was initiated, it referred to a time when Mr Ben Yole had been exiting from the industry and when Mr Wayne Yole was taking over and he had a very small number of horses. I do recall seeking clarification from him as to whether he had workers' compensation insurance and the response that you referred to a moment ago was what was forthcoming.

Of course, the ongoing issue of workers' compensation insurance is not a matter from a licencing perspective. I've had clear legal advice to say that it is not a consideration as a matter for considering whether a licence application is received or whether a licence is granted. It is one that is for action by WorkSafe Tasmania and, as I said before, if Worksafe Tasmania makes some adverse findings through the court system against any participant, that would be considered should a licencing application come from those participants.

Mr WINTER - Does Wayne Yole have any employees?

CHAIR - Mr Winter, the time being 2.15 p.m., time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Education at 2:30 p.m.

Thank you all for your cooperation.

The Committee suspended from 2.15 p.m.



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Jo Palmer MLC

Wednesday 25 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Behrakis MP (Chair)
Ms Ella Haddad MP (Deputy Chair)
Mr Vica Bayley MP
Ms Kristie Johnston MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr Andrew Jenner MP
Mr Josh Willie MP
Mr Rob Fairs MP
Mrs Beswick MP
Ms Anita Dow MP
Ms Cesily Rosol MP
Ms Ella Haddad MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. JO PALMER MLC

Minister for Education, Minister for Disability Services

Kathrine Morgan-Wicks

Secretary, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Jenny Burgess

Acting Secretary, Department of Education, Children and Young People representatives

Kane Salter

Deputy Secretary Business Operations & Support

Katharine O'Donnell

Director Education Regulation

Ingrid Ganley

Acting Executive Director, Disability and Reform

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The Committee met at 2.30 p.m.

DIVISION 2

(Department of Education, Children and Young People)

CHAIR - (Mr Behrakis) - The time being 2.30 p.m., the scrutiny of the Education portfolio will begin. I welcome the Minister for Education and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard.

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much, Chair. I'd like to introduce my acting secretary, Jenny Burgess. Also joining me at the table is the deputy secretary, Business Operations and Support, Kane Salter.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Education is three hours. We will take a short break for afternoon tea at 4.30 p.m.

The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee, either later that day or in writing, as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question to the minister, and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister for answer.

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

Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much for that. The Tasmanian Liberal Government is committed to ensuring that every child is known, safe, well, and learning. The 2024-25 State Budget contains \$266.7 million in new and additional funding, and into the forward Estimates for the Education portfolio.

As the Minister for Education, I've taken every opportunity to visit our Department for Education, Children and Young People facilities, such as our schools and our family and learning centres, to meet and to listen to our learners, to their families, and to our workforce. We recognise the critically important role our education system plays in supporting young Tasmanians to gain the skills they need to fully contribute to our social and economic future, and lead their best lives. To achieve this, we have dedicated and hardworking staff within the department, including our principals, teachers and support staff, and I do want to take this opportunity to thank them.

As I'm sure you've heard, today is an historic day for Tasmanian government schools, with an agreement reached to see them funded to 100 per cent of the school resourcing standard by no later than 2029. This agreement will see Tasmania's contribution increase to 77.5 per cent and the Commonwealth's contribution to 22.5 per cent. We are really excited that we have been able to reach this deal with the Commonwealth, and about the benefits this extra funding can

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bring to our learners. While we have until 2029 to reach this level of funding, I am committed to moving to the 100 per cent mark as quickly as possible, and work is happening right now to determine that time frame. Further to this, we will always strive to do our best for our learners and our workforce, and that is why we are committed to an independent review.

As minister, I'm committed to providing our students with a safe and inclusive learning environment. My objectives are: to give every young person the opportunity to learn and to improve their literacy skills, so they have the foundational skills they need for learning and life; to increase the education and training options to ensure we are developing our workforce of the future, through increased vocational education and training - VET - investments; and, provide the best possible facilities to support our learners and workforce through new builds, major upgrades and developments, such as through the School Building Blitz.

The 2024-25 state Budget continues the Tasmanian government's record investment and commitment to the education and care of children, young people, and all Tasmanians, so they can lead positive lives and have bright futures.

I'll hand back to you, Chair. Thank you for the opportunity.

CHAIR - I'm going to start questions with Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - Before I start questioning, minister, I'll say that the Labor Party welcomes additional funding into our school system, but there are serious questions here on whether you've secured the best deal for Tasmania. I can say, as a father of young children in the state system, I am disappointed - not only for them, but a generation of kids in the state school system - that you have potentially sold them out.

On Monday, in the other place, you said, 'We firmly believe that we must see 100 per cent funding in our government schools, and that the federal government should be providing that full 5 per cent, not 2.5 per cent. We are standing with other states and territories'. We were holding firm on 5 per cent on Monday and today you signed up to 2.5 per cent. What's changed?

Ms PALMER - It's been a big 24 hours. What I can tell you is that I would have loved the federal Labor government to sign up to 5 per cent and we have spent months lobbying for that. As soon as I became Minister for Education, Jason Clare flew to Tasmania to have face-to-face discussions with me on this. Since that time I also met with him again face-to-face in Sydney to have discussions with him. We've had numerous phone conversations and it would have been fantastic had the federal government signed up to 5 per cent, it would have been great for our state.

It's not just me who's done this work. The previous Minister for Education also stood with other states and territories outside of the Northern Territory and Western Australia to fight for 5 per cent. That deal is off the table from the federal government at the end of this month. There are only days left where there is a deal on the table, so, between the comment that I made on Monday, which I absolutely stood by, I would have loved to have seen 5 per cent from the federal government. They did not come to the party. They have stood very firm at 2.5 per cent and that's the agreement that was made with Western Australia. That is what has been on the table for all the other states and territories.

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I know you need to come to this place with a glass half full and I get that, that's the political side of it, but the reality is -

Mr WILLIE - No, I'm deeply concerned about this.

Ms PALMER - we have been able to secure what I'm advised is around \$300 million that will come in to our state government schools in the next five years, which is actually a really exciting thing to do.

Something that's really important in this agreement that we have signed with the federal government, that we have worked with the minister, Mr Clare, and with the Prime Minister, is a no worse-off deal. At the end of September, states that have signed on, as Tasmania has now, as Western Australia has, as the Northern Territory has, legislation will go before the federal government to allow that money to start to flow. That will start to flow in 2025. If I had not signed on, then we just roll over for another year.

If in another year a different state can get a better deal, we get it too. We have a 'no worse off' agreement. Regardless of what happens with any other state and their negotiations, if they can negotiate a different position, we get that position. I feel very, very safe in the knowledge that that is part of the agreement.

The other thing that we really need to stress here is that the original agreement that was on the table was looking at a very different timeframe with funding flowing through to 2034. We've been able to negotiate the timeframe that the line in the sand has been drawn at 2029. That is when we must see, and are committed to seeing, 100 per cent funding of our public schools, the SRS by 2029, not 2034. That's the deal that we have been able to broker and I am excited at what opportunities this presents for us and to know that this money will be flowing in 2025.

Mr WILLIE - When did you find out about the agreement? Who reached the agreement and who signed it?

Ms PALMER - We've been working on this - and I can only speak from when I was Minister for Education - but this has been around for a considerable length of time. I've been working on this, literally, since I became Minister for Education, with Jason Clare and with his office.

Mr WILLIE - That's not my question. When was the agreement reached, who signed it and when did you find out about it?

Ms PALMER - This element of the agreement I found out about on Monday, that we were actually going to be in a position. It was worked through with the Treasurer, with the Premier and with me.

Mr WILLIE - If you're saying this was on Monday, when did you find out about this on Monday? After that hearing or before?

Ms PALMER - I had an indication that there could be an opportunity that the federal government was presenting, unofficially, prior to the Budget Estimates hearing. However, I did

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not have anything official that was actually part of the work that was done from Monday evening onwards.

Mr WILLIE - What this looks like, minister, is that you have exchanged a commitment to fix a broken promise in the Northern Heart Centre, \$120 million, for a fifty-fifty deal that you were standing against on Monday. Was the Heart Centre part of the negotiation?

Ms PALMER - Any questions around the Heart Centre need to be put to the Premier. I was not part of discussions about the Heart Centre. My focus has been purely as Education minister. I have been in discussions with Jason Clare - more intense discussions in the last month with that deadline of the end of September looming, trying to get this over the line.

I was also very conscious that our secretary, who has had a lot of skin in the game when it comes to this, was also leaving during that September period and that Jenny would be stepping up as acting secretary. There's been a huge amount, some intense work that's been done in the last month on this. When I realised that we actually could be in a position to sign, I got that information on Monday evening.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, the real story here is what the Australian Education Union (AEU) has put out in a withering media release just now. They are devastated. The real story here is that what you're selling - that eventually, in five years' time, Tasmania will be meeting 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard. What we've heard is that you've sold us out. We should have been getting that extra 5 per cent that's needed from the federal government. Instead, Tasmania is going to have to pay 2.5 per cent.

The actual story here is the loophole which you've secured, so that 4 per cent of the funding now can go to non-teaching-related needs, like capital depreciation and school registration. That is not meeting the Schooling Resource Standard. That is not what teachers need, that is not what students need. That is not what classrooms and parents need. You've secured this loophole to be able to pay for some of the things that the state should be paying for. Don't you feel a bit ashamed about that?

Ms PALMER - No, the complete opposite. I'll start by saying I completely reject the beginning of that question. To say that I had 'sold out' Tasmanian students is completely inappropriate and inaccurate. I have been working on this -

Dr WOODRUFF - They are devastated.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms PALMER - I have been working on this for months, as has my team.

Dr WOODRUFF - It's not about you.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms PALMER - We are very proud that we have been able to secure around \$300 million in the next five years. I would have loved for the federal government to put forward 5 per cent. That is not what they've come to the table with. In five days, the deal is off the table, and we

just revert and we roll over. Any state that has not signed up reverts to the same funding arrangement that we have right now. It would have been off the table.

We have managed to secure this deal with a 'no worse off' agreement, so that if that percentage changes, Tasmania will get that percentage. This deal will see money flow to our schools, to our families, to these students, starting from next year, which is really exciting. This is a great thing, with the 'no worse off' deal. Can't go backwards here, only going forwards.

When you talk about the 4 per cent cap, I've had a number of conversations and I'm absolutely listening to our stakeholders on that. I, too, have some concerns about that, and we are progressing a body of work so that I have a better understanding of what that actually looks like. I have said to stakeholders that is something that I will be looking at. The other thing that's really important to remember here is that the Schooling Resource Standard is not the only way that we invest in schools.

The Tasmanian government invests in so many other ways as well, particularly when it comes to our infrastructure spend. We know that students, to achieve the best educational outcomes that they can, need to be in good and sensitive environments. Environments that inspire them. We know how important it is that they are safe environments. We know how important that is for our workforce, as well. I am going to schools. I am on the ground, talking to teachers and principals and parent associations, and they are talking to me about the importance of those environments. There's a huge investment there, as well.

Dr WOODRUFF - On the loophole - can we talk about that, then?

Ms PALMER - And as I've said, with regard to the 4 per cent that has always been attributed to depreciation - which every other state and territory has as well, I'm advised - I have concerns around that and I'm looking into it.

Dr WOODRUFF - With that 4 per cent loophole, it is shameful that the Prime Minister didn't close that, and it is on the head of the Labor Party that they didn't do that. But, you have the choice as the minister and the Tasmanian Education Union is so clear that represents \$260 million over the next five years that will come out of Tasmanian schools. If you don't close that 4 per cent loophole, that money - in addition to the fact that we're paying the extra 2.5 per cent, and you didn't manage to secure 5 per cent - but that 4 per cent is something you can do something about. It will actually mean \$260 million over five years that's funnelling into department costs like overheads and depreciation. These are not things that it should be spent on. It should be spent on school students. Will you commit to working to close that loophole? Just to make the decision, actually. There's no work involved. You just make the decision. You've got the power as minister. Will you do that?

Ms PALMER - I don't think I could have been any clearer that I have concerns around that and I am looking into it. I've made it very, very clear.

Dr WOODRUFF - They want to hear more than concerns, minister. They want to hear action on this.

CHAIR - Order, Dr Woodruff.

Ms PALMER - I've answered the question.

Mr JENNER - The education union has said that the minister hasn't decided yet where the \$81 million cuts in the public education bill will be applied. We've got, at the moment, 2217 students in Tasmanian government schools waiting to see school psychologists. Another 380 are waiting to see social workers, and there are another 598 waiting to see speech therapists and pathologists. The education union has stated most students are waiting up to 250 days just for initial assessment with a psychologist, and then another 198 days to receive any intervention. These students can't afford to be waiting that long for these services. The government really does need to be investing in ways of attracting more social workers and psychologists to our public schools.

Can you indicate: will the \$81 million in cuts be applied to some of these services? Especially in the light of looking at our Tasmanian AFL team, where we're spending \$12 million a year on players and that we're looking at only getting two players a year from actual Tasmania, the rest will be from out of state. That's \$144 million in 12 years. It seems our money seems to be being spent in the wrong places.

Ms PALMER - That was quite a long statement. Can you reiterate what your question is?

Mr JENNER - Basically, the speech therapists and the psychologists that are needed in schools at the moment - there's a huge waiting list of up to 18 months - and what I was worried about is the \$81 million in cuts, because it hasn't been told where it's going to be applied to. Will it be applied to this area that actually needs more funding, not cuts?

Ms PALMER - The budget efficiency dividend that needs to be achieved in the Education portfolio for 2024-25 sits at \$11.8 million, \$23.9 million in 2025-26, and then \$36.4 million in 2026-27.

Operating efficiencies are subject of consideration while protecting our frontline services; I want to be really clear on this. In our schools, our school principals will continue to operate on a business as usual basis in filling their allocated positions. They will not be asked to implement vacancy control processes in their schools. Teacher allocation methods will remain consistent with the school resourcing standard and the fairer funding model. For example, schools will have an increase in resources where it's demonstrated that there is a need for that. It could be increased enrolments. It could be students being enrolled who might have a disability. It's just normal practice in a school. That will not change.

The immediate focus is on achieving the 2024-25 efficiency allocation whilst, in parallel, working through the strategies and the actions to achieve the estimated structural reduction of \$36.4 million in 2026-27.

Some of the things - we're very much focused now on the 2024-25 and the \$11.8 million. I've brought along some examples of where, as a minister, I am looking and where I'm asking questions. I will say straight up that this is really difficult. This is a very challenging thing that we have to do. I am very much in step and in a team mindset with the department that we need to work through this together. That is a process we're undertaking at the moment. Some of those strategies and some of those things that we're putting on the table now as part of workshopping, this is as part of overall resource management. DECYP will consider

opportunities to redirect resources to roles funded to support the response to the commission of inquiry. This review includes consideration of pausing or stopping non-COI activity.

I can say there won't be vacancy control processes; that won't be happening. The review is not going to impact on the delivery of any key government priorities or any of our frontline services. We're looking and we're talking and fleshing out things like ceasing or pausing or scaling back non-priority activities that are not this government's priorities or that are not commitments funded in the 2024-25 state Budget. Capturing salary savings that occur through genuine vacancies and the timing of filling those vacancies. And also really clear focus on reducing expenditure in those non-salary costs, which won't see an impact to frontline activity. So, things like staff travel and transport, consultancies, those types of expenses. Office expenses, equipment expenses, office accommodation is something else that we've been workshoping and staff ICT costs.

I don't mean to be flippant, but does everybody need a new laptop each year? Those type of discussions. That's where we are fleshing out what we can do in those spaces. What do those numbers look like and, if there are ways that we can achieve the same outcomes but be more efficient, then that's what we need to do.

I think it's also asking questions around outcomes. We may have always funded something; that doesn't automatically mean you just keep funding it. What are the outcomes? What's being achieved by that? Show me the outcomes. If it's working really well, we've got to protect it. If we're actually not getting outcomes, then maybe we need to look at pivoting in that space.

They're the sort of discussions that we are having and, at the moment, very much focused on the 2024-25 efficiency that we need to find.

Mr JENNER - Thank you, minister. That's great. Obviously this is very serious, so it's not a cusp thing. Can I take it then that there won't be cuts to that area?

Ms PALMER - Sorry, I didn't answer the second half of your question. My apologies. We're actually trying to get more staff in that area. We have waiting lists. We want more. It's really hard to find the people to fill positions, which is why, in the election commitment, we've put forward 20 new scholarships in this space to try to encourage our social workers, our psychologists, our speech therapists to consider coming into the education space rather than perhaps private practice.

Those scholarships have already been out and I understand we've already had quite some success with that. Also fantastic that we're really hoping that we're going to see with this year our first graduates from speech pathology coming out of UTAS. So, again, it's been wonderful to engage with the university and to see how they've actually been running that particular course. A really good strategy that the university has been using is that if you're a student in your studying speech pathology and you're from the north-west coast, when you're doing your work placement, they are placing you in your community, in your area, to further strengthen those connections as well.

It will be exciting to see, with those graduates coming through the university, what that will mean, certainly in that speech pathology place. We are trying to get more.

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Mr FAIRS - Minister, I'd like to ask you about literacy. You've said many times that the elements of structured literacy are being taught in every childhood classroom. Can you outline to the house what this actually looks like?

Ms PALMER - Yes, certainly. Thank you very much, Mr Fairs - seems a bit funny calling you that - for that question. Our government is absolutely committed to providing quality education for our students, and learning to read is absolutely foundational to all other learning. What we're seeing is children in their early years of school being provided with evidence-based phonics instruction, with children learning how to decode and encode letters into sounds - a skill that is essential for them to be able to read and write. I've seen firsthand, and I can tell you how engaged students are in their learning.

Our teachers are being supported to teach this important skill, with training and classroom-ready resources that are freely available to every school. These supports are helping our teachers by reducing the time that they need to plan, and giving them back time to focus on teaching.

For students, we are making sure that they have the right texts to be able to practise their phonics, with \$800,000 of funding for decodable readers over the next two years in the last state election. This funding will provide every prep classroom in 2025 with a starter pack of books, making sure that our young learners have a successful start to learning to read.

I've certainly heard on my many visits to schools how this way of teaching is making a huge difference - particularly Invermay Primary School, who was just so proud to talk about their NAPLAN results, and they have been using this way of teaching for a number of years now, and they're really beginning to see those results.

There was one particular student, this young student in the north of the state, who'd been really struggling with their learning, and they didn't like school. And then, you fast forward six months, and they're now reading and they're writing sentences and, importantly, really importantly, they're excited to be coming to school, because of the way that they're being taught. It's really exciting to be part of an election commitment that is adding extra support and resources into this space.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, just earlier you said, 'I had an indication that there could be an opportunity that the federal government was presenting before the hearing on Monday.' You went into that hearing, and you said things like, 'We are standing firm, which is what our stakeholders have asked us to do, to see the full 5 per cent funding from the federal government'. Did you mislead that committee?

Ms PALMER - I absolutely did not, and I completely and utterly reject that. There was an indication from an informal conversation that there may be an opportunity to further the discussions that I had already been having with minister Clare over many, many months. When I went into the budget Estimates Committee meeting, the official position I took in was that, exactly as you have quoted, and it was not until after budget Estimates - or even, really, until the next day - that we were in a position to look at this formally.

As a minister, Mr Willie, you just can't go into a hearing such as this and speak about something that has not gone through a proper process, that you have not had on-the-record conversations with. That would be really irresponsible as a minister. I had an informal

indication that perhaps there may be some movement. I've had a number of informal conversations where I have thought, over the last four months, that we might be on the verge of being in a position to sign a deal, and it hasn't quite come off. This has been happening regularly with me and my staff in this. It would be very irresponsible to hear just part of an informal discussion and then take that to this forum without any indication that that was correct.

The official position was that if we couldn't reach an agreement, that would be to the best benefit, in my mind, for Tasmanians. Remember, I only had five days left and the whole deal was off the table. We have been stepping towards this, working really hard trying to find a pathway through. There was an indication that maybe we might be able to do something, which had been said a number of times before over the last three to four months. I went in with what the official position was, came out of budget Estimates and then began to wait to hear if anything further had progressed.

Mr WILLIE - You were pretty strong, though. Why didn't you just say, 'We're in negotiation with the federal government', and leave it vague? I'm not asking you to talk about informal conversations, but you had this information, you walk into a hearing and you're really strong about it with your language. It does look like you're misleading. You could have reflected a bit more reality of the situation that you were in negotiation with the federal government.

Ms PALMER - Through you, Chair. I'm very interested that you would want a minister to come into budget Estimates and be as vague as she possibly could. That is an intriguing statement from you. I went into budget Estimates with a formal position that I have held, and I have held with all other states and territories outside of the Northern Territory and the Western Australian state. There have been a number of times in the last few months where minister Clare and I have thought maybe we might be able to get something over the line. This has been happening on a regular basis. That was just the timing that it happened to be. I went into budget Estimates very clear on what my official line was that I have held since I became Education minister. Then sometime after budget Estimates, another flow of information started to come through and we began working.

Mr WILLIE - You talk about an opportunity that the federal government was presenting for the hearing. What was that opportunity? What had changed for you to consider that deal that you were saying you wouldn't sign up to?

Ms PALMER - No, there was just an informal discussion.

Mr WILLIE - That is not what you said before.

CHAIR - Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - You said an opportunity.

Ms PALMER - Sorry, there was an informal discussion that perhaps there might be an opportunity.

Mr WILLIE - Was that the heart centre?

Ms PALMER - That was not raised with me, Mr Willie.

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CHAIR - Order. Mr Willie, I am allowing people to go down a line of questioning but if questions are asked, can the minister's answer be heard in silence and I'll give you the opportunity to ask follow-up questions.

Mr WILLIE - You said there was an opportunity being presented by the federal government. Was that the heart centre being put on the table?

Ms PALMER - No, what was given to me was that there was an opportunity that we might be able to sign a deal in the Education space, and then I had to go into budget Estimates. That's where my head was. Let's be really, really clear that this is a wonderful outcome for Tasmania. I get what you are trying to do but, to be honest, I can't predict or dictate to the federal government about when an opportunity is going to be presented. They don't look at my diary or the department's diary and say, 'Oh, this isn't a good time for this, she's in budget Estimates.' I have to respond, as a minister, when I can. There was an informal indication that perhaps there might be an opportunity. It was as informal as that. Then I went into budget Estimates. I had my formal position, because you've got it. As I've already said to you, these types of opportunities have been presented a number of times in the last few months, and we've had to work through them. This was not an abnormal thing for me as Education Minister.

Mr WILLIE - We're trying to get to the bottom of what has changed, minister, for you to sign up to the deal. I've read the press releases. I've read all of your comments. I've read the previous minister's comments. You were resolute that the federal government had to pay the 5 per cent. That's changed on Monday, and I'm trying to get to the bottom of what was being offered that was different to before.

Ms PALMER - I think the thing that was different to before was the trajectory. Anything that has been looked at before the formal offer, that went to every state and territory, was always talking about 2034. This was an opportunity that had a different trajectory that we might be able to look at, and that the federal government would be willing to come to the table, and I drew the line in the sand at 2029. That's five years difference that we might be able to get to 100 per cent funding in five years. Although, can I assure you, my focus is actually to get there a lot quicker if I can, but the line in the sand is at 2029. That was not on the table prior to this. That is what changed for me to go, 'Okay, this is serious, because I'm about to run out of time to negotiate anything. After September, there's no more money at all, and now there was an offer that looked at a different trajectory that the federal government might be open to'.

Dr WOODRUFF - There are two issues here that I can see, minister. One is that you promised that you were going to go and fight for 5 per cent and you only secured 2.5 per cent. The state is going to be paying 2.5 per cent. The biggest issue from the education union's point of view - the union representing teachers and other school staff - is the 4 per cent loophole that remains. It should have been a generational opportunity. What it's meant to be achieving, this SRS, the School Resource Standard, is to bring the amount of money required to bring four out of five students to the minimum standards. The AEU have identified that it should be with this 5 per cent that's coming - 2.5 per cent state and federal - \$1000 per student a year to fully fund Tasmanian schools. That's what's required.

Instead, the State Government is going to keep on pulling out, stealing from that extra money, some \$900 per student. Can you see that it's not a happy day for people who are working in this sector, because that's what's required to get students up to four out of five just having

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a minimum standard of schooling. They are devastated that that loophole hasn't been closed. Will you commit to closing that loophole?

Ms PALMER - I've already answered this question. I don't know how to answer it any other way. I've spoken -

Dr WOODRUFF - Could you try again?

Ms PALMER - Through you, Chair, I've already answered this question -

Dr WOODRUFF - No, you haven't.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms PALMER - I've already answered this question and I don't know how to answer it any other way. I have spoken with stakeholders. I am very aware of their concerns around the 4 per cent, and I have already said here, and also to stakeholders, this does concern me and I need to have a look at it.

CHAIR - Additional questions, Dr Woodruff, and I will remind -

Dr WOODRUFF - That was one question. I get two.

CHAIR - Do you have any additional questions?

Dr WOODRUFF - I'll just make the point that being concerned is not the same thing as making a commitment, and that won't cut it when it comes to the proper funding that's needed for students. The government has received funding from the Better Schools funding agreement today. It's contingent on initiatives that support wellbeing for learning, including students having greater access to mental health professionals and initiatives to strengthen teacher and school leader wellbeing. In your response to Estimates on Monday, we heard that there are 2217 students in Tasmania waiting, on average, more than a year for an intervention from a school psychologist. There's not a cent that's been budgeted to recruit and retain more allied health professionals in schools. How do you intend to meet the requirement of the 'better schools' funding agreement?

Ms PALMER - All government schools and child and family learning centres have access to professional support staff, which includes school psychologists, social workers and speech and language pathologists. These specialists play a vital role in our schools by helping students to learn, to join in at school and to build wellbeing and resilience for the best outcomes.

Over the last decade, our government has employed record numbers of staff across the education workforce and this includes increasing the overall number of professional support staff on the ground, providing direct support to children and young people by 59.85 FTE. Now, the way our professional support staff workforce is allocated and managed across the department is complex and I will pass to the acting secretary.

Ms BURGESS - Thank you, minister. The increase in the professional support staff and that increase that's occurring over time and across the forward Estimates will help reduce those wait times for children and young people. But let's be clear, we operate in a triage system, so

when we have information around children and young people and what they need, our professional support staff work to ensure that those children have the supports that they need to engage in their learning.

Professional support staff are one element of that work. We have wellbeing teams in schools that make sure that the students in their school are triaged and that they have the supports that they need and that we broker in the need for those students so that they are well supported and can learn.

We have inclusive practice coaches, whose job it is to make sure that those children and young people are included in the learning, included in the classrooms and that they've got the behavioural supports that they might need. In addition to that, the levels of funding that have gone into trauma and students with a disability has meant that there are more staff in schools that are supporting our children and young people to make sure that they get what they need to be known and safe and well in the context of learning.

Dr WOODRUFF - Well, thank you, minister, for that explanation but the fact is that there are over 2200 students who are not getting those needs met because they are not able to access school psychologists. Waiting for more than a year on average is not support, so while the government has put more money in, you have not put a red cent more in this Budget into recruiting and retaining allied health professionals such as school psychologists. You haven't, and you're not meeting the need.

Do you accept that you're not meeting the need and that you actually have done nothing in this Budget to shift the dial for those average 2200 students?

Ms PALMER - I disagree with the way that you have worded your question, which I think will just be probably repeated through much of the day. Can I just quickly correct the record on the opening comment that I made in answering your question? I think I said this includes increasing the overall number of professional support staff on the ground providing direct support to children and young people by 59.85 FTE. It's 79. My apologies, I didn't realise I had read that wrong.

There's a couple of things here, we know that we have issues with workforce shortages, so recruitment of professional support staff certainly remains a challenge in an environment of national shortages, with Tasmanian recruitment campaigns ongoing and a number of selection processes recently finalised.

Through our 2024-25 State Budget, we are continuing to provide support for this workforce and funding of 20 new scholarships for the next generation of speech and language pathologists and psychologists in Tasmania. The funding is in addition to the nine scholarships already available for speech pathology for 2024.

I can confirm that our 2024-25 Budget includes funding of \$9.76 million over 2024-25 and the forward Estimates to continue the investment in our 2023-24 Budget commitment for an additional 20 FTE professional support staff positions, the 2022 Allied Health Professionals Agreement, including additional recruitment and retention initiatives such as increased remuneration, enhanced career pathways and more flexible work arrangements. Further recruitment initiatives have included the creation of promotable positions between base-grade and senior levels and the development of graduate recruitment pathways.

In addition, a speech pathology qualification commenced at UTAS in July 2022, which will also boost the recruitment pipeline over the longer term.

The scholarships that we have put forward that are part of this current budget process are for students who are in their final year of an accredited speech pathology university course or who expect to complete all requirements of their course by mid 2025. Psychology students, they must be in their fifth year of an accredited 5+1 internship or in their second year of an accredited masters pathway to registration program at an Australian university and expect to complete their course in 2024.

Successful applicants will be provided with \$25,000 across their scholarship term to contribute towards university course costs. They will be offered secure employment with the Tasmanian government for a minimum of three years. The scholarship placements are offered across Tasmania and we have a real focus on those regional areas.

I should also state the wellbeing and the learning needs of our students, it is our highest priority. We're really aware that students have to be in a frame of mind where they're in a good place that they are able to learn and, as has already been stated by the acting secretary, there's that effective triaging that actually ensures that students with those serious or complex needs are actually able access student support services in a timely manner.

Ms JOHNSTON - In answer to Mr Jenner's question earlier about cuts of \$80 million across the forward Estimates to education, you indicated that in the 2024-25 period of \$11.8 million and you gave a list of items you're looking at to make savings. One of those included non-priority activities, could you perhaps give an example or a few examples of what you would consider to be non-priority activities.

Ms PALMER - Yes, absolutely. I'll pass to the acting secretary. Thank you.

Ms BURGESS - Together with the minister, we are looking at where there are functions that we perform that can possibly provide savings. By way of example, you would appreciate that within a big department like Education there are a high number of policies and procedures that are on an annual or biannual or four-year rotational basis.

That takes a significant amount of work to make sure that they're contemporised. What we would be doing is looking at, for example, areas where they are non-critical or non-urgent pieces of policy work and that we would be able to either slow down if there was low risk, or delay even further if needed. Therefore, through that process, we would be able to then move those staff into areas that were being prioritised, and that would be a way of ensuring that we weren't building our staffing but we were using our staffing wisely to make sure that we were meeting the needs. We would always prioritise the needs of children and young people, so anything that directly impacts on them being known, safe, well or learning would be absolutely prioritised in that work.

The other thing that we would leverage off is as a small jurisdiction there are often ways that we can work with other jurisdictions rather than reinvent the wheel. One really good example of that is the work that we've done in the student wellbeing survey. Rather than in that situation develop our own survey and use the resource to do that, we've leveraged off the work

of South Australia so that we can use their survey work with them and not duplicate unnecessary functions.

We'd be looking also nationally to work with our colleagues as we've done in the Respectful Relationships area, as we're doing when we're thinking about years 11 and 12 course development and curriculum about how we might actually leverage some of that, rather than as a small jurisdiction going it alone, and for us that makes a lot of sense.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, minister. You also outlined some non-salary costs where you're hoping to achieve some savings and you included things like travel and transport, office equipment, consultancies and ICT. These are often areas that teachers put their hand in their own pocket to try to fund any shortages in their classrooms. I know numerous teachers will pay extraordinary amounts to ensure their classrooms are adequately equipped with a whole range of things, including stationery and things like that. Can you guarantee that with these cuts to these consumables or non-salary costs that no teacher will have to put their hand in their pocket to adequately equip their classrooms?

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much. I'll refer you to the acting secretary.

Ms BURGESS - Thank you. Absolutely. The resourcing to schools is off the table. So therefore, there will not be changes to the non-salary component of the funding to schooling outside those normal things that happen over a three-year cycle where we look at student enrolments and the students that are there. So those normal practices will apply but outside of that, we wouldn't be looking at reducing non-salary resources to schools.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, we know that schools aim to provide an environment that's inclusive and equitable. Can you provide the committee with some examples of how the government is supporting this area, please?

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much, Mr Fairs, for your question. The Tasmanian government is committed to providing all students with access to inclusive and equitable learning experiences, environments and quality curriculum. Our aim is to ensure that every child is known, safe, well, and learning. Since starting in the education portfolio, I've visited many of our schools and I'm constantly impressed by the environments that our school staff create for our students. Each is different and meets the needs of its learning community. For example, Exeter Primary School, Hobart City High, Big Picture and the Northern Support schools, they are well looked after spaces, they're constructed with such care both inside and out. I can see teachers and leaders that are acting with care and respect. I know that our schools are inclusive places where a student is supported to achieve success. Our government is committed to continuing to support our schools to do this.

The Educational Adjustments Disability Funding model is our biggest financial commitment designed to provide needs-based targeted support for students with disability. Through this funding, Tasmanian government schools are provided with additional resources to support implementation of adjustments for students with disability. Further to this, our government of course commissioned KPMG to conduct an independent review of that actual model's implementation, which demonstrated, I guess, our commitment to refining that process and to ensuring that it is a really effective process for students with disability on the ground. My department has a number of teams available to work closely with students and their families to ensure that they receive the tailored supports that they need across our government schools.

Our government is committed also to closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students. All students who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders are required to have their learning tailored through a learning plan and resources are available through the department's Aboriginal Education Services to support this. We all work to ensure Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander students reach their full potential and that all learners build a deeper understanding and a respect for Tasmanian Aboriginal history and living culture. Our government welcomes students and their families from diverse cultures. Resources are available to schools to support students who have English as an additional language - so it's EAL - and these resources can be used flexibly by schools so that they're able to respond to changing needs of an individual student.

These examples are just a few of the ways in which our government is supporting our schools to be places that are welcoming, where people do feel that sense of belonging and an empowerment to achieve their full potential. There are just some wonderful things that are being done in our schools to provide those really inclusive environments and those equitable environments. I've been to a number of schools where you can see that work is quite evident.

Mr WILLIE - You said earlier, minister, that the trajectory was enough to clinch the deal that up until Monday you said was a bad deal for the state. I'm interested in the Premier's involvement in the negotiation. Who signed off on the deal? Was it you or was it him? Are you aware of anything else that was being negotiated?

Ms PALMER - I signed a letter to minister Jason Clare. He had sent me a letter that I responded to and I signed that. As for the Premier's involvement, you need to take that to the Premier. I have a very clear focus on education and that's where my focus has clearly been.

Mr WILLIE - Was the Premier involved in the negotiation?

Ms PALMER - As I said, you would need to ask the Premier those questions. I'm not going to answer on behalf of the Premier. My clear focus has been on education and when it became apparent that we could see that much better trajectory of seeing money flowing into our government schools I knew that was a wonderful opportunity. To reiterate to you, included in my conversations with minister Clare was the 'No Worse Off' deal.

With five days before any deal was going to be off the table for Tasmania, before those five days were up that there would be no more money flowing over and above the agreed position we were in, this was an opportunity to see that trajectory brought right back to 2029 and have that 'No Worse Off' deal. If any other state in the coming year has an opportunity and are successful in getting a higher percentage rate or another aspect of the deal, Tasmania is in a very good position to have that 'No Worse Off' deal.

Mr WILLIE - I don't see higher revenue states, Labor-governed states, falling over themselves to sign up to this sort of deal. We've got Western Australia with revenue that is the envy of the nation; the Northern Territory got a special deal, they got 40 per cent federal funding; and you've signed up Tasmania to get 22.5 per cent. How is that a good deal?

Ms PALMER - In the next five years at the most, we will see \$300 million flow to our government schools, students and our workforce, looking at what more can be done in the wellbeing aspect of our students and our workforce? What more can we do in literacy? What

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more can we do in Year 1 phonics and the early years numeracy checks? I'm not sure if what you're suggesting is that we should have stayed at 20 per cent?

Mr WILLIE - I just mean you should have fought for Tasmania.

Ms PALMER - Fight we did, the Education minister before me and this became an absolute priority for me when I became Education Minister to get up to speed on this deal because I arrived at quite a pivotal point in this and our team has fought all the way. With five days to go and a federal government that made it very clear that they were not in a position to move from the 2.5 per cent, the two options in front of me were nothing, zero, no more dollars flowing to Tasmania or an opportunity to see \$300 million flow to Tasmanian government schools in the next five years and a 'No Worse Off' deal. I don't know what you would have done, Mr Willie, but I can tell you that it was a wonderful opportunity.

Mr WILLIE - Fought for Tasmania, that's what I would have done.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms PALMER - I haven't finished.

CHAIR - Order. I will let the minister finish and then I'll let Mr Willie ask a follow-up.

Ms PALMER - They were the two options that were in front of me and the clock was ticking. When I have to front up to a school, to a parent association meeting and they could have said to me, 'You let this opportunity go. We're going to have no more funding. We're just going to sit at that 20 per cent for another year and just see what happens,' or I was able to get a 'no-worse-off deal' and see that money flowing as of next year, there will be opportunities next year that, had we not signed up to this, we would not have had those opportunities, and the 'no-worse-off deal' was the most critical part of this.

Other states are trying to, you know, they have to manage their own business. They are in discussions with minister Clare. I'm not part of those discussions. My focus is on Tasmania. Yes, we saw the NT sign up and that was a deal that was for the Northern Territory. We saw WA sign up and I had the opportunity to see millions of dollars flowing next year and I am absolutely rapt that we've been able to secure this for Tasmania.

Mr WILLIE - What does it cost the Tasmanian government over the life of the agreement, minister?

Ms PALMER - Yes, so we are looking through that now. We are. That's what we're working through at the moment -

Mr WILLIE - Surely you know when you sign up for something.

CHAIR - Mr Willie, can you let the minister answer the question?

Ms PALMER - We are working through that now with Treasury and with DPAC and with my department and across our government, we are absolutely committed to play our part and to see 100 per cent funding for our government schools in the earliest time frame that we possibly can. That certainly is my focus.

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Mr WILLIE - I find it hard to believe -

CHAIR - Last question for Mr Willie.

Mr WILLIE - I find it hard to -

Dr WOODRUFF - I thought that was the last question. That's what you said. You did.

CHAIR - I did say that, Dr Woodruff.

Dr WOODRUFF - Minister, you've been saying we're going to move to full funding as quickly as we can, and that's my focus. But educators and advocates have been calling for full funding for over a decade and it's really clear in this deal that it looks like there's drip feeding over the next five years.

Notwithstanding the 4 per cent loophole which we've just discussed, which is a shame and something that you need to fix urgently - exactly when do you think that Tasmania will achieve full funding for its public schools under this agreement?

Ms PALMER - The agreement that we have been able to secure is that the line in the sand for when we must see 100 per cent funding is 2029, and I have been very clear with you that I'm absolutely focused on seeing us get to 100 per cent as quickly as we possibly can. But, you know, what was initially on the table was a deal that wouldn't see us get to that until 2034. That was not acceptable. To bring that back to 2029 was a far more reasonable position to be in, and I will have a very clear focus that I would love to see that happen before 2029.

Dr WOODRUFF - You said before, 'There will be opportunities next year,' and then you said, 'for millions of dollars to flow.'

Ms PALMER - Yes.

Dr WOODRUFF - There's nothing in the Budget in the forward Estimates at all, no increase in funding from this government. You're meant to be putting in 2.5 per cent. The forward Estimates are four years of the five years that this is meant to be fully funded. Where's the money flowing from, the millions of dollars next year that you talked about? Is that flowing from the federal government or is that flowing from the state government? And can you be clear with the committee, how many millions you're talking about will be flowing next year? Which is what you said.

Ms PALMER - Our intention is that we will see 2025, 26, 27, 28, 29 and that's the work that's been done by Treasury and DPAC and my department now to ensure that we are at 100 per cent by 2029. My clear focus is that I would like to see us at 100 per cent funding before that time, but there are discussions that need to be had with DPAC, with Treasury, with my department and with the federal government as well, but I am very confident that this process will begin in 2025.

Dr WOODRUFF - You just said millions will flow next year but then you've just said that you've got to go and have chats to DPAC and Treasury and hear what they have to say about it. How can you say that millions are going to flow next year? How do you know that?

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How many millions are you talking about? Are you talking about \$1 million, \$5 million or \$100 million? This is hundreds of millions of dollars which, by the way, you're going to take the majority back unless you change your position. You said millions next year. How many millions?

Ms PALMER - That's the modelling. That's-

Dr WOODRUFF - So, you're just making it up?

CHAIR - Dr Woodruff, you've just asked the question, can you let the minister answer the question, please?

Ms PALMER - That's the modelling that's been done now. We haven't negotiated the final trajectory with the federal government. We have said we must get to 100 per cent funding by 2029. That's the line in the sand that we have said as a state government. That's where we have to get to. We are now looking at what does that look like in 2025, 26, 27, 28 and 100 per cent at 2029. As I've already said to you, I have a very clear focus that I would love to see and I will be fighting to see that 100 per cent come in earlier if that's what we are able to do. The deal that we have with the federal government is that we will get to 100 per cent before 2029.

Dr WOODRUFF - You got no basis to say that millions will flow next year. You don't have a piece of paper, you don't have any agreement that says it will start next year. You don't have anything that says that the federal government will put their 2.5 per cent in before 2029. It might be that they hold it all back for five years. You don't know that won't be the case but you've told us millions will flow next year. I think you're being a bit loose with your language in that regard and I think you should be much clearer for teachers and staff who are desperately waiting for this money how many millions next year, because they're not in the budget?

Ms PALMER - That's the modelling. That is the modelling, that is the work that is being done now and I am advised that, based on that modelling, that is the expectation that money will be flowing next year, which is what makes this so exciting for the teachers that you're talking about, for their families, for those students that based on base modelling that we are going to see money flowing next year.

I guess worst-case scenario is that we will get to 100 per cent at 2029. My focus is that we get to that 100 per cent funding before 2029, and that's what I'm working towards. That's what I'm working towards with our government, that's what I'm working towards with the federal government.

What we do know is that both governments have a really firm commitment that is now part of an agreement that we will get to 100 per cent funding by 2029. Prior to this deal, the only other offer on the table was that we would get there by 2034. We will now get there by 2029. This is a very exciting day for those teachers and those students and those families that we will see this flowing from 2025.

Dr WOODRUFF - They've spoken and said they don't feel your level of enthusiasm. They're on the record as saying that.

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Mrs BESWICK - I have come across several instances where policies have been considered in internal documents and not released publicly from Department of Education. Minister, could you elaborate on the specific criteria or framework the Department of Education uses when deciding whether a policy should be classified as internal or external? In particular, how does the department ensure that policies which directly impact the welfare and care of children are appropriately communicated to stakeholders, including parents, educators in the wider community?

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much. I think I'll pass that one to the acting Secretary.

Ms BURGESS - We have a team of people that look at the policies for the agency and determine firstly the audience for that policy. Now if the audience is predominantly and primarily staff-focused, those policies and procedures and the guidance that sit underneath that will be internally facing. Those that have a broader audience, or a policy where there are implications for stakeholders that need to meet a commitment as part of that policy process, so an accountability, then we'd think about whether that needs to be public facing.

By way of example, the student behaviour policy should be public facing, because not only does it place requirements on our staff about how they deal and engage with and implement that, but there are also broader requirements for other people about how they might undertake that work. So it's really the audience and who that is.

Sometimes we'll find that a number of policies are public facing, then the procedures are internally facing, because they are to deal with the day-to-day operations and accountabilities of staff.

Mrs BESWICK - When you are looking at a stakeholder group, how are you determining that they shouldn't have access to it? You said if it does affect a range of stakeholder groups, you might give them access to it.

Ms BURGESS - In this space there is a legislative framework. Not for all policies, but for a high number of policies, there is a legislative framework that determines who has access to, or who should be able to see, those policies and procedures. Where there are legislative requirements, for example, a parent must ensure that a young person attend school, then that requirement immediately says it needs to be public facing.

Firstly, we would look at the legislative environment, and if there was no legislative environment, then we'd be looking at the functions and requirements of the procedure or the policy, then make a determination on that. If it involves external stakeholders or working with the department, we'd need to make it public facing.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, as we know, there are particular challenges on the west coast for families, students and the workforce. Do you think it's acceptable and are you doing enough as Education minister to support west coast schools?

Ms PALMER - Great, thank you very much for that question. Can I begin by saying what an incredible job our staff do on and in our west coast schools. This was certainly very evident when I went to visit in July. It was amazing to watch how they operate, and also to recognise some of the challenges that they face in the job that they do.

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We want all of our schools to have the resources they need to ensure, as the Acting Secretary and I have said many times, that students are known, that they feel that they are safe, that they are well, and importantly, that they are learning. That is why our government is investing \$3.5 million over four years for the hard-to-staff teacher incentive program, and investing additional \$15 million towards building and upgrading housing for 25 teachers in our rural and remote communities. That's including the west coast of Tasmania.

These houses will be tailored to better meet the current needs of our staff, for the staff that are there, but also in a bid to attract teachers to some of these more hard-to-staff schools and to some of these remote locations, so that they are going home to a beautiful environment at the end of a long day. New staff can also access rental accommodation at just \$10 a week and also receive assistance with relocation expenses.

Our government worked with stakeholders to ensure incentives are in place in the 2023 Teachers Agreement to attract and retain teaching staff in isolated schools. As a government, we increased financial incentives above those agreed upon through the agreement, and these additional incentives include an increase in the initial settling-in payment from \$2759 per year up to \$6000 per year, and an increase in payments for completing a full year of employment in Years 4, 5 and 6 from \$5523 per year up to \$8000 per year.

Teachers will also be paid time to attend urgent personal business and to receive a travel and accommodation allowance when they need to have, perhaps, specialist medical appointments that they would need to travel to go to. All these added incentives are obviously in addition to a teacher's salary that they would be receiving. As of 2024, our west coast schools have a lead principal to provide additional leadership and support to our principals at Strahan Primary, Zeehan Primary, Mountain Heights and Rosebery District Schools.

Through my department, comprehensive consultation around issues affecting these schools has been undertaken. These consultations have included targeted face-to-face consultations with teachers and leadership staff, plus representatives from the West Coast Council and the Queenstown Child and Family Learning Centre. To help us better understand what their needs actually are and to collaborate with them, particularly on those long-term strategies. Our government absolutely values the work being done by our schools on the west coast, and we'll continue to work with them to find ways to support them and to support their community.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, I heard before that you said you didn't know the cost of the deal for Tasmania. I find it very hard to believe you sign up to a 10-year agreement and you don't know what the total cost is for the state.

Ms PALMER - As I've said, this is a very exciting time for our government schools. It has been wonderful to be able to negotiate with the federal government to a position where we will see 100 per cent funding, at the very least by 2029. My focus will be on trying to achieve 100 per cent funding in a shorter time than that. Now we move to the stage that we have that base agreement, we have to work through a bi-lat with the federal government as well. I'll do that with the federal Education minister. We'll be looking at what that trajectory needs to look like, and that's the modelling work being done now involving Treasury, DPAC, and my department.

Mr WILLIE - In the announcement, we heard that there was \$300 million from the federal government flowing into schools over the agreement. How do you not know what the state contribution is?

Ms PALMER - It's not \$300 million from the federal government - that would be lovely, wouldn't it? To get to 100 per cent full funding the state needs to play its part, as we've always done, and the federal government plays their part. That is what that \$300 million is. It's not just from the federal government.

Mr WILLIE - How are you doing modelling if you don't understand the total contribution?

Ms PALMER - That's the work that's being done now.

Mr WILLIE - No, you need a total contribution over the life of the agreement and then you can model it over the years. How are you doing modelling if you don't know the total cost?

Ms PALMER - It's worked out on percentages, so the Tasmanian government, our full contribution needs to get to 77.5 per cent, the federal government needs to get to 22.5 per cent, and it's worked out on those percentages. Now we go away and do the modelling, and that's when the actual dollars step in. The negotiation was not around dollars, the negotiation is around the percentages. What this commitment is, what this agreement is, is what those percentages are.

Mr WILLIE - On Monday, you also said, 'I believe that Mr Clare needs to have a deeper understanding of some of the challenges that we face in Tasmania. I've made sure that he and his team are aware of these challenges and Tasmania's differences.'

The deal you've struck means Tasmanian kids will receive less funding than the Northern Territory. Some of these differences you were talking about, the challenges are very similar in Tasmania; in fact, a lot of the results, it's Northern Territory on the bottom and Tasmania second. How have you signed up to a deal that puts Tasmanian kids at a disadvantage to Northern Territory kids in terms of funding?

Ms PALMER - I need to be a little bit cautious here, because that was negotiated with the states and territories before I became Education minister, and that was already agreed by states and territories to carve out the Northern Territory, and the first time I met with minister Clare I certainly talked him through what our needs are in Tasmania.

As you've continuously said, Mr Willie, you would fight for 5 per cent. I did fight for 5 per cent. I fought for 5 per cent, but the federal government was not in a position to sign on at 5 per cent, and in five days' time, the deal is off the table. There's no deal. This was not a choice here between me saying, 'oh, let's get 5 per cent'. The federal government was not offering 5 per cent. They did not offer 5 per cent to any other state or territory outside of the Northern Territory. The choice I had, with five days to go, was: sign on to an agreement, where we as a state meet our target of 77.5 per cent, the federal government meets their responsibility share at 22.5 per cent, to ensure that we can get funding for our government schools to 100 per cent. The change came with the trajectory. The initial deal that the federal government had on the table was for 2034. That was not going to work, so we moved it -

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Mr WILLIE - For when you reached - let's be clear, it's a 10-year-deal.

Ms PALMER - So, we said 'no'. Line in the sand at 2029. Now we are going to see full funding for our government schools by 2029, importantly with the 'no worse off' condition attached to this. So, if anything changes in any other state, we have secured that. I am delighted that we are able to deliver money flowing into our state from 2025 for our government schools, rather than say, 'okay, I'm just going to let the next five days roll over, and we will be in exactly the same funding position as we were in beforehand'. This is a great thing. Millions of dollars are going to flow to our non-government schools. We are going to see what we have been calling for: 100 per cent funding. And I know it's your job to twist it and make it look as negative as possible, but this is millions of dollars -

Mr WILLIE - No, I care about this. I'm a former teacher.

Ms PALMER - And I am a parent, Mr Willie. This are millions of dollars flowing to our government schools. The option was money flowing in on a shorter trajectory with a 'no worse off deal' - no worse off deal - or nothing. You seem to be advocating for 'nothing'.

Mr WILLIE - No, I'm advocating for using your power, your position, as collective states. You've got higher revenue states, Labor-governed states, saying that this is a bad deal and they're holding out, and that's what you should have done and used your collective power instead of selling out.

Ms PALMER - Just to be clear, you are saying that I should not have signed a deal, and I should have rejected millions of dollars? I just want to be clear. You are saying, on the record, that I should have rejected this deal and not seen a potential \$300 million. That's exactly what you've just said. It's exactly what you've just said.

Mr WILLIE - No, it's not what I'm saying. You were rejecting the deal up until Monday, minister.

Ms PALMER - And the trajectory changed -

Mr WILLIE - You were rejecting the deal up until Monday, and then you changed -

CHAIR - Order.

Ms PALMER - And the trajectory changed, and we got a 'no worse off deal', and now we're going to see potentially \$300 million flow to our government schools in the next five years. This is a wonderful opportunity for us, and if any of those bigger states can get a different deal, we also get that deal. It was absolutely imperative, the 'no worse off deal'.

CHAIR - Last question Mr Willie, and then Mr Bayley.

Mr WILLIE - For transparency, this document was being waved around at the announcement. Will you table that? It's the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. You must have that as Education minister, that document?

Ms PALMER - Yes, sorry, what are you asking?

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Mr WILLIE - I'm asking you to table it.

Ms PALMER - I'll just seek some advice. Mr Willie, I'll have to take that question on notice.

Mr WILLIE - Okay. I can provide this to you as part of that process.

Ms PALMER - I'm happy to take the question.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I'm keen to keep talking about funding, but shift sideways a little bit to school levies. Specifically a Greens RTI has shown that there's some clear discrepancy in the way that levies are brought about in schools and by schools. Claremont College, for example, has about half the number of students of Rosny College, but Rosny is bringing in about six times the amount of Claremont in levies. So what I'm really interested in here is whether the government makes any additional payments to schools to balance out some of the discrepancy in levies they receive.

So just to try to unpack that little bit, some schools are in socioeconomic demographics where there are perhaps greater proportions of students who, you know, don't need to pay the levies because of their status - concession card holders and the like. So there's this clear discrepancy where there is additional funding going to through the levy program going to schools in areas and disadvantaged areas are losing out in many ways twice I guess you'd say.

Ms PALMER - Yes, thank you very much. I'll hand over to Kane Salter, who's the deputy secretary of business operations and support. Thank you very much.

Mr SALTER - Thank you. In terms of providing equity across the schools, the government has the student assistance scheme which provides relief from levies, and schools get funded where that relief is provided. So I think it was back in 2019 or 2020 that the government increased the eligibility status for STAS so that anyone that's got a healthcare card or equivalent can get access to the scheme. So that's one way that schools are supplemented for the income they don't get through levies. The other mechanism, which is part of the fairer funding model, is that based on a school's SES or needs basis, that does impact the level of funding through their school resource package. Those two elements contribute.

Mr BAYLEY - But essentially, you're telling me, which is welcome if I'm hearing you correctly, that the levy funding shortfall that a school suffers, I guess, but due to the student assistance scheme, is reimbursed by the state. So that's really welcome and I appreciate that, but there's still some differences in the actual amount that each school will levy students. Different schools in different SES areas may levy a lower amount. Is there any mechanism to sort of balance it out across the board or do you just directly reimburse dollar-for-dollar what was foregone via the student assistance scheme?

Mr SALTER - Through the minister, there's a policy that defines how schools set levies that provide some parameters and they are to do that in conjunction with their school association so there can be some variability in what schools set, based on taking into account their local context. If part of the question is, is the STAS amount related to what the school charges or a set amount, is that -

Mr BAYLEY - Broadly, I think that's what I'm getting at, yes.

Mr SALTER - I'll just have to double check that aspect. I can do that and then come back before -

Mr BAYLEY - Before the conclusion of the hearing?

Mr SALTER - Yes.

Mr BAYLEY - Okay, thank you. I'd appreciate that.

Ms PALMER - We will try to get that information for you before our time expires.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you. We had another example in the RTI. Montello Primary in the state's north west and Montagu Bay Primary in the state's south, they're two primary schools of the same size. Last year, Montagu Bay brought in \$77, 000 in levies. Montello brought in \$16, 000. Part of that might be because there are more students on student assistance schemes, but part of it is also because that Montagu Bay charges 65 per cent more in levies than Montello. That is what I'm keen for you to clarify, understanding it is that sort of discrepancy you are going to come back and answer?

Mr SALTER - There's still the two aspects. There is the school within the parameters of the policy and based on their local context can set their fees. That can be a difference in the levies in themselves and, as communicated, we'll come back on the STAS amount that goes to each school.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, teachers continue to burn out in record numbers with unmanageable workloads a major cause. They're asked to be so many things, and they do an incredible job - I wouldn't want to be a teacher for quids, but they do a fantastic job. Given that the teachers exodus is driven by workload and has not abated, existing government initiatives have proved inadequate. What immediate additional steps will you take as minister to substantially alleviate workload issues driving psychological injuries.

Ms PALMER - I can address part of the question you have asked, about the stress we see in the workplace for teachers. It's been a question that I have been asking principals and teachers as I'm moving through schools and I am aware that, as communities change, as society changes, schools reflect what is happening in society.

We are seeing rates of trauma and we're seeing the issues of society reflected in our children in the education system. One of the things that I've been really focused on and I spoke about this with the education union at I think it was their branch council, where I spoke about working with the department on doing an audit - for want of a better word - of what we ask of our teaching staff. What is in that body of work that they are doing on a daily, weekly, monthly basis, year in, year out that we could either consider stopping? We could look at pausing? What are our priorities in what we're asking of our teaching staff?

It's been made clear to me that the workload on our teachers is intense. As a department, we want to look at what levers we have that may be able to alleviate some of the pressure on our workforce.

One of the really important things we know in the literacy space is ensuring that every child has that one hour of literacy teaching in the classroom. That is something that we would see as a priority. Are there other things that we're asking teachers to do that perhaps are not a priority and we could release the pressure valve on, because we're looking at our educational outcomes? They're not where we want them to be for Tasmania, but we have an amazing workforce, incredible teachers, principals and allied health workers that are working in our schools. What can we do to better support them? The conversations that I've been having with teachers has really clearly said, 'Can you please not give us any more to do?'

That's a body of work that I am looking at with the department, to the other part of your question, I'll refer to the acting secretary.

Ms BURGESS - I can outline a range of strategies that we are undertaking. We are hearing our workforce and that the conditions and the complexities of working in schools nowadays is far different than it was 10 years ago. A number of strategies that we're trying to put in place to help that is in the curriculum space. How do we make sure that we provide the curriculum and the resources that are necessary so that teachers don't have to do as much of that thinking and planning.

A classic example of that is the scope and sequence work that we've been doing in the literacy space. There are step by step elements of the work so that schools and teachers don't have to do that, that is there for them. That work, more broadly across the curriculum, started through the COVID space. That was one of the benefits of COVID, it was, 'How can we flip to make sure that we're putting the support for teachers where it's needed most?' One of the areas we heard from was that curriculum resource area.

The other thing is the systems work. We're on a journey with our systems to support schools, particularly where we've got students to make sure that they're safe or that they have additional learning needs, we've prioritised that safety element for those students.

Now, by way of example, we are moving towards all schools using electronic student learning plans. The learning plans are there, we're able to harvest information from them; they don't need to rewrite them. They're there in the system and they only need to adjust them as they as they need to. We are trying to systematise the work of teachers so that isn't seen as a burden, but as a support. Schools are being provided with more admin time, with admin staff, so that those areas that are not involved in teaching - that core teaching time - can be done by other people within the schools.

Another example is the data dashboard. We've really moved leaps and bounds in our way that we can systemise the way that we present data to schools. Now we have real-time data feeds to schools. Rather than having to go and work out, 'What's our attendance rate? What's that looking like? Do we need to adjust our strategies?' they get a real-time feed that they can drill down to see what their attendance rates are looking like and what they need to do. Before, that would have been a manual calculation, but it also lets them know whether they're on track to meet their learning targets and their learning goals for students.

There's been the revised reporting to families. In partnership with the unions, we worked through an approach that allowed parents and families to still understand about the progress of their children, yet reduce the burden about how that might be reported which means less report

writing, because we know teachers wanted to go above and beyond for families, so while we had minimum expectations in that reporting space, schools wanted to give more.

We've narrowed that more, we've clarified that and reduced the expectations in that. There are a number of ways that we're trying to achieve that. We're not there yet, and that's the work of our department to make sure that we are being responsive to the needs of schools and taking away things from them that they don't need to do so they can focus on the day-to-day work of teaching and learning.

Ms JOHNSTON - You have quite clearly outlined a number of things that you're doing in that space. Despite that, psychological injury claims are on the rise and they've increased from 32 per cent for teachers and 40 per cent for other educators. Clearly, what you're doing is not enough. You, as a PCBU (person conducting business or undertaking) minister, you outlined that you're looking at an audit of workloads. When will that audit be completed or concluded? How would that be communicated to parliament and to the teaching community?

Ms PALMER - My priority will obviously be communicating that to our teaching staff, and I'm looking at a couple of different areas in this space. I'm looking at what we can do right now that can alleviate the pressure on our teachers.

But then, the next stage is what we could do in a more mid-term strategy, whether we look at pausing this section of work, this requirement that we're asking about teachers, to ensure that there aren't other consequences to pausing that work, or is there something that we can stop?

I don't think there's a quick fix with this, but I do want something for right now - a lever to pull right now to release some of that pressure. There is a bigger conversation here about what's the impact of what that might be, but what are some other strategic ways of thinking that we can ensure our teachers are in a position where they can spend that time in class, they easily can meet that one hour of literacy that we are asking of them, and that they feel really empowered in their role as educators?

It's going to be a really interesting body of work. We'll do that looking at it from a department space, but also consulting with our stakeholders as well so that we can get an understanding from their perspective about where they would like us to be looking at what we could focus on.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you have a time frame around completing that work?

Ms PALMER - I can't give you a date on that. I would hope that before the end of this year there is something that I can do, a lever that will be available to me to try to make a difference.

But I don't think the body of work finishes there. The stress that our teachers are feeling is a real, deep concern of mine. I'm very committed to trying to find ways to relieve that pressure so that they can do what we want them to do, which is teach our children and share their knowledge and their passion for education with our children.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, as you know, I'm very passionate about helping our young people in the community, and I know that's very close to your heart as well. Staying in school is

obviously a key point to their development. What's the government doing to improve retention of young people in government schools?

Ms PALMER - Yes, it's a really important question, so I thank you for that. I am pleased to confirm today that in 2024 we have had an increase, small as it might be, of 2 per cent in our retention rate from Year 10 to Year 12 in our government schools. This increase in retention can, in part, be attributed to the increased diversity of learning programs that are available in our schools, and the additional supports that are being put in place to support our young people.

Our young people are being supported to develop a personalised, localised and customised plan for their future that helps them to smoothly transition from the junior years of high school into those senior years. Our schools and our colleges provide young people with a wide range of options, including school-based apprenticeships, vocational education and training, Big Picture Learning - what a phenomenal success that has been, and we want to see the Big Picture Learning with TASC-accredited courses and UTAS High Achiever and University Connection programs.

Students can choose to study at their local secondary school or college, or they can undertake shared enrolments, because we know that works for some kids to have some time in college and some time perhaps in their district school. We can also enrol with Virtual Learning Tasmania, the government's online learning provider for senior secondary students, and that's regardless of where they live. We've invested in ensuring that students benefit from qualified career practitioners to support their decision-making and planning their own pathway. We've invested in digital platforms which can be accessed anytime, anywhere, to help young people understand the choices that are available to them and then to be supported in that decision-making process. That's including Careerify and the digital course guide.

We've increased the number of VET learning opportunities that are available across our schools, and there's been a significant increase in the number of schools offering VET: 28 schools in 2022, up to 35 schools now in 2024. We want this to grow so that we can reach a target of 50 per cent of young people undertaking VET by the time we get to 2030.

We've invested in a range of services and resources to further support our young people. There are specialised teams, such as Back on Track - they work directly with young people to support engagement in approved learning programs.

We've invested in improving data systems to allow schools to track and to be really responsive around student engagement. We've invested \$3 million in the take home borrowing system.

We deployed 927 devices and 891 hotspots for students in Years 7 to 12; we did that in 2023. In Libraries Tasmania, \$2 million was invested to support delivery of a program for parents and carers to learn how to best support their child's digital learning.

The schools are providing pastoral care for young people to ensure that they are safe, well and known, and that they are learning.

We've also created a Digital Inclusion for 21st Century Learners framework to determine more flexible opportunities for young people in the way they want to access their learning.

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I think we all know not all kids learn the same way; not even siblings in the same family all learn the same way. So, we have to be able to adapt and be flexible to that.

We know there's always more that can be done, and we're open to that. We want every young person to have that meaningful pathway and learning. With the Youth Jobs Strategy and the independent review into education that I announced earlier this year, we certainly look forward to understanding what else we could possibly be doing in this space so that we are on a positive trajectory.

Ms DOW - Minister, I understand that you've been to Montello Primary School in Burnie and visited the site, so I would have thought that you would have a good understanding of the conditions at the school with the fact that there are four toilets for 200 students. Your government in the past, back in 2021, made a small commitment of \$7.1 million to upgrading the school facilities. There was additional funding then provided when that original money wasn't enough for what was planned, post-COVID.

Minister, why was there only another small amount of \$2.5 million in the Budget for Montello Primary School? Quite clearly, there is the need for more capital funding at that school. Why wasn't a greenfield site or a totally new proposal and redesign for that school campus ever thought about by your government?

Ms PALMER - Yes, I've actually been to Montello twice now. The first time was to spend time with their fantastic principal and also the student business manager there, which was a great opportunity. I did that very early on in my time as Education minister. The first visit was a thorough walk through the school. Then, I also made sure I was still there at school pick-up time, because we knew that some of the concerns of that school community were around safety.

In 2021, we had an election commitment to deliver an upgrade to Montello Primary School, with an initial commitment of \$7.1 million. It was never envisaged that the proposed works would redevelop the whole school. However, they will enable significant areas of the school to be upgraded, with learning areas, the student bathrooms, and that pick-up and drop-off area. Accessibility right across the site needed to be greatly improved as well.

Since the original budget was developed, the construction industry has seen significant cost escalations by up to 40 per cent in recent years, which we're all aware of. In 2023 the former Education minister approved an additional \$2.5 million from existing departmental funds to be allocated to this project. This, together with funding from the school and the minor works program took the total project budget to \$9.95 million. The concept plan for the proposed works at Montello Primary School was released for the school and for the community to consult on in November 2023. The construction tender for the redevelopment of the school was released on 27 April 2024.

In evaluating the tenders received, it was identified that additional funding would be required to deliver the concept plan that had been developed. That was part of the conversation I had with the principal and the business manager on my first visit to Montello.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works hearing for the project was held on 3 July 2024. During the hearing, existing safety concerns at the school were raised, which central areas of the department had been unaware of at that point. So, the government is

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certainly committed to delivering, in full, the concept plan that was presented to the committee, that was consulted on, and also addressing the safety concerns.

Ms DOW - What about those other additional things that were highlighted during the public works committee, like the sash windows?

CHAIR - Ms Dow, you'll be able to ask additional questions on this and continue a line of questioning. Can we let the minister finish her answer and you'll get an opportunity to ask follow-up questions.

Ms PALMER - Thank you, Chair. The government is committed to delivering, in full, the concept plan that was presented to the community, and addressing the safety concerns. That is why you'll see an additional \$2.5 million that's been included in the 2024-25 state Budget for Montello Primary School. That is taking the total project budget to \$12.45 million. A building contractor has now been appointed, and the works at Montello Primary School are expected to commence in the coming weeks - a very exciting time for Montello.

Ms DOW - The other question was, why there was never a greenfield site new development considered, which I believe was the original concept put forward by the school and previous principals? I want you to give me a commitment today, please, that you will continue to work with the school community. They're still not satisfied with the level of works that are proposed through that concept plan. There are still things that they want to see fixed into the future, and they want the attention of your government on their school community, to make sure they get what they deserve. They've been waiting for years for a redevelopment of their school.

As you said, the disability access was absolutely appalling. You had students that weren't able to go to school because they had broken their leg and couldn't access the classrooms and the toilet block. Downstairs wasn't able to be used. There are numerous issues that they have put up with for years. I ask you to give them your ear and compassion, and to make sure that they get the school environment that they deserve.

Ms PALMER - They certainly have had quite a bit of my attention. I had that wonderful time, that wasn't rushed, to go through the school with a member of my team, which was really great, to see some of those issues which the initial funding had been committed in previous budgets. It had been stepped up to respond to the increase in construction, and we've stepped it up again. Now we have that \$12.45 million commitment. The next time I went to Montello Primary School, it was to have lunch through the 'school matters' program, where again I got to sit and share a meal, talking to students, the principal and the teachers who were there. It has been wonderful to be engaging with the school, and I've appreciated being able to visit the school twice in the last couple of months. I'll see if, through the Acting Secretary, if there's anything to add to that.

Mr SALTER - You posed the question about a greenfield site. When we look at making recommendations to government on school needs and we look at the building condition for the whole school, we can make significant differences through redeveloping sites rather than going a greenfield build on all occasions. Taking that approach also enables more schools to get significant redevelopments. If every site was a greenfield new build, then you would see fewer schools getting important upgrades that they need.

Ms DOW - My other question to you, minister, is around the old university site in Burnie, which is the old UTAS campus on Mooreville Road. I understand that there's been representation made to you by the council around what they would like to see for that site in that area. What are you doing with that site? I've had a number of people make representation to me, particularly about the need for more childcare facilities across the Burnie region, and that being an ideal location.

At a time when we have a housing crisis, not enough accommodation for TasTAFE teachers - which was confirmed this week in Estimates - you have difficulty in attracting all types of professional staff because of the housing shortage across the state. Why do you have a building that's sitting there empty, doing nothing, space that could be used in our community to improve services that are provided across our community? What are your plans for that site? I appreciate you updating the committee today.

Ms BURGESS - We do have plans, but given that the facility site is in Kane's portfolio, he has greater levels of knowledge than me.

Mr SALTER - As you identify, it is an important asset. We certainly want to provide recommendations to the minister as to how that can be used for service delivery within the Education portfolio, including Children and Families and Youth Justice. We expect to be putting some recommendations to the minister about how that asset can be utilised in the portfolio. The minister can then make some decisions from there.

Ms DOW - When would we expect you to have made that decision? When will the community know?

Ms PALMER - I'll be looking forward to receiving that advice from the department and then I'll carefully consider it and make an announcement. No date.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, just to follow the line of questioning from Ms Johnston around alleviating pressure on teachers. It's incredibly welcome that this is acknowledged and accepted that you need to do something, and something urgently, in that area.

Obviously, teachers are managing their own time. They're not doing unnecessary activities. The real question is, the work that they don't do - what happens to that, and who does it, and how is that going to be funded? My understanding is, in terms of some of the ICT programs and other things, there's less money going into some of those programs which may ultimately alleviate the administrative burden and so forth. The question is, are you prepared to prioritise elements of the Budget into this, and how are you structurally going to make it work?

Ms PALMER - With the greatest of respect, I'm not sure that all teachers agree that everything they're being asked to do is where they believe the priority is. This is why I'm having those discussions with stakeholder groups, but also with teachers themselves. I have been very fortunate to secure a teacher in my ministerial staff with decades of experience, who has been a teacher before and after COVID, and is able to give incredible insights to me about how this works on the ground and in a school. That's part of the work that we need to do, and further discussions that need to be had.

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There are varying points of view about where the priority should be. So, that's what I see this job as being - pulling all of that together, then sitting down with the department and really stepping through: What can we do? Where's the priority list? Here's the non-negotiable, and perhaps we could have a thought process in this category over here. That's the work that we want to do. As I said to Ms Dow, the member for Braddon, before, that we would like to see a lever pulled before the end of this year to try to release some of that pressure. We will also be looking at this really strategically. Sometimes you can find yourself in a position where you just keep adding and adding and adding. My commitment from where I'm sitting is that if you want to add, you have to take something out. Let's balance those priorities.

Mr BAYLEY - I guess it's difficult to see that with a diminishing budget.

CHAIR - Given that it's 4:30 p.m. we'll go to a break. Given that Mr Bayley has only asked one question, we can pick up with Mr Bailey when we come back. Given that time taken for breaks must be made up, I'll encourage members to be as quick as they can.

The Committee suspended from 4.30 p.m. to 4.37 p.m.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, a question about the three-year-old kinder pilot that was promised for Bruny Island at the beginning of last year. Eighteen months later, there's still no action that's been taken to begin the necessary renovations for the kinder to open. There's currently 10 children who would be eligible for this program by next year, but if it doesn't start by 2025, there will only be two three-year-olds on the island who'd be eligible for the program in 2026.

We're really interested if you can give a commitment to open this facility in 2025 for the school year, regardless of the condition; whether you'll give a commitment longer-term to build a new fit-for-purpose facility, as opposed to just a renovation; and also whether the trial period started when you announced it or when you open it.

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much. I'm going to seek some advice on that question and then I'll pass to the acting secretary. But, with your indulgence, Chair, I'd like to correct the record, if that's okay?

In a question that was asked of Mr Fairs, the member for Bass, with regard to some figures that I laid out for incentives for student teachers, I want to correct the record. I should have said - and this came through from the Teachers Agreement - that, when a teacher is relocating, they are eligible for a \$5000 Centrelink payment, then, as soon as they begin, on commencement, there is a payment of \$2759, and on completion of each year of service in the first three years there is a payment of \$2759, and then on completion of service for years four, five and six of continuous employment there is a payment of \$5523, and I apologise I read out the wrong figure.

CHAIR - Now to Mr Bayley's question.

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much. I'll pass to the acting secretary, thank you.

Ms BURGESS - The Early Learning for Three Year Olds is a very exciting initiative. Unfortunately, it hasn't moved as quickly as we would have hoped for a number of reasons, one of those being that we've been really committed to working with the sector as well as

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working with local communities to make sure that what we're going to be offering is going to be fit for purpose.

We have the trial site at Bruny Island, we've established the local enabling groups so that work can progress, and we're still working through the logistics of that. As you would appreciate, with any site that three-year-olds have access to, it needs to ensure that it meets the national quality standards. We've been working with the regulator, the Education and Care Unit, to make sure that the building is fit for purpose so that it can have little people in there.

We've also established community inclusion workers to make sure that we're working with the community in a way that is responsive to their needs. In discussions with the working group that we've established, we're not yet ready to commence that trial this year. We have talked to some communities - but I'm not sure whether it is at the Bruny Island one - about if we haven't got the facility ready would they want us to start a service. But, certainly in the context of some communities, they actually want to wait until we've got the physical site ready and then roll out the service.

Mr BAYLEY - And so, is that the case with Bruny? Like, next year, is not an option? You mentioned you're not ready this year, but is next year an option?

Ms BURGESS - We're absolutely working towards next year for all of them.

Mr BAYLEY - You are? Right. Thank you very much.

To the minister: I appreciate that it's, I guess, retrofitting a facility to make it fit for purpose in the short term or medium term, but have you got an aspiration - will you give a commitment to building a new fit-for-purpose facility on Bruny Island, or advocating for?

Ms PALMER - That's not something that I've been looking at the moment, but I'm always open to having discussions. We've really laid out our capital commitment in the infrastructure space, but I am always open to having discussions. We know how important the first 1000 days are of a little one's life and the department is certainly working on this particular project, and it will be good to see that come to fruition in 2025 for Bruny Island.

Mr BAYLEY - Chair, there was just one more element to that question which was around the trial period. I assume it would be logical to start on the day that the little people start as opposed to when it was announced. Is that fair for stakeholders to assume?

Ms BURGESS - That's correct? As you'd appreciate, there are a range of complexities that we need to work through with regards to how the trial operates, how the funding works, what that looks like from provision. We chose five communities that were really complex for us and that's why we're doing a trial. We didn't want to go with areas where it was easy to solve. We wanted to go to those communities where it was far more complex for us so that we could test the parameters of the model. So, yes, we won't start the clock ticking until such time as we get kids in there, but the idea is that we learn from those and once we've distilled the complexities, the issues, the workforce issues, we'll then be able to say, okay, we're next and how can we scale up.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you, that's very helpful.

Ms BESWICK - Minister, there have been bans placed on school excursions for activities such as laser tag due to its being considered not to meet community expectations. Earlier, you confirmed that policies that affect external stakeholders should be published publicly. With that in mind, can you please point me to where the policy around appropriate school activities is published on the Education website? The ban on some of these activities does have a significant impact on some of our family businesses.

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much and I will seek some advice.

Ms BURGESS - We'll just look to find that out for you, but, I do need to correct the record while I am here. I was of the understanding that the attendance policy was public. It is not public. There is a significant amount of information on the attendance policy that is public, but the actual document in and of itself is not public. In the meantime we'll look to find that for you.

Mrs BESWICK - Do you accept that people who are hoping to support the school with excursions and incursions would want to know what the standards are that they need to meet to meet the risk assessments, et cetera, for the organisation?

Ms BURGESS - That's absolutely part of it. It's also about whether it is aligned to the curriculum. By curriculum, I mean the whole aspect of the curriculum and supporting the whole child rather than just formal curriculum. We do need to make sure - because we've got those children and young people for such a small, well, it's a large amount of time, but precious time - that we need to make sure that the work that we do with them and the opportunities that we provide them are very much based on their learning needs. We would have criteria, but the other element that we need to mention is: how is it delivering on the school improvement plan; how is it aligned to the key focus areas of the school; and how appropriate is it for the age and stage of the child?

Mrs BESWICK - That's what I'm saying. How is that sort of information communicated to these organisations and businesses that could be supporting you in that?

Ms BURGESS - We'll find out that answer for you.

Mr FAIRS - Thank you, Chair. Minister, unions and the Tasmanian Principals Association often talk about the challenges of recruiting staff to our remote and regional areas and that the accommodation in these areas is dated and not meeting the needs of the current principals and teachers. Can you advise what the plan is for the \$15 million to rebuild or upgrade teacher housing please?

Ms PALMER - Thank you and this is a really important part of supporting our workforce, and, as a government, we absolutely recognise the importance of the role this plays in continuing to attract high-quality teaching staff and school leaders to work in the remote and regional parts of Tasmania and what we can do to encourage them to put roots down in a community because we know there are great benefits to the community and to schools when we see teachers in an area for a number of years.

In the 2024-25 state Budget, we're investing \$9.1 million across four years of our overall \$15 million commitment to build or to upgrade housing for 25 teachers in our rural and remote communities. Those communities include - as I was talking earlier - the west coast of Tasmania

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- teachers who are at Zeehan, Strahan, Rosebery and Mountain Heights. I'm also talking about areas like Flinders Island and King Island.

When I visited the west coast as part of that trip, I asked if I could have the opportunity to see some of the teacher residences and yes, I must say they were dated and they certainly were in need of a refresh. I was very grateful, in particular, to the principal of Mountain Heights who actually took me to his residence. It was lovely that he gave me the opportunity to actually look through his house and we were able to discuss some of the things that he found difficult in moving there and being in that particular accommodation.

I really want to make sure that we are doing everything that we possibly can in our remote and regional schools to make it a really attractive proposition where people want to go to work. I know that accommodation availability and suitability are key factors that teachers are considering when they determine whether or not they would want to make that move.

It's important to me that we can offer them somewhere that's warm, that's inviting, that they can go to at the end of the day, so I'm happy to announce today that the first upgrades delivered through this funding commitment will be to a unit complex of 14 residents in Queenstown, with these works scheduled to occur over the Christmas and New Year leave period commencing in late December of this year.

These works will include upgrading of bathrooms and kitchens, double glazing, insulation, installing heat transfer kits where it's viable, and also some painting that I felt needed to be done. The broader Teacher Residences Program will also see construction commence on up to 22 new residences progressively over the next six years and these residences will be located in our greatest accommodation demand areas including the west coast, Scottsdale, Smithton and Flinders Island.

The design and location of the new residences will be determined in consultation with schools and their staff, with the tender for the first tranche of the new residences expected to be released in the second-half of 2025.

There are currently 132 residential properties for teachers across the state - many of which are dated; and providing more modern and fit-for-purpose residences that our teachers and school leaders require will certainly help ensure that we're encouraging them to stay in our regional and remote areas on a more long-term basis which, as I said, has such a positive impact on our learners as well as a really positive impact on the community more broadly. That is certainly something that I've had a bit of a focus on in the last few months.

Mr WILLIE - Earlier in the hearing, minister, you said - prior to the hearing on Monday in the other place - that you had an early indication there could be an opportunity the federal government was presenting before the hearing. Did that indication come from the Premier's office?

Ms PALMER - No, that indication came from my chief of staff.

Mr WILLIE - And where were they getting their information from? They're obviously getting it from someone - that indication.

Ms PALMER - That indication came from minister Clare's office.

Mr WILLIE - Minister Clare's office, okay, thank you for the clarification there.

Ms PALMER - No problem.

Mr WILLIE - In terms of the state Budget, we're not even through the budget session and this agreement is completely unfunded. It's actually listed in the revenue risks for the state. It mentions the Quality Schools, Quality Outcomes reform agreement. If we take that the state government is paying for half - and there's a \$300 million figure being bandied around - then that's \$150 million across the forward Estimates. How are you planning to pay for this commitment? You were obviously fighting for 5 per cent, and you're not now.

Ms PALMER - That's the modelling work that is being done now. It's not being done in a silo; it's being done with DPAC, Treasury, and my department.

Mr WILLIE - You've added \$150 million to the forward Estimates, and we haven't even finished budget Estimates.

Ms PALMER - As I said, that's the modelling that's being done now. We are absolutely making the most of the opportunity to see federal money flowing to Tasmania. It's a wonderful opportunity for our government schools to see those sorts of dollars coming in, not with a trajectory of 2034, but coming in over the next five years to ensure that we get to 100 per cent funding of our government schools by 2029.

Mr WILLIE - But there is a cost to the state of Tasmania you weren't anticipating when the budget papers were printed. We're not even through the Estimates, and now there's \$150 million added to the Estimates.

Ms PALMER - As I said, that's the modelling that we're doing now to look at what that trajectory may look like, and that's the work that we're doing with Treasury, DPAC and our department at the moment.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, the Closing the Gap agreement sets targets and outcomes that pertain to Aboriginal students reaching their full potential in our education system. Under this agreement, your government also committed to 'transform government organisations so they work better for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people'.

Aboriginal Education Services provides critical support for palawa students via in-school roles and programs staffed by Aboriginal people. However, most of these roles are employed on annual contracts, meaning that Aboriginal educators must reapply for their roles each year, and have limited or no employment, and therefore income, over the summer break.

Minister, I assume that you agree that having Aboriginal people directly work with Aboriginal students in our school is important, but do you think it's acceptable that Aboriginal educators, who are themselves from a disadvantaged and vulnerable group within our community, should reapply every year? Will you do all you can to ensure that their contracts are made permanent?

Ms PALMER - We certainly value this part of our workforce. The Aboriginal Education Services provides services to children and young people in a number of ways, first, by tailoring

support for Aboriginal students in several schools with high levels of need, and also by building cultural learning about Aboriginal history and culture through resources like The Orb. Staff also support teachers by offering professional learning so that they are then able to teach Aboriginal history and culture. They also have a resource library, which holds an extensive collection of materials to support learning about Aboriginal culture.

With your questions around staffing, I'll pass that to the acting secretary.

Ms BURGESS - I'm not sure whether you're aware that we are renegotiating the Closing the Gap strategy, and as part of that, what work will fall to our department with regards to that strategy. We know and we're very aware that we have a small number of staff that are on fixed-term contracts, and we're in the process now of going to the State Service Management Office to make sure that they can be extended.

The reason behind the extension, rather than a permanent recruitment process, is because we need to think about how the strategy then is going to work through Aboriginal Education Services, and what we need going forward to make sure that we've got the right people in the right place to support those Aboriginal learners.

Mr BAYLEY - Those who are on permanent ones are in the administration side as opposed to the face-to-face teaching side. Is that correct?

Ms BURGESS - I understand here that we've got a profile of 22.61, and that 18.89 of those are permanent, and 3.72 are fixed-term. We are also slightly under profile at the moment by 1.57, and there is a current band 5 vacant position. We know that there are currently two fixed-term, band 4 Aboriginal education support officers, and four fixed-term Aboriginal program workers, and they're the ones that we're seeking extension to until we know what the medium and longer-term strategy is. Once we know that, we will recruit to those roles in a more permanent way.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, would you be willing to take on notice providing the data of who is in what category of employment and on what kind of contract going back a number of years, even to 2014? That would give us a 10-year profile to understand the trends of employment within Aboriginal Education Services. Would you be prepared to table data on employment and data on funding for those 10 years?

Ms PALMER - Yes, we'll try to get you that by the end of the session. If we can't, I'm happy to take it on notice and provide that for you, but we will try to get it before.

Mr BAYLEY - Thanks. I appreciate that.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, I'm aware that some students in our alternative learning programs, such as the Big Picture program, are discovering that they're unable to obtain their Tasmanian Certificate of Education (TCE) because they haven't completed the basic English and maths competency courses that are required to achieve and receive a TCE. This is despite the fact that students clearly demonstrate not only competency but excellence in their studies through completion of things like a certificate III, for example, and they also are required to submit a university-standard thesis at the completion of their studies.

The attainment of TCE is incredibly important to these students and moving forward in their education. What are you doing to address this particular issue?

Ms PALMER - Yes, I am right on board with this. It comes down to what does success look like? That is part of what I've included in the terms of reference for the independent review into education. Some of the saddest conversations I have had have been with young people who are honestly smashing it out of the park, but because of the way we're determining what success is through an ATAR or through the TCE, we have some of these amazing young people, especially through Big Picture, who - one quite heartbreaking scenario was when the ROGS data came out and it was splashed all across the front of the newspaper that schools were failing and education was failing. She was listening to a debate in the Legislative Council, and she came to me after and she burst into tears. She said, 'I'm one of the failures. I'm one of the ones that everybody is saying is in the failing capacity'. What she is doing is incredible, phenomenal. She is the furthest thing from a failure you could find for a young lady who was 17 at the time and is now 18.

There needs to be a conversation here. I've appreciated being able to advocate and organise for that particular young person to speak with some of the decision-makers around how that's impacted her. She is also advocating now on behalf of other young people as well. How do we say what success is? That's the question. When we answer that question, then we need to make sure that the processes we have in place enable that success to be celebrated.

It is not only impactful for the young people, it's impactful for our workforce as well. Our teachers see young people getting fantastic jobs and attaining all these wonderful levels of achievement, and then in some areas of conversation we're classifying them as a failure. I can't stand it, personally. Everyone learns differently and just because you learn differently and because you're not a round peg in a round hole, that doesn't make you a failure or a success. It is a really great that you have asked.

From our government's perspective, we're absolutely committed and feeling quite passionate in this space. We're absolutely committed to improving educational outcomes for our workforce, and for our young people to feel fantastic about what they are achieving and how they're contributing in their community.

We know that a quality education and how you feel about yourself and your achievements is pivotal to a foundation for a young person to launch themselves onwards for success. This is something that is very much in my line of sight. It's something that we are certainly having conversations about, and that's why I made sure that it was part of the terms of reference that Vicki Baylis, our independent reviewer, is looking at. I'm very much looking forward to the conversations that we'll be able to have when she's done that review.

She's talking to all the different stakeholders in this space, from the university through to our teachers on the ground, through to the voice of young people. In fact, she's even gone so far in ensuring that the voice of young people are heard that if a young person can't put into words how they feel in the submission process, they can actually draw it and send in a piece of artwork to say how they're feeling. We're really excited in this space.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. I can see you're quite passionate about it and I think I know the young person you've been talking about. I agree, she's an absolute inspiration to so many.

You've indicated that that would be part of the independent review, but this is what I would describe as a low-hanging fruit in terms of how we can help young people achieve and have that achievement recognised. Do you have a timeframe for when there might be a resolution to this issue? I appreciate it will be part of the independent review, but there could be quite simple steps taken now to ensure that young people who are trying to achieve their TCE this year or next year can actually do that and attain that qualification.

Ms PALMER - Absolutely. Obviously, it'll be fascinating to see what comes from the independent review. That's a huge body of work and I'm really looking forward to that, but I will pass to the acting secretary. She has some comments in this space.

Ms BURGESS - It's very much the job of our schools and our colleges to make sure that our students who are enrolled with us at the moment are on a pathway to success. As part of that work, they work with councillors and staff in schools to make sure that they have an approved learning program. Part of that approved learning program outlines what success looks like for them at an individual level now. Within the parameters that we have at the moment, which is the legislative framework through the *Education Act*, we know that there are some things that they need to achieve in that space.

The current TCE is one of those. If that's the aspiration of students in our schools, it's absolutely the job of our schools to make sure that the children and young people in the schools and colleges have access to what they need so that they can get their TCE. They need to be scaffolded from years 8, 9 and 10 through to years 11 and 12 to get the curriculum plan and to meet the five standards of the TCE, if that's their aspiration.

If those students feel that they're not on that trajectory and they need to be and want to be, then they need to go and knock on the door of the senior staff in their schools and colleges and say, 'Hey, I'm worried about my ability to attain the TCE, what else do I need to be doing?'

Ms JOHNSTON - Rather than an issue that the students should deal with, isn't it an issue about what constitutes TCE qualifications and requirements? Could we not change that to recognise -

Ms BURGESS - That's the longer-term piece of work. Absolutely. That goes to the minister's view about what success looks like. We do need to contemporise what success looks like for students at the end of year 12. The TCE hasn't fully been modified for a long period of time and there's certainly policy work that will need to be done, I imagine.

I am not privy to the review, but once the minister has those recommendations from the review, she'll ask the department, in collaboration with Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC) and the TASC Board, to reconsider what success looks like for students at the end of year 12.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, this is very close to my heart once again, and I know it is yours - the 26Ten program. I was up at the Starting Point Neighbourhood House at Ravenswood recently and at their AGM, and it's fair to say that they were very excited that funding was continuing for them to help deliver this program - as am I; I think it's absolutely wonderful. For people who don't know, it's about teaching adults in Tasmania literacy and numeracy. As we

know, it's an area that we do need to improve on, which is great that we are. Can you provide an update on the actual program though, please?

Ms PALMER - Yes, for sure. Thank you very much. I love how everything is so close to your heart. It's a very big heart that you have, Mr Fairs, and I love that.

Mr FAIRS - It's a big body.

Ms PALMER - Your words, not mine, just for the record.

Our government is continuing our commitment to support the very successful 26Ten strategy for adult literacy and numeracy. It was launched in 2015. The new 26Ten strategy for the next decade is now under development. Over the past decade, the strategy has helped to improve the skills and confidence of so many Tasmanian adults, and I know that you've heard their stories.

The 26Ten Coalition helps to promote awareness and action on low literacy and is well positioned to support the Lifting Literacy framework and the DECYP Lifting Literacy Implementation Plan 2024-2026. Some recent activities include a revamped 26Ten brand style and website to better share information to improve literacy and numeracy, and evaluation of the 26Ten Communities program for the first four communities, being the Huon Valley, Glenorchy, Clarence Plains, and Launceston Northern Suburbs. A fifth community, Circular Head, began in 2022.

The evaluation confirmed these first four met the initial objectives and showed the complexities of the collective impact approach to community-led projects with vulnerable and low socioeconomic groups. The program began in 2021, and it has brought a newfound confidence that can help someone apply for a job, get their driver's licence - there've even been examples where they've been able to help their children with homework, and we know how special that can be.

That's why our government has continued to fund the 26Ten Communities program, with \$640,000 over two years in the state Budget. I know the success of the program - like you, I have visited the Northern Suburbs Community Centre in Ravenswood and have loved watching them go from strength to strength. A great example of this is 26Ten Northern Suburbs learner Rebecca, who was a student, and she actually went on to be named as the first Tasmanian to win an Adult Learners Week award from Adult Learning Australia, which is pretty cool. Rebecca is now employed part time, which is also such great news.

We certainly extend all of our thanks to the 26Ten team, who do so much to help Tasmanians improve their literacy and numeracy every day, and help them step through some of those things that can be quite challenging for them but what they need to do as part of their day-to-day life.

I look forward to celebrating 26Ten week from 21 to 27 October. You can all pop that in your diaries, and I don't think I'd have to offer much encouragement to those around the table to get involved. Thank you very much for your interest in this great program.

Mr WILLIE - Minister, after years of inaction and spending the first two weeks of the election campaign saying it wasn't your responsibility and attacking me, it's good to see that

the Liberal party, finally, at the end of the campaign, acknowledged that it has a role in early education and care and outside school hours care, and you made some commitments. I'm just interested in whether you can provide the committee with some information around some of those commitments.

One was that you were going to work with primary and district schools that do not currently offer outside school hours care to determine the level of need in their community and if the provision of outside school hours care is right for them. I'm interested in how that work is going. I know from my own travels around the state, there are a lot of families who can't get the care that they deserve for their children, and they can't participate in the workforce the way that they would like to. So, this is a very important policy area and it's good to see after 10 years of not much that you're actually looking at doing some things.

Ms PALMER - I certainly understand the challenges that working families face when they're not able to drop off or pick up their children at regular school times or on non-school days. I get it, having been one of them for decades, along with many other parents, probably some of you around the table.

It was really good to see that in the election the Tasmanian government made a commitment to and has funded through the 2024-25 state Budget \$10 million over four years from 2025-26 to support primary and district schools to establish new and on-site outside school hours care in partnership with early childhood education care providers.

Outside school hours care is currently available at more than half of our state's primary schools and providing families with the care that they need for children aged from five through to 12. They're operated by education and care professionals through both not-for-profit and private providers and parents can access the federal government's child care subsidy if they meet those eligibility criteria.

Our government recognises the significant benefits to both children and families when children are able to attend outside of school hours care service that's located at their school. The government has also worked with the education and care sector to develop and implement the Strong Partnerships Framework, which provides information, tools and resources to support the education and care community and the Department of Education to work in strong partnership to provide services for families.

Within the first 100 days of our re-election, we distributed a survey to schools as a preliminary scan of the current capacities, also wanting to gauge the interest in outside of school hours care; 104 schools responded to the survey and of those, 30 indicated their interest in exploring the potential to provide new OSHC service on site. Of the 104 that responded, 55 said that they had that service and of those, 17 would like to expand the service they have.

The information gathered will form the basis for more detailed engagement with our schools and also engagement with the early childhood education and care service providers - and with families and communities as well - and the department will be providing me with an outcome of that engagement before the end of the year.

Mr WILLIE - Are you able to provide some detail around which schools expressed an interest and which you want to expand?

PUBLIC

Ms PALMER - I don't have that level of detail at the table and I would probably like to consider that. I wouldn't like to commit to doing that. I'm not sure how public that process was or whether schools would want that information out.

Mr WILLIE - I am happy for you to take it on notice and you can check those things.

Ms PALMER - Yes, I think that would be best - I'm not taking on notice and committing to answer that question. I would like the opportunity to see whether the department is happy to release that information and the schools are happy for that information to be released. Not always when schools answer a survey do they necessarily think it's going to be on a budget Estimates thing, so just want to be respectful in that process, thank you.

Mr WILLIE - I completely understand that.

CHAIR - Further questions?

Mr WILLIE - Yes, and there's another part to this which was that you were going to undertake a comprehensive property audit to identify government land that can be utilised for the expansion of early childhood education centre services, including outside school hours care and vacation care. I'm just wondering where that's at, given the importance of it.

Ms PALMER - Yes, absolutely. This is part of our plan to be reactive in this space, acknowledging the need across the community. It became part of our First 100-days Plan to undertake that property audit, trying to identify government land that could be utilised for the expansion of early childhood education and care services, that's including outside-school-hours care and vacation care. We've conducted that initial audit looking at government land and the audit has identified over 150 sites that could have potential to support ECEC provision. The audits have come through, the sites have been identified, and now we step into the next phase of that work.

Mr WILLIE - Are you able to give some detail around the sorts of sites? Are we talking about health services, TAFE campuses, schools, what sorts of government land are you looking at?

Ms PALMER - The criteria around the sort of land that we were looking at were: is it near a school, is it flat, that type of thing. As we move into the next stage of this body of work, there'll be an opportunity for more information to come out. Where we're at now is that we have identified the 150 sites with potential. The next body of work, actually, I probably should pass over to you, Kane, on that before I just start assuming what I think the next step should be.

Mr SALTER - As you've outlined, minister, the next step is to engage with the sector and the relevant schools and child and family learning centres (CFLC) on that information to consult with them before going wider.

Mr WILLIE - To clarify, your audit hasn't been with other government departments and their land yet or it has?

Mr SALTER - Yes, it's included. NRE.

Mr WILLIE - NRE. Not the Health department?

Mr SALTER - NRE looking at broadly across government.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, limited authorities to teach have increased dramatically over the last couple of years, and currently, teaching graduates who have previously taught under a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT) don't have this experience counted towards their pay rate. However, a minority of teachers on placement programs such as Teach for Australia or the Teacher Internship Placement program that undertake a similar on-the-job experience do have their do have experience recognised and can start work with a two-year pay disparity compared to other graduates with similar experience. They will have to start at a band 1 level 8. This seems fundamentally inequitable.

I asked this question because we're aware of a specific situation where the department has lost a specialist teacher, a language teacher, in a hard-to-staff school simply because they couldn't get equity of pay and couldn't get their prior experience recognised.

Why are certain forms of experience recognised above others? If we all agree that teacher retention rates are a major priority for the department and for the state, should it not be the policy of the government to recognise both these forms of on-the-job training and have that reflected in their pay rates?

Ms PALMER - I'll just make some opening comments and then I will pass to the deputy secretary. A limited authority to teach, which we know is a LAT, can be issued to an individual by the School Registration Board to address a workforce shortage and provide a sustainable pathway towards teacher registration. There are three categories under which a LAT can be issued, which are: school specific, generic relief, or internship. I'm advised there are 452 individuals with a LAT in 2023-24. Of these, 21 are in the 2023-24 TFA cohort, and 34 of them are TIPP (Teacher Intern Placement Program) participants. There's a lot of acronyms across education.

Mr BAYLEY - I guess the fundamental question is equity of pay across those programs.

Ms PALMER - For more details, I'll pass to Mr Salter, the deputy secretary.

Mr SALTER - A person undertaking a LAT, who obtains their qualification, will be appointed as a band 1 level 5, so that being the entry level for a four- or five-year qualified teacher for teachers that are coming through programs such as TFA, TIPP and isolated schools' package. Recognising the particular elements of those programs, they do have a varying level to start at, based on the programs that they're coming through.

Mr BAYLEY - Level 7 or 8, along those lines? There's a disparity of a couple of bands at least, is that correct?

Mr SALTER - I haven't got those levels in front of me, but, yep.

Mr BAYLEY - Can I just ask what the logic is behind that? It sends a poor message to aspiring teachers that if you're in one program, you'll get your experience recognised. If you're in another, you're not. And, as I say, I'm asking this question because of the real-life experience of a constituent who left one of your schools in a very hard to staff area because of this issue,

and I'm sure that's not an isolated situation. What is the logic behind the disparity of graduating teachers through these programs starting on quite significantly different bands?

Ms PALMER - I understand that there is a difference in commencement salaries for teachers coming from different LAT category backgrounds and I need to keep working with the department to understand the reasons behind those differences.

As a new minister in this portfolio, issues with workforce and workforce retention are front and centre. That's something that is very much in our thinking and in our discussions. I don't know if you've got anything to add to that.

I might be able to actually add to that, Chair, if I could call someone to the table if you're happy with that. I'll just check she's in the room; she is. I'll ask Katharine O'Donnell. Katharine is the Director Education Regulation.

Ms O'DONNELL - Basically, the situation is that the scholarships that you're talking about, things like Work for Australia, the programs involve additional learning on top of the ITE qualification. There's additional side programs that are run and additional learning and additional things that the people who are on those scholarships work through, which I understand, although the Teachers Registration Board (TRB) doesn't set the pay rates, is what differentiates them.

Whereas the LAT purely gives an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) student the opportunity to earn some money and some experience while they're working through their program. My understanding is that the reason there's a difference at the end is because the students that are enrolled through the scholarship programs, they are designed to give them more learning support and I guess they come out with added value on top of their degree.

Mr BAYLEY - They come out with additional qualification, effectively?

Ms O'DONNELL - Effectively. That's my understanding.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you. Just as a follow-up, we talked about duty of care earlier and I know you took quite a few questions in the committee yesterday around violence in schools but I'm interested in support for tier 4 intervention in schools.

Violence in Tasmanian schools has been increasing and causing great deals of stress and fear for students and teachers alike. This is a serious issue. The Australian Education Union notes that tier 4 support programs - a vital tool for students with complex needs to re-engage with learning - do not currently extend to year 11 and 12.

Teachers in particular have noted and felt the real impact of this as student violence does not simply stop at year 10 obviously. These students still require support and this has been noted and advocated for.

How can year 11 and 12 teachers and students feel safe with no further support for tier 4 intervention in their respective year groups? And will you make a commitment to looking at this and extending tier 4 intervention across into the college system, into year 11 and 12, not just the colleges, obviously.

Ms PALMER - I'll make some opening comments and then I'll pass to the acting secretary. This is something that has been raised with me, where I need to be careful when you ask of me as a minister across the table - will I commit to something? - is seeing Tier 4 for years 11 and 12? What I need to do is make sure that the way Tier 4 is set up is fit for purpose for years 11 and 12 because, for example, if you look at the structure of years 11 and 12 in colleges, students can come and go. There are days when they're not on class hours. It's a very different structure than what we see in year 7 to 10. I have heard the concerns around this but I couldn't make a commitment to pick up what Tier 4 is right now and say, 'Yes, let's put that into years 11 and 12'.

There is a body of work to be done in this space. It is not necessarily taking a program that was designed.

Mr BAYLEY - I appreciate that. I'm hearing you recognise there's a problem and an aspiration to do something about it and implement something more than there currently is across year 11 and 12.

Ms PALMER - At every stage we are wanting to do whatever we can to engage young people, through trying to lift our vet courses, getting the right teachers in the right place, having teachers with experience as a teacher, but also perhaps from an industrial area or whatever it may be. Whatever levers we can pull to keep students engaged, we want to do that. We're trying to find pathways to do that.

Mr BAYLEY - Surely, this is an issue in terms of those year 12 retention rates and more.

CHAIR - Before we go to Ms Johnston, just noting there's probably about just under 6 minutes left. There was an endeavour to table something in response to the Greens' question. I am checking if that was available or if you were taking that on notice.

Mr SALTER - I can answer the status question.

Mr BAYLEY - This is in relation to the levies?

Mr SALTER - Yes. With STAS (Student Assistance Scheme) funding, there's a component provided to schools that is in the general needs component of the fairer funding model and that allocation is driven by the needs factor of the school, so that would differ with SES of the school. For increases in STAS students that occurred post the eligibility change in status, which started in 2021, schools are provided with funding that is equivalent to the average levy amount that the school charges. The school receives revenue for the increases in students as a result of that criteria change to ensure that their school wasn't disadvantaged.

Mr BAYLEY - The average level of school or the average level of all schools, guess what we're trying to understand is the disparity between -

Mr SALTER - The individual school.

Mr BAYLEY - We do still have a situation where some schools who charge less in levies and have less students that are able to pay it are significantly disadvantaged.

PUBLIC

Mr SALTER - There is an equity component to the extent that if those schools are comparatively lower SES (socio-economic status), then they would get greater needs-based funding than the other school.

Ms PALMER - Chair, we have an answer to a question that was posed for the Independent member for Braddon from the acting secretary. It's very short.

Ms BURGESS - That question was about how do businesses know. It is a school responsibility and they must comply with the procedures for planning off campus guidelines which currently aren't public facing. The information about going to the school principal, talking it through with the school principal so that they can then communicate the parameters around whether that activity does or doesn't meet the criteria.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, coming back to an answer you gave earlier about how you are trying to alleviate workload pressures for teachers, one of the strategies you outlined was looking at work in a curriculum space and perhaps making some changes there. My understanding is that for year 11 and 12 curriculum development, that has been impacted by staff shortages and that's a possible area for change. Has the department outsourced development of the year 11 and 12 curriculum and if so, what are the cost of outsourcing and when will this work be completed?

Ms BURGESS - It's my understanding that we haven't outsourced any work around curriculum development. We have prioritised based on student need and gaps in the curriculum. So, we have prioritised what's required to make sure that there's engaging curriculum for all cohorts of students in years 11 and 12, and where there are gaps, we've prioritised that work. But we aren't yet outsourced. We've certainly been in the past, in discussions with South Australia around their curriculum, but we haven't purchased any at this point in time.

Ms JOHNSTON - Are there issues with the year 11-12 curriculum that haven't been developed or are on hold at the moment, whilst we're trying to manage workloads?

Mr BURGESS - Again, we've prioritised where the work needs to happen, and that work is being undertaken.

Mr BAYLEY - There's a follow on question from that one that I wanted to put: whether you'd commit to undertaking a review of the model for school levies, including consideration of abolishing levies full stop in exchange for direct departmental funding?

Ms PALMER - I will seek some advice. I'll ask Mr Salter, our Deputy Secretary of Business and Operations and Support, to answer that question.

Mr SALTER - I think there are two components to the question. Asking whether the minister or government will undertake a review, there was a previous review of the levies policy, and certainly happy by the minister to provide details on that review.

In terms of the second component of the question of abolishing -

Mr BAYLEY - I guess it's whether you'd look at that again, given the inequity, and consider abolishing the inequity and levies full stop in exchange for direct departmental funding.

Mr SALTER - The second component of the question around abolishing levies altogether - and that's a government policy decision - but in terms of the example that you've highlighted today, I'm certainly happy to look at that example in terms of how the policy is structured at the moment.

Mr WILLIE - I might do an electorate one to finish with, but it's good to see Rosetta Primary and Princes St Primary receive funding in this Budget. I know Rosetta has, for a long time now, had unsuitable learning environments. It had heating issues, demountables - and I know I've asked you this in another forum - but there is bipartisanship support for the Education department's system now, and they've done a lot of work modernising it. Is there an opportunity, as minister, to take some of this school infrastructure out of the political cycle and fund it on an as-needs basis?

Ms PALMER - Through you, Chair, it has been funded on an as-needs basis.

Mr WILLIE - It's there until an election cycle.

Ms PALMER - There's an extensive audit that the department does - and I'll get the Deputy Secretary to talk about that - that actually looks at a range of issues that establishes that priority list that is publicly available. We were very cautious in ensuring that through the election, we utilised the work that's been done by the department in that audit to establish that, and I'm very comfortable with that.

Mr WILLIE - I'm well aware of the system, minister. What I'm saying is that you have an opportunity to potentially take it out of the political cycle. It seems that only these schools are funded when there's an election. They sit on this priority list for years, in some cases. Rosetta is a perfect example of that. I've spoken to people at the school community. They were very frustrated that it had to take an election to get funded.

Ms PALMER - We have quite an incredible -

CHAIR - Sorry - in the interest of fairness, I've tried to drag that last minute out as long as possible, but the time for scrutiny on this output has expired.

Mr BAYLEY - Chair, there is one answer outstanding about Aboriginal education workers. I'm happy to take it on notice?

Ms PALMER - Sorry, Chair, we'll need to take that on notice. I apologise, we haven't quite got that information in the time.

CHAIR - The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the minister for Disability Services. If you can do the changeover as quick as possible, if people need a very short break but yes, we'll get it going as soon as possible.

The committee suspended from 5.37 p.m. to 5.45 p.m.

DIVISION 9
Output Group 7

7.1 Disability Services

CHAIR - The time being 5.45 p.m., the scrutiny of the Disability Services portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions for the benefit of Hansard.

Ms PALMER - Certainly. Going left to right, introducing Ingrid Ganley, Acting Executive Director, Disability and Reform, Mellissa Gray, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform, and Kathrine Morgan-Wicks, Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. The time scheduled for the Estimates of the minister for Disability Services is one hour. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Ms PALMER - Yes, I would. Thank you, Chair. It's great to have the opportunity to make some opening remarks. I want to begin by acknowledging Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional and original owners of the land that we are on and to pay my respects to Elders past and present. The number of Aboriginal people in Tasmania that report a profound or severe core disability is at 11.8 per cent, and that is higher than the national average at 7.7 per cent as well as the general Tasmanian population at 8 per cent.

As Minister for Disability Services, I am determined to achieve outcomes for all Tasmanians living with disability. It's certainly a busy and a very important time for people living with disability, and for the disability portfolio on the national stage and for our state, with the Disability Royal Commission, the review of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, as well as the usual policy regulation and funding of peak and advocacy services for Tasmanians with disability.

The development of the new Disability Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill will play a critical role in supporting Tasmanians living with disability. It has been 13 years since the last disability bill was passed by parliament and I'm proud that this bill was developed after a long period of consultation and engagement with the Tasmanian disability community. It reflects their wants and their needs, ensuring their rights and protections are upheld while also delivering on greater inclusion.

The bill will introduce some significant reforms for improving inclusion of Tasmanians with disabilities. These include a disability inclusion planning and reporting framework which mandates that government agencies consult with people with disability, a disability commissioner who will be a person with disability, and a disability inclusion advisory council, where the majority of members will be people with disability.

Additionally, the Tasmanian government published our response to the Disability Royal Commission on 31 July this year. We accepted, or accepted in principle, 103 recommendations and wanted to further consider 24 recommendations. We've committed to regular monitoring and reporting of our progress against all recommendations.

Tasmania also continues to work closely with the Commonwealth and states and territories to reform the NDIS after the review was handed down last year. That work continues,

with some targeted consultation on foundational supports underway currently and a range of amendments to the *NDIS Act* passed through the Commonwealth parliament in early September this year, to take effect from early October.

Our disability bill also provides response to some of the recommendations of both the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS review, and places Tasmania in a strong position to continue to respond to these important reforms. I welcome questions from the committee.

Ms HADDAD - I wanted to ask you about the funding in table 9.1, which is \$2.8 million for disability reform over the next four years. Could you provide the committee with information about how that funding will be used? Is it new funding or is it funding to continue existing activities like funding particular organisations?

Ms PALMER - I'll pass to Ms Gray to give you the detail of that, but just at a high level, there's so much change happening in this space. There is the Disability Royal Commission and the NDIS review, and there's a lot of work that we have to do as a state government in mapping out our responses, and in the work that keeps unfolding as we see certain outcomes take form from the NDIS review. We needed to have in the Budget the ability to do that body of work as we move through these stages. For more detail around that funding from an operational level, I'll pass to the Secretary.

Ms GRAY - The funding for disability reform, as the minister said, is to have us well placed for those major reforms: to support them through capacity and capability building for providers and people with disability, promote change management processes, and facilitate market and advocacy.

Ms HADDAD - Does that mean that that funding will be used to employ people within your department to conduct that work, or will it be allocated to organisations that are also adapting to the changes from those various reforms?

Ms GRAY - That funding is available for external funding, not internal funding that's met within disability, and more broadly within the policy and reform team in Premier and Cabinet working closely with the disability policy team as well.

Ms HADDAD - Will it most likely go to existing organisations or will there be some kind of funding process to allocate that funding?

Ms GRAY - We don't know what we don't know yet. We're working collaboratively with the Commonwealth and through the Disability Ministers Reform Council on all of these reforms as they enter our jurisdiction and our state, and it's just to have there so that we have some funding available should we need it as the reforms progress.

Ms ROSOL - The National Disability Advocacy Framework of 2023-25 includes an agreement by the federal and state governments to commit to sharing the responsibility for disability advocacy in their jurisdictions. In Tasmania, your government funds three organisations to provide individual advocacy for people with disabilities. That's Advocacy Tasmania, Speak Out and the Association for Children with Disability.

The Association for Children with Disability provides some systemic advocacy, but the organisation that focuses solely on providing systemic advocacy for Tasmanians who live with

disabilities is Disability Voices Tasmania. However, they received no funding from the Tasmanian government. Why have you chosen not to fund Disability Voices Tasmania, leaving them with zero funding now that their federal funding agreement has expired?

Ms PALMER - The first advocacy groups that you listed there are for individual advocacy, not for that broader advocacy. Through our NDIS commitment that we make each year, part of that amount of money, which is in excess of \$280 million, goes into the bucket of money known as the ILC bucket, which is information linkages capacity. That money is then distributed by the federal government through a competitive process.

Organisations have to apply for that through the federal government and then the federal government makes those decisions. I think it's about \$35 million since 2019 that Tasmanian organisations have received the benefit of through that fund. It's been good for Tasmania because it's double what the contribution was to those organisations before it went through the federal government. This is the process that was set up by the federal government through the NDIS, that this is how these organisations were to be funded.

It was very disappointing when Disability Voices was not successful in their application. I absolutely accept, and have lobbied quite hard as the Disability Services minister for Tasmania, that the ILC funding model really is not fit for purpose. It doesn't address core funding for disability groups. It is program based, so you almost have to look at what's the criteria for this round and adapt what you do to a program.

As disability ministers across the country, we have been quite strong in saying to the federal government, who have been very receptive in this space, that it doesn't work. We shouldn't have disability organisations having to pivot what their core business is to try to fit a funding model. However, that is the model that we have at the moment. Quite possibly we will see that change as we are moving into a space now for general foundational supports that the federal government is going out to consult on now. We believe that could possibly replace the ILC.

I was very disappointed Disability Voices were not successful, but I'm not involved in it. It is with the federal government. Where I see my role as Disability Services minister is in that advocacy space, and I drew this to the attention of the federal Minister for the NDIS, minister Shorten. I laid out for him the importance of this organisation. I asked if there was an opportunity to revisit that or if there were other funding options that might be available to Disability Voices Tasmania.

My office has been advocating strongly for a number of months now. We really hope that we are very close to being able to see success for Disability Voices Tasmania and that they will be funded.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. I note that in some of the other states around Australia advocacy peak bodies are funded by the state governments as well. There is capacity for state funding there. In terms of the development of the disability rights bill - I don't know if I say it with 'rights' in it now, because that's the amended title, but the Disability Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill - I noticed that Disability Voices Tasmania has worked collaboratively with you and with DPAC staff to identify amendments that have strengthened the bill. They say it makes it the most rights-focused legislation in Australia.

Within the bill there's a provision for the minister to fund disability advocacy organisations or disability peak bodies or representative organisations. Given that your department relied on Disability Voices Tasmania to improve parts of the legislation, will you commit to funding Disability Voices Tasmania as a state government once the disability rights and inclusion and safeguarding legislation is enacted?

Ms PALMER - I am really grateful for the contribution of Disability Voices Tasmania. It is important to remember that they were one of a number of individuals and organisations that have worked collaboratively with us for two years now in ensuring that the voice of people with disability was in that legislation. We are very grateful to all of our disability advocates - individuals, the Ministerial Disability Advisory Council and the Premier's Disability Advisory Council - who contributed to the bill and to amendments that have been made, not necessarily officially on the floor, but this has been a living, breathing piece of work for a number of years.

We started this piece of work before the recommendations of the Disability Royal Commission, so we had to incorporate changes there as well. Then there was the introduction of the NDIS review. At the same time as these enormous things are happening in the disability space nationally, we had to keep looking at, is our bill right? Are we going in the right direction? Do we need to add into that? Disability Voices Tasmania joined with many other individuals and organisations to play a part in that body of work.

As I've said, our taxpayer dollars are already contributing to the federal government bucket of money through the ILC. While we're disappointed that Disability Voices was unsuccessful in that process, we have advocated very strongly on their behalf to look at what other options are available. The federal minister, Bill Shorten, has been fantastic in working with us in this process and I have every reason to believe there will be a great outcome for Disability Voices in the very near future.

Ms JOHNSTON - My question probably straddles the previous portfolio, Education, as well as Disability Services. It has been reported to me that parents who choose, or have no other option but, to home-school because of their child's disability receive no funding support for that home learning. This is despite the fact that if these learners were to attend school, there'd be significant resources required of the Department of Education to support their learning. In effect, it means parents are saving the Department of Education a significant amount of money by not providing this support. It's impacting on these young learners' ability to learn in the home environment. It's largely because of their disability that they can't attend school, or are unsuitable to attend school. What can be done to address this disparity? Parents shouldn't have to be dipping into their NDIS allocation to support learning.

Ms PALMER - I really appreciate the question, but I'm not here as the Education minister, and the people I have at the table with me are not from that department. I would be happy to engage with you on this outside this forum, but I'm here as the Disability minister and sticking in that output group.

Ms JOHNSTON - I appreciate that. Perhaps you can speak more generally to the pressures facing parents of children with disabilities in the learning environment. What is the department doing in terms of disability support to assist those parents more generally so that young people can engage in education?

Ms PALMER - I need to restate that I'm not here as the Education minister, so I don't have the information or the people at the table to address part of the question you're asking. All I can do is make a general statement.

I don't have a child with a profound disability. I grew up in a family with a father with a profound disability, but I can't begin to imagine the challenges of a family, of a parent, of a mum having to assist their child to navigate their way through all aspects of life. I have a huge amount of empathy, but would never attempt to think I had an understanding of what that looks like on a day-to-day basis.

What I can tell you is that it's with these circumstances in mind, it is with these families, parents and children in mind, that we have the Disability Inclusion Bill before the House. Part of the work we've done with that new piece of legislation is to put in place that across every government entity, our GBEs, all of our departments, that when they are looking at policy, when they're looking at new programs, they must have a plan in place for how this impacts and integrates, and has inclusion for people with disabilities. I think that's the greatest thing and I'm incredibly proud of our team that we have this in that legislation.

With the example you've put forward, that would mean, in the Education space, that planning and thinking in that policy area must be inclusive, and those entities will be held to account. That's a really exciting part of the bill and I think it is going to see genuine change across government when it comes to the inclusion of people with disability and the thoughtfulness we are asking of our departments and GBEs.

Mr FAIRS - I understand work will soon be underway to establish the Office of the Disability Commissioner. I'm aware we've had an interim disability commissioner since early last year. Can you please update the committee on what that person has been doing and what this role has achieved to date?

Ms PALMER - Absolutely. I'm pleased that our budget measures this year outline \$8.5 million in funding for implementation of the measures outlined in the Disability Rights Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill. I don't know which title I should be using because it hasn't gone through the House, but you know what I'm talking about, our amazing inclusion bill. Part of that is, of course, the establishment of the Office of the Disability Commissioner.

You are correct in stating that we have had an interim disability commissioner since early 2023. We have been fortunate to have the amazing Mary Mallett. She is a person with a deep passion for advocating for people with disability. Ms Mallett's passion is matched by her years of experience working with people with disability, including extensive professional experience both nationally and in the Tasmanian disability sector, and years of dedicated individual and systemic advocacy for people with disability.

It's been crucial to have Mary in this role for the past 20 months at a time when significant reform is underway in the disability sector. During this time Mary has been focused on engaging with stakeholders, including the disability community, members of parliament, heads of agencies, and commissioners in Tasmania and on the mainland. A key engagement, in particular, has been meeting with people with disability, advocates, providers and other safeguarding entities so that she was able to build her understanding of inclusion of people with disability, service provision and safeguarding issues.

She has played a key role in consulting on the powers and functions of what our disability commissioner needs to have, what we need in place to ensure our disability commissioner is doing the role the legislation is enabling and asking that role to do. As part of that she hosted listening sessions for Tasmanians with disability. She was able to talk them about what they want to see in their disability commissioner, because this is their commissioner. They were very up-front and forthright in their responses, which is fantastic.

She has also been able to work with our disability community as we saw the recommendations roll out from the Disability Royal Commission, when the final report came out, which was an emotional and difficult time for people with disabilities. I recognise the courage of the many people with disability in Tasmania who gave evidence or supported someone giving evidence, and even to those who may not have found their voice through that process but have lived experience. Our disability commissioner is for them.

Ms Mallett been really pivotal in the costings. We haven't done this before. We're looking at other jurisdictions, we're looking at other commissioners. What do their offices look like? She's done a huge body of work over the past 20 months to make sure the office is set up adequately, that it's fit for purpose, and that the role of our disability commissioner is what people with disability want and need. It has given us a magnificent framework from which we'll be able to launch ourselves the minute your House gets it done.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, you touched on ILC funding before, and I agree it was not ideal in terms of funding uncertainty for organisations. I also made representations to the federal government about those three organisations that lost their funding, and also about the disconnect of 12 months between ILC funding expiring and foundational supports coming into play. I think it was unfortunate and I'm happy to put that on the public record today, acknowledging that it's not your government that made that decision.

I understand, with foundational supports replacing ILC funding from next financial year, that states and territories need to develop foundational support strategies co-designed with people with disability. Other states have begun establishing task forces for this co-design work, and attaching funding to it. Has that work begun in Tasmania, and if not, when will it, and is there funding allocated to that work?

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much for that question. It's certainly been quite the journey moving through the review of the NDIS and the recommendations that have come out. As a government, as a minister, there's a level of anxiety around what this will look like. We are certainly engaged. We are right in the trenches with this, as disability ministers representing our states and territories, doing everything that we can to work with the federal government.

We know the NDIS must be sustainable. We must be really protective of that scheme, but we are seeing where it has become a little bit of a runaway train. We've seen that there are terrible issues with how it's being abused, unfortunately, by some members of our country's community.

As I understand, consultation around what general foundational supports look like is happening now. I'm going to pass to the Deputy Secretary to talk through the work that's being done at an official level.

Ms GRAY - As the minister has said, the development of foundational supports is being jointly progressed by all jurisdictions. Importantly, this work is being oversighted by the First Secretaries Group with the Council of Federal Financial Relations, as well, oversight.

The senior officials from the First Deputies Group and Disability are working together to establish a shared understanding of the vision for reform to the disability support - what is being called the 'ecosystem' for people inside the NDIS, also outside the NDIS. They are also developing an agreed definition of 'foundational supports', and what they need to occur in our jurisdiction as that work rolls out. There is a current focus on finalising our foundational support strategy for consideration at that national level.

There was also a question about funding to roll out. That is, in particular, a good example of what the use of the disability reform funding line item may end up being used for. It is to facilitate engagement or capability and capacity-building as that policy work is rolled out, so that people can engage with that work.

Ms HADDAD - Thank you. I would note, I understand the ACT is allocated \$90 million over five years for their version of this work. So, there might need to be another budget request at some point to continue that work.

Ms PALMER - It might be a good opportunity to get that national perspective from Kath.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - The work that's occurring by First Secretaries and Deputies at a national level on foundational supports is tied also to the negotiation of the National Health Reform Agreement, because of national cabinet's decision that those two items were tied.

There is still a significant policy piece to describe foundational supports. I accompanied the Premier to speak to minister Shorten about the NDIS Amendment Bill, but also to advocate on behalf of the Council of Australian Federation for an intergovernmental agreement to be prepared on disability. We're quite concerned that we've obviously got years of experience now around the NDIS, but we're now proposing major reforms to the NDIS. We're proposing foundational supports shifting to the states. We believe - and certainly the Premier and well-supported by the minister for Disability - that there should be a national agreement on disability that can describe the new 'ecosystem' in which we will be operating.

Now, 'foundational supports' has been currently posed to cover anything from zero up to 64. Certainly, in conversations with states and territories, we've been trying to focus from birth up to, I think, 8-12 years. We're looking at how far the funding being posed by the Commonwealth will stretch, and to what level of foundational support in the community that the NDIS is now not going to cover.

We do want to reassure community that we will be working very closely with them. We don't want there to be concern in relation to that coverage. We also need to push, on a national policy basis, to say what is being shifted to the states and what type of impact that will have on our health system, education system, and through the disability work we already have underway.

Ms HADDAD - My second question goes to the Disability Royal Commission. I'll ask it quickly. You did touch on it in your opening statement, and I acknowledge you've released the

government's response and accepted many of the recommendations. It's another funding question. With the recommendations that you have committed to, have they been fully funded? For those recommendations that were either accepted in principle or subject to further consideration, what can the community expect, in terms of progress, against those recommendations? Is there work and support in investigating those recommendations for further consideration down the track?

Ms PALMER - Thank you very much for the question. I'll pass to the Deputy Secretary.

Ms GRAY - The Disability Royal Commission has proceeded over a number of years and there's an enormous amount of work. The impact of responding to the commission and its recommendations will also span over many years. That is the first point we need to make.

We will be looking at the implementation of those recommendations and considering them in terms of future budget submissions. It is important to emphasise that the Disability Inclusion Bill that members will be considering goes a long way to responding to many of the Royal Commission recommendations. We are working on scoping across, on a whole of government basis, what the impacts of those recommendations mean for our jurisdiction, and we'll continue that work with agencies.

Ms ROSOL - I have a question about the DPAC website relating to disability services. It has quite a few links on it to various documents and forms relating to disability services and people with disabilities. Quite a lot of it is very dated. There's a role of advocacy services in the Tasmanian disability sector document that's from November 2011. There were forms from 2012 that include old department titles dating back to 2011. There were email addresses on the website that include departments that no longer exist, and missing attachments. There were more than 20 dead links, including one to a medication management framework.

I was concerned about that, because that's a place where members of the public would go for information, and so much of it was dated. Why is the information on there so dated now? There are so many dead links. Is it a resourcing issue? Is it a neglect issue? Is it reflective of a broader issue with a lack of resourcing and not being able to keep on top of things like that? When could we expect that the website might be fixed up so it provides accurate, up-to-date information and contact details?

Ms PALMER - It's a good question. I'll pass to our Deputy Secretary.

Ms GRAY - Thank you. I'm advised that as a result of the machinery of government changes that occurred with the move into DPAC, there were a number of items of dated information and, as you rightly pointed out, anomalies identified with the website. There is an active project underway. In terms of timeline on updating that, there is no specific timeline. However, we will work, as a priority, to address that for people living with disability in Tasmania.

Ms ROSOL - Great. Thank you. I have a question relating to some information that was in the Budget. There was performance information for Disability Services in Table 9.9 of budget paper 2. It's on page 283. There's a projection in there that in 2024-25 restrictive practices will be authorised at a rate of 1 per cent of Tasmanian NDIS participants, which equates to 154.6 authorised restrictive practices for the year. When I went back and did the maths on the previous numbers of authorised restrictive practices over previous years, that

figure that's projected is almost a doubling of the 2023-24 actual number of authorised restrictive practices. Given restrictive practices by definition restrict the rights of people with disability, and we're working to move away from them, and that's what the whole Disability Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill is about, continuing with managing that and making sure that we're doing the best we can as a state to ensure people's freedoms, I'm curious as to why there's that projected almost doubling in the number. Can you explain why you've planned for more authorisations of restrictive practices this year?

Ms PALMER - Yes, I looked at that and asked the exact same question of my team, who sorted it out for me in about 60 seconds. I will pass to Ingrid Ganley to explain that to you.

Ms GANLEY - The target that we've set is based on our assessment of the active NDIS participants and knowing what occurs in the sector, what we would anticipate we need to be authorising as restrictive practices. Part of the work we're doing is ensuring that organisations are actually complying with our legislation. We think there's room for improvement in the organisations complying with restricted practices. Through our new inclusion bill, we will be broadening the scope of restrictive practices that our organisations need to apply for. It's accounting for both bringing up compliance and broadening our restrictive practice definition.

Ms ROSOL - You're saying, potentially, that number of authorised restrictive practices, or unauthorised restrictive practices, are happening and so it will be a matter of bringing them into an authorised space. Thank you.

Ms GANLEY - Yes.

Ms JOHNSTON - I think we can all agree that ensuring that people living with a disability should be able to participate fully in democratic processes. Over the last six months or so, concerns have been raised with me that people living with disability have had difficulty engaging in our election, for instance, and accessing polling booths. Even last week we highlighted in the parliament that perhaps parliament itself isn't terribly inclusive when it comes to disability. We recognised Auslan in our parliament, I think it was Thursday last week, which was fantastic. What are you doing, minister, to try to advocate in that space with your colleagues to ensure that the people with living disability can fully participate in our democratic processes?

Ms PALMER - Yes, I absolutely agree with that. All Tasmanians have a right to be able to cast a secret, independent and verifiable vote and the opportunity to participate in our democratic process fully. Even as recently as the state elections and the Legislative Council elections, this hasn't been an easy process for Tasmanians living with disability. I found it extraordinary that a person with disability could actually get on a plane and fly to Melbourne and vote privately and independently, but they couldn't do it here in Tasmania.

I have been working on this with the Attorney-General and have held a meeting with Disability Voices Tasmania, which is a member of the Tasmanian Electoral Commission working group. We have met with the Attorney-General specifically on this. The Attorney-General is working with the Tasmanian Electoral Commission to identify potential reforms that will enhance accessibility, including phone voting. I also understand that DVT, along with others, has made a submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Electoral Matters. I'm delighted that the Attorney-General has seen that there are issues here and we need to look

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at what changes need to be made to ensure that this is truly an inclusive process for all Tasmanians.

Ms JOHNSTON - In terms of parliament itself, have you made representations to the President or the Speaker regarding parliament being accessible? Closed captions, access to the building, all those kinds of issues?

Ms PALMER - I've had a number of conversations and have been advocating, certainly with the President and the Clerk of the Legislative Council on some of the issues that I can see. It will be very soon when we will have a person with some sort of mobility issue in our parliament and we can't be in a position where, as a parliament, we are reacting to someone who's just been elected. We need to be looking at that now and I think there's a lot of goodwill. I can't speak for Parliamentary Services - already I can feel the Clerk descending on me - but as the Disability Services minister, yes, I've certainly been involved in discussions with the President.

The member for Launceston, the honourable Rosemary Armitage, smashed her heel, would it be early last year? It might even have been the year before. Just for her, it was a really difficult situation getting her in and out of the Chamber, and her ability to even sit in the seat for the member for Launceston. There were parts of when we were sitting where she had to sit away from her seat.

I'm really passionate. I want our parliament to set, and we should be setting, the standard here. I'm certainly involved in those conversations, and there's been tremendous goodwill for looking at what needs to be done.

In saying that, we have an old building. This is not easy. I've put forward some suggestions without any knowledge or experience in the construction space of what I thought were some really easy fixes. Yes, some of them have drawn laughter, but it is an old building.

Ms HADDAD - I'm sure they were well intentioned.

Ms PALMER - Yes, they were very well intentioned and we have to be having these conversations. Just because it's hard, doesn't mean you don't go there. I acknowledge that there are some really tricky aspects to this, but we have to find a way forward. We have to find a way through that.

Ms JOHNSTON - Just as a final question, will the parliament and the TEC be required to have an inclusion plan under the bill proposed? Are they covered by the bill? I apologise, I probably should have asked that question in the briefing.

CHAIR - Sorry, I know this has been a lot more collegial session, but just for the benefit of Hansard, can we not talk over the top of each other? Sorry to burst everybody's bubble.

Ms PALMER - I'm just seeking some advice.

They wouldn't be included with what we have put forward as government entities in the bill. But the important thing is, with the bill, we have committed to begin a review within 18 months. It needs to start not before the 18-month part and be finished before three years.

Wherever we can see that we can improve this, we'll certainly be looking to do that, but it obviously needs to be done in consultation right across that broad spectrum of our community.

Ms JOHNSTON - Hopefully, the parliament can lead by example.

Ms ROSOL - Closed captions would be an amazing addition to our broadcast.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, the National Autism Strategy is expected to be finalised by the end of the year. Did the Tasmanian government make a submission as part of this strategy? What do you expect implementation of such a strategy will mean for autistic Tasmanians?

Ms PALMER - Such a large number of our NDIS participants fall into having autism and so it was really important that our state had a strong presence in the development of that strategy. Yes, we did make a government submission to that strategy.

Correct me if I'm wrong, Secretary, but I believe it went in under the Premier, but as disability minister I was engaged through that process as well. We made a submission to the draft National Autism Strategy - that was in June of this year - really incredibly important to me, to the Premier, and to our government that the needs of our Tasmanian autistic community were outlined in that submission. While our submission acknowledges that the strategy sits with the Commonwealth, we acknowledge that it will have implications for the Tasmanian Government. We've advocated for a well-coordinated approach to achieve the goal of improving life outcomes for all autistic people, and it's a goal that our government is committed to.

For a small state, we've got some pretty significant numbers, as I alluded to. It's estimated that between 2 to 3 per cent of Tasmanians are autistic, and that translates to somewhere between 11,400 and 17,100 people. Additionally, as of 30 June this year, 5312 autistic Tasmanians access the NDIS and autism is the most prevalent primary disability identified of Tasmanians receiving the NDIS, accounting for 36 per cent of Tasmanian NDIS participants.

All these statistics demonstrate the need for our involvement in the strategy that has a number of key reform areas, including access to services, healthcare, education and employment, and it covers commitments on areas such as social and economic inclusion, diagnosis supports and services, and health and mental health.

It is particularly pleasing to hear that autistic Australians will continue to be involved in the strategy - a clear example of 'nothing for us without us' - and I do want to acknowledge the depth of consultation that was undertaken with autistic people and their families and their carers and their support networks, advocates - also researchers were involved in this as well.

I certainly hope this strategy will provide a true turning point for how our autistic community can be supported in all facets of life, and our government looks forward to working with the Commonwealth after the release of the final strategy to understand how our government will be engaged and supported in the implementation of the strategy. Thank you for the question.

Ms HADDAD - Minister, I also wanted to ask a few things about the Disability Rights Inclusion and Safeguarding Bill and also acknowledge your work on that bill that has been significant, and your department's work. You've already described the complexities of doing

the work on that bill while there were many competing national reforms going on at the same time, and I do want to acknowledge your willingness to work with disability organisations and people with disability to adopt a number of amendments to the bill in the Upper House, and I look forward to the debate continuing downstairs. It was on the list for us last sitting day. It's very sad that we didn't quite get to it. I'm sure you are more frustrated than me.

Ms PALMER - I'm still traumatised. We sat waiting, didn't we?

Ms HADDAD - We were all there ready, but unfortunately it didn't happen.

I do note, though, that the bill establishes a range of different functions, including the advisory council - the Disability Inclusion Advisory Council (DIAC) - and, in schedule 1, 4., it provides that members are entitled to be paid such remuneration and allowance as the minister determines. Obviously, on its reading, I think everyone around this table would probably read that to mean that there is an intention for remuneration, but it could also be read in the opposite way, meaning a future minister could determine that remuneration is zero, because the schedule and clause allow for a minister to determine remuneration. I just wondered, as the minister responsible for the bill and the act once it's completed, can you indicate your intention in terms of payment of members of that council?

Ms PALMER - Are you looking for a dollar figure?

Ms HADDAD - I can go on to my next question which is about the board fee policy - wondering if it will fit somewhere in that board fee policy, because I know that policy already exists and applies to some other consultative boards and committees, but there are different categories, and within those categories there's different steps. If there's an easy answer to say, 'yes, it will be category E' and whatever it might be, then I'd welcome an answer like that. But, if it's going to be remunerated in some other way, also it would be good to have that information.

Ms PALMER - Yes. I'll pass that to the secretary. It was really important that - this this advisory council is going to have to be a skills-based council. What we are asking of this council is to have that level of accountability and to be able to work with the Disability Commissioner and really advocate, and they'll also be involved in looking at the inclusion plans from some of the departments and the government entities that come forward.

My expectation was - and I say this with the deepest of respect - but quite often in the disability space we see volunteer boards, and it was really important that this is a very important board. It will have terms of reference, it will have very clear jobs that it has to do, and so it needs to be remunerated in the same way as if we were asking them to advise on whatever it might be.

Ms HADDAD - It's about recognising their expertise and their skill and compensating that accordingly because we're asking them to share that lived experience and their skills in developing government policies.

Ms PALMER - I'll just see if the Deputy Secretary has anything to add to that.

Ms GRAY - Yes, the council will be constituted in accordance with the Tasmanian Government board and fee policy. We haven't sized the council at this stage because we're

waiting for the legislation, but it will be a fast process. We're already working on the terms of reference for the council, but we have to wait.

Ms HADDAD - I know there's not many minutes left, but do you have to wait for the legislation to be complete before you can determine whether it's a category D, E, F or G board? Well, it won't be G, because that's not remunerated, but I've had some advocates express to me that it should at least be category E, which is policy review and specialist, and within category E there are four levels of remuneration. Does the legislation have to pass before you can make those decisions around its constitution?

Ms GRAY - Schedule 1 of the bill pretty much sets out skeleton terms of reference. We could do some work. We have not at this stage, though. We could do some work now looking at that and assessing it, but there is a formal process that we have to go through to have the council sized and the appropriate level will be determined through that process.

Ms ROSOL - We were just talking about autism earlier, and I do have a question about Autism Tasmania, because I think we're all aware that their funding ceased on 30 June and it's left an enormous hole for many Tasmanians who relied on their services and support, and I understand that your reasoning around this is that the Tasmania already provides funding to the federal government and then the federal government return that to Tasmania through the NDIS or through ILC grants.

I guess I'm just curious why such an important service; you chose not to fund it, because I'm sure that there's capacity. We could fund things if we chose to. I'm wondering if you could just explain why you chose not to step in and provide funding there and maybe give an update on what services or other organisations have filled that gap or are filling that gap for people with autism, please.

Ms PALMER - I'm probably a little surprised at your question because I did ring you to step out specifically the reasons why we were in the position that we were in, but I will do my best to answer this question.

Ms ROSOL - Or if you could provide an update on where things are.

Ms PALMER - I will do my best to answer the question respectfully in a public forum. I certainly acknowledge the role that Autism Tasmania has played in supporting many Tasmanians on the autism spectrum and their loved ones.

It's always a difficult decision and I know it was a difficult decision for Autism Tasmania to enter into administration, and I expressed then that my thoughts were with the staff and the members of the organisation and those who relied on it, who were affected by that decision and the subsequent liquidation of the organisation.

This was not a situation where it was appropriate to step in with any sort of a rescue funding package. The reasons why Autism Tasmania entered into administration are reasons that are best, I think, expressed by Autism Tasmania for the decision it made. When I became aware of the situation, I approached the federal government to look at what appropriate supports could be given to Autism Tasmania. They looked at the situation and also agreed that there were some governance issues and there was not a pathway for funding from the federal government either.

We totally acknowledge that in the advocacy space, there is now a hole for autism across the state. It certainly is not impacting on services for autism, which sit in other portfolios; this is in the advocacy space. I had an online meeting with the Regional Autistic Engagement Network and they have also had discussions with my adviser in my office, to look at what can be done there.

It was great to see that the Premier's Discretionary Fund was able to provide some quick funds to them, which has been able to assist them in setting up their office - the things that you need, like a phone, a laptop; I think they got a portable screen projector.

We also understand that they have applied for the Commonwealth's Peer Support and Capacity Building grant round. My understanding is the successful applicants are going to be notified towards the end of this month or the beginning of the next month.

Ms DOW - I have a question in relation to accommodation, particularly for young people with disability in the north west. I have a lot of constituents who make representation to me about the lack of facilities or the long waitlist to get into accommodation. I know some of those are managed through their NDIS support packages, so I do work with our federal colleagues as well around that, but from a state point of view, I wondered if you're working with the Minister for Housing around trying to increase access for those living with disability across our community, particularly in regional areas where there seems to be a significant shortage of housing options.

Ms PALMER - One of the main aspects of being the Disability Services minister is to be that constant voice across all portfolios. Again, I point to what we're doing with our inclusion bill, which will formalise our expectations about the consideration of people with disabilities around inclusion and supports right across policy in government areas.

But yes, I work with the Housing minister on this, but also with my national colleagues and disability ministers around Australia as well, and advocating in that federal space as well.

Recently, we were able to organise a briefing for my ministerial disability group and we had Homes Tasmania come, so that there was an opportunity for those around the table and online to ask questions of Homes Tasmania. How does this work? What are you doing? It was also an opportunity for Homes Tasmania to hear directly the voice of disability. What do they need? What does this look like? What are some of their struggles? That was a really important thing for those from Homes Tasmania to attend.

Ms DOW - Are you confident that Homes Tasmania, in the work that they're doing, are actually looking at the availability of disability housing across the state?

Ms PALMER - I don't feel that I can step into the territory of another minister's portfolio. What I can tell you is that I'm advocating at every step of the way to ensure the best outcomes that I can for people with disabilities.

CHAIR - And with that, the time being 6.45 p.m., the time for scrutiny has expired. I thank everybody for their cooperation today. It's been a long day.

The committee adjourned at 6.45 p.m.



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Madeleine Ogilvie MP

Wednesday 25 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Behrakis MP (Chair)
Ms Ella Haddad MP (Deputy Chair)
Mr Vica Bayley MP
Ms Kristie Johnston MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Jen Butler MP
Ms Cecily Rosol MP
Mr Rob Fairs MP
Ms Meg Brown MP
Ms Tabatha Badger MP
Mrs Rebekah Pentland MP
Ms Janie Finlay MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON. MADELEINE OGILVIE MP

Minister for Science and Technology, Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation, Minister for Arts (including Heritage), Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

Kristy Bourne

Acting Secretary, Department of Justice

Christopher Carney

Executive Director, Community Corrections, Department of Justice

Rod Wise

Deputy Secretary, Corrective Services, Department of Justice

David Jackson

Acting Director of Prisons, Department of Justice

Dave Sudmalis

Director Arts Tasmania, Department of State Growth

Jason Jacobi

Secretary, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Melissa Ford

Director, Heritage Tasmania, Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania

Mary Mulcahy

Director, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery

PUBLIC

The Committee met at 9.00 a.m.

DIVISION 5

(Department of Justice)

CHAIR - The time now being 9.00 a.m., the scrutiny of the Corrections and Rehabilitation portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the Committee. I'll invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard.

Ms OGILVIE - I have Kristy Bourne, acting Secretary. I have Rod Wise, Deputy Secretary of Corrective Services. In the back of the room, we have Colin Shepherd, Deputy Secretary, Strategy, Governance, Major Projects. We have David Jackson, acting Director of Prisons, and we also have in the back of the room, Christopher Carney, Executive Director, Community Corrections. We also have, if needed, Gavin Wales, Director of Finance. I think I've captured everyone.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation is two-and-a-half hours. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question to the minister, and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence to the minister for answer.

Minister, would you like to give an opening statement?

Ms OGILVIE - I certainly would, thank you very much. The 2024-25 state Budget continues our government's track record of responsible investment in Corrections and Rehabilitation, supporting our commitment to improving community safety and offender rehabilitation.

As part of the funding allocated to the commission of inquiry response, \$4 million has been provided over four years to deliver treatment programs for both offenders and others at risk of sexual offending. This includes the establishment of preventative groups and one-on-one counselling treatment programs for people who identify themselves as being at risk of such offending, and those who are no longer under a correctional order but require ongoing treatment to prevent risk escalation.

Following my announcement last month, the Budget discontinues funding for the construction of the northern correctional facility, however, the government will continue to invest in expanding and upgrading our correctional facilities to ensure we provide a physical environment that aligns with our operational approach. To this end, the Budget provides \$15.9 million in additional funding for capital services over three years for the Risdon Prison construction program.

This program will include construction of the new Risdon kitchen, building improvements to facilitate an expansion of drug and alcohol programs, the delivery of more rehabilitation programs to prisoners, investment in prisoner self-service technology, as well as

co-funding the purchase of a property to accommodate north-west based female prisoners following their release from custody.

This capital investment is supported by further allocation of \$4.1 million over four years for the Tasmanian Prison Service to improve intervention and rehabilitation services across the state as part of our correctional improvement program that runs parallel to the capital works. An additional \$1 million per annum has been provided to expand Community Corrections, successful home detention and electronic monitoring services to support the objectives of Changing Lives, Creating Futures: a Strategic Plan for Corrections in Tasmania 2023.

Recognising the natural variations in project progress, some capital funds have been rolled over from the last financial year to enable a range of capital works projects to continue in 2024-25. These include the new Risdon Prison kitchen, the additional maximum security accommodation unit within the Risdon Prison Complex, the electronic security system and mobile duress alarm system replacement, and Risdon Prison critical infrastructure maintenance.

While not exclusively within the Corrections and Rehabilitation portfolio, the 2024-25 state Budget provides \$25.4 million across the next four years for ongoing operational costs of the Justice Connect - Astria - system, which I'll refer to as Astria going forward, and the provision of operational support for use of the system once it goes live. Once implemented, Astria will significantly improve information management across both the justice and correction systems. Staff in the Tasmanian Prison Service and Community Corrections are expected to have access to the system in the first half of 2025.

We recognise that our correctional staff are central to achieving our rehabilitation outcomes, and I would like to place on the record my personal appreciation for the work that staff across the Tasmanian Prison Service and Community Corrections undertake. The 2024-25 Budget provides funding for two key initiatives to support our workforce, both in the Corrections and Rehabilitation portfolio and across the Department of Justice more broadly.

The first of these is an allocation of \$3.5 million per annum to provide support for injured correctional officers and state service employees who have a workers compensation plan, which is very important. Further, \$800,000 in annual ongoing operational funding is provided for the department's Wellbeing Support Program, which provides all departmental employees, including those in the Tasmanian Prison Service and Community Corrections, with a range of services and support, including health and wellbeing checks, mental health awareness, incident support and case management. We are focused on continuing to make the improvements we need to make, and I look forward to this session.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, I understand there are critical shortages in Community Corrections. Can you provide an update on the number of employees by head count and the establishment figure, and break this down by region?

Ms OGILVIE - Certainly, I will seek that information.

Ms BUTLER - Can you provide the number of probation officers in this figure? I can take all of those on notice.

PUBLIC

Ms OGILVIE - I think we'll have that information. I think Kristy can answer that one for you.

Ms BOURNE - We have staffing levels at the end of each financial year for the three years to 30 June 2024. At 30 June 2022 there were 132.1 full-time equivalent positions; at 30 June 2023, 125.3 full-time equivalent positions; and to 30 June 2024, 121.4 full-time equivalent positions. For the past decade, the Community Corrections workload has remained relatively stable. I do not have before me a breakdown of probation officers that I am aware of, but we may be able to find that before the conclusion.

Ms OGILVIE - If we can seek to get that information and bring it to the table.

Ms BUTLER - You will bring that to the table before the end?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. Can you provide an update on the number of probation officer employees who have left Community Corrections this year?

Ms OGILVIE - We don't have it to hand. We will bring it to the table.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. Is the lack of staff impacting on program delivery, such as the family violence program for offenders deemed to be high risk and likely to offend? How many offenders have been supported by this program over how many years?

Ms OGILVIE - I think it might be worth having Mr Carney join the table. I will introduce Mr Christopher Carney, Executive Director, Community Corrections. Mr Carney, the question asked for detail about the staffing numbers, but also whether services are impacted.

Mr CARNEY - To answer the Family Violence Offender Intervention Program question first, in 2021-22, we had 115 people commence that program and we had 73 complete. That was 63 per cent. In 2022-23, we had 62 people commence the program and 35 complete. In 2023-24, we had 54 people commence and 39 complete, so it was really a COVID-19 spike that we saw that earlier year. That 54 commencing in 2023-24 was a 22 per cent increase on the 44 who commenced the program in 2019-2020. We only had 44 commencements in 2019-2020. We had 54 commence last year, but this 115 was a spike that we saw associated with COVID because more people were at home, and there was certainly more risk associated with that.

We have 34 probation officers in the south and there are eight current vacancies, as well as 2.9 FTEs that we're managing through flexible work practices. There are 18.5 probation officers in the north of the state with four current vacancies, and there are 14.4 probation officers in the north-west with 3.8 current vacancies.

We have ongoing recruitment in relation to all of those, and we've also established a fixed-term register for the probation officer and casework support officer roles that we have recently established. Casework support officer roles were established just in the past couple of years, and that was to take away a lot of the administrative load from probation officers. They do a lot of reports, they do a lot of assessments, they do a lot of home assessments and they do

weekly activity planners for home detention orders, so we reduced the administrative load there.

We've also increased the support staff that we have in place. We've established three new therapeutics roles that offer support across the entire state, and we've also established a practice lead role, which is about enhancing the practice support that people can get. These are the supports that we have increasingly built around them.

We have just finalised the interview process in relation to a probation officer position in the north-west yesterday. That should be finalised this week, so we'll get some more staff in that area. We've recently advertised permanent positions in all three regions across the state. There's been a big change this year, which has been great. We've had really large pools of people applying for the roles and they're back to pre-COVID levels.

We're building up our capacity to appoint staff all over the place, and one of the things that we've done - I did raise this - is the fixed-term register. We've had that in place for a couple of years, but we didn't necessarily manage it well - I would take that on board - from a Community Corrections perspective, but last year the department supported us to get a business services manager in place, and she has been a godsend. She has built our processes around how we can manage that in a very measured way to ensure that we are continuing to tap into that and building up our capacity to draw from it. What that's going to do and what we're starting to see now is a reduced timeframe lag between when somebody leaves and when we get new staff come in.

In relation to separations, we had 13 per cent separation in 2021-22. We had 11 per cent in 2022-23. We had 15 per cent last year, but that increased separation figure was actually due to retirements and officers who accepted promotions to higher-level positions in the state service. We actually saw a spike in promotions to higher-level positions in the State Service, and I want to talk about that because at the beginning of last year - I'm sorry if I'm talking, but I want to talk about that -

Ms OGILVIE - We're here to hear from you. I think they're more interested in what you have to say than what I have to say.

Mr CARNEY - We had a look at the support that we were providing to our staff from a management perspective, and one of the key figures that was not a good reflection on us was that we only had 24 per cent of our staff who had an annual plan, which is not okay. They deserve better from us, and so we really invested in building up capacity to and frameworks of supervision and support that we're providing to our staff to make sure that we have annual plans in place for everybody, to make sure that we are focused on their learning, to make sure that we're focused on their development.

We got that up to 88 per cent, which I have to say I was very proud of. We did really well to move the needle there. What that allowed us to do was to better understand the needs of our people so that we could design, implement, procure and deliver enhanced training so that they were better positioned to do their job. The reason why I raised that is because we designed and procured and delivered a range of additional staff training packages, mainly to do with soft skills and working within the human services field.

We did a vicarious trauma training package; professional boundaries; trauma informed practise; reflective practice; defensible decision making. We did case management training; motivational interviewing training; sex offender criminogenic assessment training. We did how to work with sex offenders; how to work with people affected by drugs and alcohol; risk assessment tools. We actually sent two people away, one to Melbourne to become Australia's second only master trainer in a level of service suite of a criminogenic assessment. That's the criminogenic assessment tool we run. The second only ever master trainer and the first one that's actually attached to a corrective services organisation. The other one is a professor at a university.

We also sent an officer away to become a trainer in a suite of sex offender training tools, because we need to increase our capacity for our people to be able to identify criminogenic risk there and deliver those tools. We also sent officers away to become trainers in the programs that we deliver, the eclipse suite of criminogenic programs, and the year before, the family violence offender intervention program as well. We have trainers in those programs. We also delivered training packages in relation to performance management and planning, business planning, and leadership and management to our managers.

The reason why I raised that is because we've invested a lot in our people to enhance their soft skills, to enhance their core skills, to enhance their capacity to be able to deliver better service. What that does is it naturally sets people up to be able to gain promotion. I have to say, universally, I believe all of them were able to transition to promotion positions within the State Service. We've still kept the expertise within the State Service even though I may have lost a couple of them.

Ms BUTLER - The Sober Driver program has been delivered by Community Corrections for some time now. How many years and how many people has it supported?

Mr CARNEY - We actually looking to review that program. That has been delivered since around 2007 I believe. I don't have the numbers here.

Ms BUTLER - Our information, due to the staff shortages there will be no more programs of any type run until 2025, is that right?

Mr CARNEY - Do we want to talk about the Sober Driver program specifically or do we want to talk about programs more generally and then address each one?

Ms BUTLER - Sober Driver and overview.

Mr CARNEY - The Sober Driver program has been run for a number of years. It was developed by the NSW Department of Transport, I believe, and we procured it. It's an information program that tells people drink driving is bad and it gives them some information around their alcohol use and how that can affect their driving.

Last year, we invested additionally into this program to get some 'beer goggles', so that we can have additional resources so that people can actually see it rather than just sitting in front of a PowerPoint. The program is a little outdated, I do have to say. It's good, it certainly does give people the sort of information they're looking for, but we're hoping to enhance that.

PUBLIC

We've set up a partnership with UTAS to try - and one of the things we're doing through that partnership is trying to get both a Sober Driver program to talk about alcohol, alcohol-associated effects on driving and decision-making, but also one for drugs as well so we can have an information program on how some of these intoxicants can affect your decision making. We still do run this Sober Driver program.

In EQUIPS, 52 people started in 2021-22 and 45 completed; in 2022-23, 51 started and 45 completed; and in 2023-24, 35 started and 37 completed.

Ms BUTLER - Will there be any more of the Sober Driver and the family violence programs for the rest of 2024? Or will they not start again until 2025?

Mr CARNEY - No, they are still running. When I was talking to you about our programs more generally, one of the things that we did - I spoke about it before - is we sent some officers away to become trainers in the family violence program and we also sent a couple of officers away, six I believe, to become trainers in the EQUIPS suite of programs.

We manage programs through wait lists and what we do is we wait until there's a certain number of people because they're all group programs. We need to wait until there is a certain number of people to commence programs being run because part of the learning associated with programs comes from sitting in a group and hearing about others' experience and getting them to challenge your beliefs and your ideas.

We've always managed programs through wait lists. What we have done by sending these people away to become trainers is we're trying to change our model of service delivery to enhance our capacity to deliver programs. I now have people who can train people to deliver programs; our focus is to look at getting all of our probation officers capable and ready to facilitate the delivery of these programs so that we can roll them along more generally and make sure they're continuing to run.

The issue with a wait-list design the way we've always done it - and we've had to because we're a relatively small jurisdiction - is that someone can come onto an order and there may not be a whole bunch of other people who get the program condition at the same time. They can just be sitting there waiting until we have enough to run a program for them to get on. We want to try to get them in early because if we can get them in early, it addresses their risk early and we can start to move them forward.

We're still managing programs through wait lists, but we are also moving toward a rolling model of program delivery. They have started a rolling family violence program. It's already started, which is great. We have separate programs that are booked in other regions across the state that are going to occur this year.

One of the areas that was highlighted for us when we sent staff to attend the trainer program in the EQUIPS suite is there are four parts to the EQUIP suite program. There's an addictions program, there's an aggression program, there's a domestic violence program and there's a foundations program.

The prison has been great. They have always run the foundations program. As Community Corrections we never did.

PUBLIC

The idea with this suite of programs is that everyone gets a front door through the foundations program because it sets them up to be program and change ready. It gives them some of that change in mindset around why we would accept change and how we would build on that.

It really sets them up well, but we've never run it at Community Corrections because we focused on drug addiction, family violence and aggression as the main ones. Because we sent these staff away, one of the things we're looking to do is set up a rolling foundations program as well. Hopefully what that will mean is, not only are we increasing our ability to facilitate programs because we've got far more staff able to do it, but it'll mean that far more people will get the benefit of this program intervention in the first place. If they don't necessarily roll on to one of the other EQUIPS programs, that's okay because it makes them change-ready or it supports them to engage in the external services that we might send them to in a more effective and proactive way. So our focus here is around building our capacity to deliver a more meaningful suite of programs. There are programs that are continuing to run throughout the rest of the year and, as we have always, we will be managing wait lists, but our intention is, across the next 12 months, to also start to establish some of these rolling programs so that next year and the year after we should be looking at building on some of these numbers quite significantly.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, in last year's annual report, the Custodial Inspector said:

I regularly hear about matters of concern in custodial centres from people working or housed there, but unfortunately some people who have raised their concerns with my office have also reported that their actions in speaking with my office were sometimes not well received. There are no protections for people who do come forward to report issues to my office, and there should be.

Your government has rejected this call. I'm just wondering why. Is it because you'd rather people didn't come forward? Or is there another reason?

Ms OGILVIE - No, and I don't accept the premise of your question, which is that I might have a personal view about people exercising their legal rights, which they're absolutely entitled to do and I'm fully supportive of that, clearly.

I meet regularly with the Custodial Inspector and I'm very supportive of their work as well. It's a key part of the process that we have in running the system. I understand also that the Director of Prisons meets regularly with the Custodial Inspector, at least on a quarterly basis. We're always listening and hopefully doing what we can to have the most contemporary approach that we can have.

I know that there are recommendations from the Custodial Inspector Report. Senior TPS staff recently met to allocate the 120 recommendations from the two recently released reports to various TPS staff members. But I do note, as you have, that not all of the recommendations were supported. Some, of course, will be allocated to the Department of Health for actioning, and from those recommendations and from all of the other reports to date, there have been 545 recommendations made. Of those, 34 recommendations were not supported.

PUBLIC

I would actually like to ask the question whether we have a view or any information in relation to the ability of people to make appropriate contact and complaints. Have we had some feedback on that?

Mr WISE - We don't think that additional protections are necessary for staff and indeed the Dry Cells Report, which the Custodial Inspector issued not too long ago, stemmed from a staff member approaching the Custodial Inspector and making that reference, so I don't think that there's any need for it. Staff are welcome to contact the Custodial Inspector and we welcome that as well. We try to act in a transparent manner and our staff are absolutely free to contact the Custodial Inspector.

Ms OGILVIE - Having said that, though, if you have a specific instance or a concern, I'm always open to listening to that.

Ms ROSOL - As a supplementary for that question, I guess my question was also relating to those people who are imprisoned there, whether they have protections, because at this stage they don't have legal protections if they do raise concerns. I don't know if you've got a comment on that.

Ms OGILVIE - I think my only comment would be, I'm very happy to hear if you have a specific instance or if there's more we can do. I'm really genuinely interested in making sure that we have the best system we have, so very open to listening.

Ms ROSOL - The Custodial Inspector has also noted that consultants and specialists that they employ are required to obtain a gate pass in advance from the Prison Service. At Ashley Youth Detention Centre that's not required, so that limits the capacity of the inspector to conduct unannounced inspections. Why is that situation in place? Why hasn't that been changed? The Custodial Inspector has recommended regulations be made to address this issue. Do you intend to change that?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you for the question, which is important. I actually don't have any overview of the Ashley centre, so I don't know what arrangements -

Ms ROSOL - My question is about the Tasmania Prison Service, where they do have to get a pass in advance.

Ms OGILVIE - I'm just coming to that. I don't have any purview over what happens in other areas, in relation to what we do, particularly the Risdon site. You would be aware that it houses a range and diversity of prisoners. I imagine that's part of the reason we have some careful guidelines around passes, but I will ask the department to provide some additional information.

Mr CARNEY - We naturally have a range of requirements in place so that people can't enter our prison facilities without proper identification, those sort of things. There is no issue and I've passed this on to the Custodial Inspector's team if they were to engage in an unannounced inspection and had an expert with them who we weren't previously aware of. It only takes a phone call for me to say 'Can we arrange for this person to be granted access immediately?' and I would grant it. So it's not an issue as far as we're concerned.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you.

PUBLIC

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, I've had concerns raised with me regarding the staffing levels at the Remand Centre. It's been indicated to me that the demand on the Remand Centre has increased significantly through family violence incidents where people who had to be remanded, and that there is insufficient staffing to meet that demand. Can you give us an indication of the current staffing levels for the Remand Centre, please?

Ms OGILVIE - It is an operational matter so we'll ask for you.

Mr WISE - Can we ask one point of clarification please? Minister, when you're talking about the Remand Centre, are you talking about the Southern Remand Centre or were you perhaps taking about the Hobart Reception Prison?

Ms JOHNSTON - Both. Can I get both figures, please?

Mr WISE - Yes, maybe Mr Jackson would know.

Ms OGILVIE - Mr Jackson, would you mind, if you can add some information?

Mr JACKSON - I've recently spoken to the unions, who have raised this point with me. We are now looking at what we might do to add an extra person at the HRP, the reception prison in the watch house for detainees. At this point in time I'm unaware of staff shortages in the Southern Remand Centre. It seems to be open quite regularly, so I don't have any more information on that, sorry.

Ms OGILVIE - Certainly. If you have a specific concern though, please feel free to -

Ms JOHNSTON - Could I then ask, as a follow-up, and you might need to take this one on notice, what is the staffing allocation per shift and particularly the night shift, and how many times has that not been filled in the last financial year?

Ms OGILVIE - Is that information that you would have to hand here?

Mr JACKSON - We could get that information.

Ms OGILVIE - We'll bring it to the table if we can.

Ms JOHNSTON - By today or do you think -

Ms OGILVIE - Today, if we can and if not, then we will take it on notice.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you.

Ms OGILVIE - We're trying to get as much information as we can to the table as we sit here.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you.

PUBLIC

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can you outline how the expanded use of electronic monitoring has already enhanced community safety and how this technology will offer sophisticated sentencing options, please?

Ms OGILVIE - I was really pleased that Mr Carney was able to join us and give a big overview of the hard work that's happening. I thank you for that, because that's a really good sort of precursor to talking about the work that we're doing with our nation-leading electronic monitoring. It truly is nation-leading. We have a lot of interest in it from around the nation but internationally too, so we're doing some remarkable things. It does represent a major step forward in how we can effectively respond to the needs of the community, but also victim-survivors, which is very important. We secured a \$4.7 million extension to this initiative, which I was really pleased about, and it does reflect our commitment to maintaining a program that offers, as we'll hear from Mr Carney, sophisticated real-time tracking technology which provides a safer alternative to traditional forms of detention and allows courts to impose electronic monitoring. By doing that, we give them the tools to make more informed, more flexible, more agile orders that ensure public safety remains a top priority. That gives a little bit more control over the sorts of orders we are providing. One of the standout features of the program is how it actively supports victim-survivors of family violence and by issuing discreet duress alarms, we provide a safety net that is always within reach. This technology offers victim-survivors a greater sense of security, knowing that they have immediate access to assistance if they need it. It really is a crucial aspect of our broader strategy to prevent family violence, and it demonstrates how technology can be used in ways not just for monitoring offenders, but also to protect those who are most vulnerable in our community. I can't tell you how supportive I am of this program.

The use of electronic monitoring extends beyond just ensuring compliance. It does play a really important role in the rehabilitation process by maintaining connections with family support networks, employment opportunities - elements that we know are essential for reintegration - and by allowing offenders to serve their sentences in a structured way within the community. I know you have a passion for this area too.

It reduces the likelihood of reoffending and, ultimately, we hope, creates a safer and more cohesive society. We have also ensured that the program is backed by legislative reform, which was needed, so that we make it clear that tampering with or attempting to remove an electronic monitoring device is a serious offence, sending a strong message. Our partnership with technology experts has allowed us not only to put what we have today into place, but I know Mr Carney and his team also have been looking at new technology, different sorts of apparatus that we can provide to assist with things like alcohol monitoring and other innovations that we know are coming down the pipeline.

I'm really pleased to share that we have had even international interest in what we're doing here. The German police are currently in communication with our department. They're coming to see what we're doing. I'm really pleased to see that we are leading globally in this area and we're looking to provide that holistic approach. Safety concerns and long-term solutions are part of what we want to do. I think it's an excellent example of innovative thinking. I want to give a great deal of credit to the department for going down this pathway. I think technology has a huge amount to offer in this sector and we are leaning into that with a great deal of success.

PUBLIC

Ms BUTLER - Minister, magistrates rely upon the operation of family violence and sober driver programs so they can send offenders to participate in them. Do you think it's reasonable that somebody might be placed on an order then released with no supervision because of these high vacancy levels, which have just been outlined, in Community Corrections to provide that?

Ms OGILVIE - Sorry, just ask that question again about magistrate's orders. What was your question?

Ms BUTLER - Magistrates rely upon the operation of family violence and sober driver programs. They can send offenders to participate in them. You understand that? Do you think it's reasonable that somebody might be placed on that order and then released with no supervision because of these high vacancy levels, which have just been outlined, in Community Corrections, to provide that? They are high vacancy levels.

Ms OGILVIE - I'll just seek some advice on that. Because we have Mr Carney here and I understand he is in communication with the magistrates on this issue, I will ask you, Mr Carney -

Ms BUTLER - Can I also ask, through the Chair - and I really like listening to your answers - that we limit the response time, just because we're mindful of time today.

CHAIR - The Standing Orders do allow for one-minute questions and three-minute answers. It hasn't been the practice so far to be super strict in enforcing them unless people start feeling it's unreasonable. Given that it seemed that people were getting value out of the detail of the answers, if people call, I'll draw attention to the time limits, but if people are happy with what's being provided, I'll let it go if members are happy with that.

Ms OGILVIE - Mr Carney, would you be able to provide some information in relation to this issue?

Mr CARNEY - Yes. Community Corrections manages orders to support people to effectively manage their criminogenic risk in the community.

So, our approach is really built upon a framework of understanding what someone's risk is and what their criminogenic needs that arise from that are, and what the responsibility considerations around the kind of intervention we can provide are.

We have a sliding scale approach to how much contact somebody needs to have with us, depending on how much work we actually need to support them with. What we try to do - the best we can do - is we get people in and we assess their risk and their needs, and then we try to link them in with existing community supports and services, so that they can address their immediate risk and they can also establish relationships with those services, so that if they ever come across those same risks or issues in the future, then they have a contact point that they can go to. They don't need to come back into our service and think, 'Oh, they're the only people who can help me'. So, we try to build up this framework around them.

The question you're asking is really big and complex, so I'm trying to -

Ms BUTLER - About the magistrates' orders for programs.

Mr CARNEY - When magistrates give us orders - programs are different, so I think there's a bit of a challenge there. When magistrates order that someone undertake a program and they need to undertake that program, and we work with them - and I think all of the programs that we deliver actually require ongoing engagement with them throughout the program delivery. It isn't just about attending a program and sitting in a group, it's also about an ongoing supervision model that we have to understand: they've gone to the program, they did the first session, these are the kind of learnings they should have got from that. What did they get from that? That's a question we actively ask them.

When somebody has a programs condition that they're required to complete, we continue supervision and management throughout, and we would even increase it throughout the periods of program participation, just to make sure they're getting the good outcomes that they can. Does that answer your question?

Ms BUTLER - Has the department communicated with the magistrates to inform them that there are limited programs operational due to those vacancies, though? Because you do have the vacancies, and part of the magistrate's ruling is for the alleged offender to undertake these particular programs, has that been communicated through to the magistrates that there is a delay or that there are staff shortages in that area?

Mr CARNEY - I have regular contact with the administrator of courts; I have regular contact with the Registrar of the Supreme Court. Just five weeks ago, I was sitting in a meeting with the Chief Magistrate. I go to the magistrates conference; I went to their last one and I'm doing the next one. Also, four weeks ago, I went to their weekly catch-up. These are conversations that are ongoing. They are aware that we manage wait lists through our programs; they are aware of the programs that we have been running; and it is something that - again, we certainly do have conversations about it - and I'm also talking to them about this, trying to increase capacity within the model of programs delivery and the rolling programs that we're trying to set up. They're aware of where we're up to and they're aware of our future plans, as well. We're continuing to engage through that.

Ms BUTLER - What does it mean for those offenders who have been sentenced to participate in programs? Can they be deemed as failing to comply and subsequently punished for not complying with those programs because of the vacancies within Community Corrections? Is that a kickback, or would there be measures taken on those offenders if they're failing to comply with the orders from the magistrates? Does that make sense?

Ms OGILVIE - I think I understand what you're saying. I might ask Kristy to perhaps talk about that.

Ms BOURNE - It's my understanding that if there were a delay in the commencement of participation in a program, that wouldn't reflect negatively on that individual. Again, it would be a discussion between the Community Corrections personnel who are in the court at the time that that order is made, in terms of providing submissions to the court about the wait list or other factors that might impact upon the commencement of that sentence, for lack of a better term. There should be no negative impact on the individual, and that's where I think the benefit is of Mr Carney and his team's ongoing communications with the court. There should ideally be a no-surprises approach, noting of course that the workload of community corrections will ebb and flow, and magistrates will have concerns about the impact on people coming before

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them, but that ongoing discussion means that we can hopefully work through that and find an appropriate outcome for each individual person.

Ms BUTLER - Can you provide this committee with how long that wait list is and how many people are on that wait list?

Ms OGILVIE - That one we'll have to take on notice.

Ms BUTLER - Also, those programs have been ordered by a magistrate for a specific reason and that is the ruling of that magistrate. Isn't it a breakdown of the orders of a magistrate if Community Corrections can't provide those programs due to staff vacancies? Is that an issue for community safety?

Ms OGILVIE - I would just say I'm not responsible for the magistrates. That's a different output.

Ms BUTLER - We did ask the Attorney-General this and he said it was to be taken up in this committee.

Ms OGILVIE - That's another minister's output, but I think we have not heard that things are unavailable. I think we've heard that things are being managed, but I'll ask Kristy to pick up on that.

Ms BOURNE - That's correct. I think it's inaccurate to characterise programs as not being available. Participants may need to wait, and we will provide that information on notice as the minister has undertaken to do, but I'm not aware of any instances where magistrates have not been able to order people to participate in particular programs.

Ms BUTLER - It's not the orders as such that I'm querying. It's the direction and the time that it takes for those orders to be implemented from the magistrate to Community Corrections, and the impact that could be having not only on the judicial system but also on community safety.

Ms BOURNE - Further clarification to the question is that magistrates often provide an 'if directed' component to their order. Community Corrections will work, as Mr Carney has outlined, to make sure the best suite of services are provided to that individual to address their offending behaviour, and that can include internal services provided by Community Corrections, but also potential referrals to external services to make sure that those needs are addressed.

Ms ROSOL - I'd like to come back, minister, to the custodial inspector's recommendations, because the inspector has made a number of recommendations about legislative amendments in their annual reports, some of which I've touched on already. I understand from your responses that you are happy for people's rights to be protected and upheld, so do you have any intention of progressing legislative change and regulatory changes to protect those rights and formalise them?

Ms OGILVIE - The short answer is, at this time, no, I do not. I haven't turned my mind to that. I'm very open to making sure that legislation - our response - is fair and best practice.

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If there's something specific that you'd like to discuss - you've raised one particularly today - I'm very happy to do that, but the answer is no at this time.

Ms ROSOL - I think the custodial inspector's been quite specific in the recommendations they've made. To another question, the custodial inspector notes in their annual report that the process of sending a young person in detention to prison arguably should be a matter that's determined by a court rather than Ashley Youth Detention Centre and the Tasmania Prison Service.

That's to do with the transfer of young people between the two facilities. At the moment my understanding is that that's facilitated between the two without the court being involved in that at all. Is that a reasonable reflection of what's happening? Do you have a view on it and will you look into that?

Ms OGILVIE - It might be helpful, I think, just to hear exactly what that process is and how it works.

Mr WISE - The commission of inquiry made a similar recommendation, I seem to recall. That is being worked through at the moment. It's already had an effect, although the recommendation hasn't been affected, the transfers of young people from Ashley to prison have essentially stopped. In 2023-24 there were no transfers of young people into prison custody. The notion is being observed and we'll wait to see how that plays out in terms of legislative amendment down the track.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Minister, do corrections use private security companies to transport detainees?

Ms OGILVIE - For you David?

Mr JACKSON - Through you, minister, the simple answer is no. We don't use private companies to transport prisoners unless - the only way we would do it is probably by patient transport, that would be -

Ms OGILVIE - Private ambulance?

Mr WISE - Maybe private ambulance if it's a low level -

Ms JOHNSTON - So, the transfer of young people from the reception centre to Ashley that's coordinated through?

Mr WISE - I don't work with the young people. They might have their own system. I believe that they send people down through an on-call basis, through you, minister, but as far as using private firms with secure vehicles? Not to my knowledge.

Ms JOHNSTON - Okay. Thank you; that's it for me.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, how would the introduction of advanced in-cell technology including educational platforms and also secure video-calling help reduce repeat offenders by

ensuring prisoners stay connected to a central family and support systems during rehabilitation which I know is very, very important as you do?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you very much, Mr Fairs. Yes, it is and I'm really happy to share how the introduction of advanced in-cell technology, including secure video-calling and educational platforms will be a significant step forward in our efforts to help reduce recidivism and to support the rehabilitation of prisoners in Tasmania's correctional system.

In our government we are very committed to ensuring that our correctional facilities are places not just of a confinement but environments that actively contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of offenders back into society so the introduction of in-cell technology - I believe - will be a game changer in this regard. By providing prisoners with access to secure video-calling we will enable them to maintain meaningful contact with their families and loved ones. We know that prisoners who maintain those family ties during their time in custody are far less likely to reoffend upon release. They have stronger support systems to guide them on their journey to rehabilitation and these connections foster a sense of hope and motivation for prisoners to work towards positive change across a range of fronts and we know that's a key factor in successful rehabilitation.

This initiative, which will be explored as a pilot initially, also reflects what we've learned in a post-COVID world where digital connections have proven to be invaluable in maintaining relationships when in-person contact is limited. We've learned a lot. By incorporating this technology, we're ensuring that prisoners - particularly those who are geographically isolated from their families - will be able to maintain those important connections despite the challenges of distance, travel restrictions, or other barriers. This approach aligns with our understanding of the vital role that technology can play in maintaining social bonds and support networks which are essential for rehabilitation.

We hope to build digital literacy skills through this initiative as well, to help prisoners understand and keep up with the technology-driven world, both when they're in custody and upon release, and to equip them with the knowledge and capabilities that they need on their rehabilitation journey. Digital means more access to education; prisoners are supported to continue their education and gain valuable skills while in custody; things like literacy can also be addressed. So, some really good stuff that's able to be done.

We want to equip prisoners with knowledge and skills. They need to find employment, of course, when they're released and to become productive members of society. We also think that technology and this ability to communicate more freely will enhance prisoners' access to justice, to their lawyers, video-calling, legal appointments, and consultations without the delays and challenges that might come with arranging in-person visits and their engagement with the justice system more broadly and, of course, it does help with their engagement with the justice system more broadly too.

The approach we are taking aligns with our commitment to evidence-based rehabilitation. What we want to do by making these opportunities readily available through in-cell technology is to ensure every prisoner has a chance to participate fully in their own rehabilitation journey regardless of their background, circumstances, location, or location of their families. We have legal access, family contact and ability to access education. We are trying to deliver a more holistic approach, and we're using modern technology systems and tools to do that.

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As I say, we're starting with a pilot. I'm very excited about this. I know that other facilities on the mainland and internationally are using this to great effect.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, can you confirm that the two probation officers who used to be stationed in the Southern Magistrates Court to give immediate answers to magistrates have been removed? When did this happen and what was the reasoning for that?

Mr CARNEY - I think there's a bit of history here that I need to explain. About 15 years ago we placed two officers down at the Magistrates Court. Their role was really about managing the prosecutions of community corrections orders in that court, because we had a lot coming through. We have multiple offices down in the south. That's not a system that we set up anywhere else in the state.

Across that time, they continued to be tapped by magistrates and by various courts - that is, asked to come in and provide point-in-time information right there on the spot.

Ms BUTLER - Saving time.

Mr CARNEY - No. I would challenge that. I think the reason for that is twofold. One, because they were being called from one court to the other all of the time and providing assessments and reports that were oral in nature, which required them to jump in and have a look at a couple of case notes and come to a determination, it was a quick turnaround, but it was very interrupting to their work. It moved them away from actually being able to manage the prosecutions, which was actually the core part of their role.

We were adding to the court backlog because we needed to manage breaches of orders and they had to continue to be held over, and we were late in the day to being able to get them in just because we did not have the resources there available.

The other issue that we had - well, there were a couple of issues from a staff management perspective. They were dislocated from the office, so we weren't able to offer them the right kind of support and engagement. They weren't involved in team meetings. They weren't getting a lot of the up-to-date information there. They were also being asked to hang around late for after-hours courts, so they were getting lots of flex time and it was becoming quite an impost on them. We were getting a lot of challenges from those courts.

The major issue that we had with it is that they were being brought in at a moment's notice to a court and asked to provide an update around whether someone's suitable for an order or whether someone's suitable to be given bail. Those officers had a specialised role that wasn't around case management, and they were being asked to give point-in-time information based on a couple of case notes, rather than something more invested and involved.

What we do in the rest of the state is, when we get those questions from the court, the information is asked of the person who actively works with the offender in the first instance. If there's a requirement for an assessment, that's done by a duty officer at the time, and what they are able to do is undertake a comprehensive assessment. They are able to undertake collateral checks. They are able to review all of our case files. They are able to come up with an informed, involved and invested opinion that's actually built on evidence, and that's able to go through a bit of a quality assurance process, which is a couple of things that we were missing by having those two officers just being called in and pushed out of courts one after the other.

It became a bit of an issue both in terms of what we were asking of our staff and their requirement, and then also the advice and support that we were giving courts. I have complete confidence in these officers. They are highly experienced officers, but even if you were asked 70 times this week to give an opinion and move on, it creates the potential that our advice may not be the best advice to support the decision-making of the court.

Ms BUTLER - So that's the reasoning - when did this happen?

Mr CARNEY - This occurred earlier this year. We've been talking about this with the courts as a potential for a number of years. This has not come up recently. Because we were able to offer staff additional training, we were well-positioned for it to occur. We were taking up space in the court, which as we all know is a bit of a premium. They had a new officer come on board and we were going to have to move from our space. There was another space that we could share with a whole bunch of other court users. What we decided to do in conjunction with lots of people is to remove those officers back to our office, which is about a block from the court, so that they could start to get some of that better stuff, management stuff.

We took this duty around immediate notification to the court off them. We invested additional resources in the support that we can provide to the court. We ensured that that went to the officers who were actually working with them, or to duty officers, so that we had additional resources to be able to provide this point-in-time information, and so that we could make sure that the information we're providing is comprehensive, engaged and fully informed when we're providing it to the courts.

I think instead of us building up this backlog of weeks and weeks because we're holding up prosecutions and we're not as fully involved in there, we've brought the resources back into that prosecution space. We can have a turnaround time of a couple of hours back to the court for this additional information we're providing. We're trying to give them the best possible.

I do have regular conversations with the courts. I know that this is a point of friction -

Unknown - This is an issue.

Mr CARNEY - Because it's a change. It's a change from what we used to have down here. We are changing to what they had for the rest of the state. The real benefit it's given us is that - and I know I'm talking, so people just have to close me down if they need to - we have had a structure of the reports that we provide to the court that's been in place for about for about 20 years. It's always the same reports and it's always been the same way. The most minor report we can provide has a turnaround time of about three hours. Because of this change, and because we've been having some conversations with other courts across the state and other offices that we have, we're actively looking to see whether there's any other kind of report types or information return types that we can add to this to be a little more proactive in ensuring the courts get the information.

I will also say that most of these questions that arise around how someone is going on community corrections orders, the ones that are that are causing most concern, really revolve around bail decisions and bail applications. My staff are always available to defence solicitors and prosecution if they're looking to get this information ahead of time. There's an opportunity

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when a defence solicitor is going to be applying for bail, to contact our staff and to have this information available to be able to provide at the time.

Ms BUTLER - Our advice, which our shadow attorney-general put to the attorney-general in this Estimates round, is that that process and the removal of those probation officers from the Magistrates Court is leading to delays in the court process. The only way to access information the probation officer used to be able to give the Magistrate immediately is for formal requests to be made in writing, which a probation officer then replies to in writing and submits to the court. That's slowing down the work of the court. There's frustration coming from the Magistrates Court in relation to this changing process.

Is the government going to reverse this decision, this change in procedure which Mr Carney's just outlined? What is the average turnaround time on those probation officer reports to the Magistrates Court now?

Ms OGILVIE - I am happy to deal with the question of the average turnaround time, as you put it, of probation reports. Secondly, I think we have a new process in place, and that's what we're working with.

Ms BUTLER - Okay.

Mr CARNEY - We've had this existing framework in place for many years. The quickest turnaround time report that we have gives us a minimum of three hours. What that does is it gives us an opportunity to interview an offender to undertake a comprehensive criminogenic risk assessment, to undertake collateral checks, review our case file, write a report and also have that quality assured. There's a bit of a process to it, but it is a relatively quick turnaround time of a few hours.

Ms BUTLER - If I put that question on notice, would the average turnaround time of those reports be able to be provided to us?

Ms OGILVIE - Let me just seek some information. Sorry, before I do, what exactly do you need?

Ms BUTLER - The turnaround time from when that advice is sought by the magistrate to when the probation officer provides that report back to the magistrate, for them to be able to make a decision.

Ms OGILVIE - For a specific period, or averages?

Ms BUTLER - Over the last two financial years would be great.

Ms OGILVIE - Let me seek some advice.

Mr CARNEY - We will return it the date requested by the court.

Ms BUTLER - On the same day, is it?

Mr CARNEY - If the court requests it that day. The problem with these things is, we're required to get a minimum of three hours, but if the court says, 'Oh, I don't want it for six

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weeks', we're not going to give it to them. Three hours is the answer. If they request it that same day, we will provide it that same day.

Ms BUTLER - Whilst I have you at the table as well, around community corrections, it's my understanding that there are flaws in the electronic monitoring system. People can trick the charging devices, sending a message to the electronic monitoring centre that they are at home, when in fact they've slipped the bracelet and have actually committed crimes. How many cases have occurred where people on home order detention orders with electronic monitoring bracelets have been able to beat the system?

Ms OGILVIE - Firstly, can I just ask, if you have details of anybody who's done that, please may I have them?

Ms BUTLER - I have already gone through those channels.

Ms OGILVIE - To my office?

Ms BUTLER - Not to your office, no. I have that advice.

Ms OGILVIE - Okay, well, I'd be very keen to hear this.

Ms BUTLER - Can I put that question on notice, because it is an issue.

Ms OGILVIE - No, I think we're going to hear about that. That does concern me. If you have evidence of that, I think we would like to see that.

Ms BUTLER - I'm being very careful with the way I'm asking this question, because I understand that this is publicly broadcast.

Ms OGILVIE - I understand the confidentiality issue, so maybe that's something you would communicate to me.

Ms BUTLER - No, insofar as it's a community safety issue, I want to make sure that I'm not providing too much information around this issue.

Ms OGILVIE - Right. It makes it difficult for me to respond. Let me see if Mr Carney can help. I think the question is, have you had any reports of tampering with ankle monitoring devices?

Ms BUTLER - These are the new ones, not the previous ones. The new monitoring device.

Ms OGILVIE - Have you had any reports of tampering?

Mr CARNEY - I'm sorry, I think there's lots of different ways - the system is quite intuitive and the service provider continues to build up capacity for the system to identify people who are attempting to circumvent the system in a range of ways, including by trying to circumvent the GPS technologies. The system provides a range of alerts that indicate potential risks that the system itself is identifying.

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Ms OGILVIE - Just to interject, I have had some information that we do have details of the numbers of attempted removals. I'll ask Kristy to speak to that.

Ms BUTLER - It's not 'attempted', but where they actually have been able to trick the system.

Ms OGILVIE - She has some information about this.

Ms BOURNE - Thank you, minister. For the past three financial years we do have a breakdown of device removals across the various order types, which I can go through or provide a total. I'll go through them; I think that would be of benefit.

- For the 2021-22 financial year for home detention, there were eight unauthorised device removals: three for family violence orders, four for parole orders and zero for high-risk offender orders.
- For 2022-23, there were three unauthorised device removals for home detention orders: three for family violence orders, seven for parole orders, zero for high-risk offender orders.

In a total sense, for 2021-22 that was 15 unauthorised device removals; for 2022-23, 13 unauthorised removals, and 2023-24, 15 unauthorised removals.

Ms BUTLER - How many cases where they have been able to beat the system, of sorts, and have committed crimes whilst under those home detention orders with those electronic monitoring devices fitted?

Ms OGILVIE - We'd have to take that one on notice.

Ms BUTLER - Okay. Thank you.

CHAIR - Ms Rosol.

Ms ROSOL - Before I start, I just want to provide a warning to people watching or reading that I have a series of questions about a coronial investigation into a suicide in custody.

I have some questions about the coronial inquest into the death of Robert Harold Gerard. The report quotes Dr Darjee:

The level of resource in the prison mental health service is the lowest I've come across in any developed country.

There's no funding in the Budget for prison mental health services, and are you content leaving the resourcing at levels that have been described as the lowest in any developed country? Can you confirm that the current resourcing is .8 FTEs of a psychiatrist, three nurses and a .4 FTE registrar?

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Ms OGILVIE - Firstly, let me express my condolences to the family. It's a terrible thing when these things happen. Suicide is a terrible thing. It touches so many people. So, my personal condolences.

In relation to the death of Mr Gerard, Magistrate Robert Webster handed down findings into the death - he died by suicide on 23 May 2022.

Throughout the coronial hearing, evidence was given by Dr Rajan Darjee, Consultant Forensic Psychiatrist and Deputy Statewide Specialty Director of Forensic Health and Mental Health and the Community Mental Health Service, that in his view, the level of resources in the mental health services provided to prisoners is the lowest he's come across in any developed country. Notwithstanding, Coroner Webster concluded that the medical treatment and care provided to Mr Gerard was reasonable.

Magistrate Webster also commented that the response from the TPS staff was 'swift and professional'.

I acknowledge, of course, that more resources could be put into these services. We are working to ensure adequate resources are available. The Department of Health is currently developing a new Prisoner Mental Health Service, and the service is being established to address the key recommendations from the Prisoner Mental Health Care Taskforce.

By way of giving you an update on what's occurred so far, approval has been given to recruit permanent positions within this team to include: a consultant psychiatrist, career medical officer, team leader, clinical nurse specialist and two case managers, along with a fixed-term project manager.

Recruitment has been initiated. Fixed-term appointments are in place in the interim while permanent recruitment progresses. As the above-mentioned positions are currently unfunded, a budget bid has been initiated as part of the Department of Health funding bid. You would appreciate, obviously, work across departments in relation to that.

Ms ROSOL - The coronial inquest recommended an urgent review - sorry if you've answered this already - be conducted into the current mental healthcare services and that the recommendations of any such review be implemented. Has that review commenced? Do you intend to do it?

Ms OGILVIE - Let me seek some information on that. That is a question for the Minister for Health, given that the services sit within his purview.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. The coroner also recommended that the Tasmania Prison Service (TPS) continue to develop and implement plans to remove all, or as many as are reasonably possible, hanging points in the accommodation and communal living areas of the medium precinct of Risdon Prison Centre. Are you able to advise the committee on any progress towards implementing this recommendation?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, thank you. I would ask that Rod make some comments.

Mr WISE - There were three major recommendations. One of them you have already touched on, which was the mental health review. It is a matter for the Health department, but

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there is also a large degree of overlap between the Custodial Inspector's recent review of health and mental health services. Combined, those mental health issues are being picked up.

There was also a discussion about shoelaces. I have instructed that the Tasmania Prison Service phase out shoelaces, even though we are a little sceptical about the efficacy of that recommendation, given that there are other potential ligatures that prisoners can access.

The final one is the more problematic one for the department, I must say. I have written to the Coroner directly some weeks ago, and sought an opportunity to discuss that with him. It's a very, very expensive thing to do to remove all the hanging points. The location where Mr Gerrard sadly died is a lower security area, which is a more normalised environment. For example, in cell accommodation we ensure that there are no hanging points. In a lower level security accommodation there are hanging points on doors, for example, that the prisoners have to their bedrooms. To go back and remove all of those would lose some of the benefits, we think, of the more normalised environment. It's a discussion I think we ought to have with the Coroner, and I have invited him to do that.

Ms JOHNSTON - The *Mercury* recently reported that Mark - and I won't use his full name because we are publicly broadcast - from Risdon Vale has been renting out rooms and most recently tents in his backyard for approximately \$125 a week. Mark has indicated publicly that a number of his tenants - and I use that word loosely - are recently released persons from prison. Has correction staff ever contacted Mark to request or confirm housing options availability for recently released prisoners?

Ms OGILVIE - Sorry, I am not quite sure, is your question -

Ms JOHNSTON - Has the correction staff ever contacted Mark?

Ms OGILVIE - Mark, who's renting out tents in his backyard?

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes, to request or confirm housing options availability.

Ms OGILVIE - I will see if I can get some information for you about that.

Mr JACKSON - Not that I am aware of that we reached out to Mark, but we could make inquiries, to see if there's information.

Ms OGILVIE - We will consider that.

Mr JACKSON - I've never been made aware of that.

Ms OGILVIE - I think the answer is no, they have not.

Ms JOHNSTON - Would you to be able to take that on notice to confirm, or are you categorically stating no at this point in time?

Ms OGILVIE - He would like to take it on notice.

Ms JOHNSTON - Perhaps as a follow-up to that particular question, and maybe again take it on notice, could you outline the frequency in which corrections staff need to liaise on behalf of prisoners for housing options for them leaving?

Mr WISE - In just about every case we have discussions with prisoners who are about to be released about their housing options. We release around 1900 prisoners every year. A large proportion of those people do not have suitable housing accommodation. Many of them will go to couch surfing and other arrangements that might not be optimal. But we do, particularly where we have some notice of their impending release, work with them and the various housing organisations to try to find them suitable housing prior to release. That's not possible in every case.

We understand that the whole issue of housing for ex-prisoners is really tricky in any event. Public housing has to cater for not just ex-offenders, and we know that providing secure accommodation can reduce the risk of people reoffending. But the housing organisations also give priority to victims of family violence and people who have been evicted from their homes, a large number of people who are very worthy recipients of housing, so it's finding that balance. But, we work with the available organisations to try to get people into better housing upon their release.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you have figures on how many just-released prisoners you need to broker housing for, and how many of those end up having no option, that you can't find suitable housing for them?

Mr WISE - The difficulty we have in that sort of data is that, in very many cases, the prisoners will indicate to us prior to release that they're going to suitable housing. We're not in a position to check on whether it's suitable or not, and in some cases it might prove suitable only for a couple of days. Some people have fractured relationships with their family, for example. The family will put them up when they're first released from prison, but then that relationship breaks down again very quickly, and they're back to couch-surfing or living with friends, and those sorts of things.

Ms JOHNSTON - Would you have data on those who haven't indicated that they've got suitable housing?

Mr WISE - In many cases, we have no formal relationship with that person who's been released into the community. If they're on a community correction order, if they're on parole, we can maintain some sort of information. But for most of them, if they've been released on bail or released on a straight sentence, we've got no mandate to work with them to get an appreciation of how frequent that is.

Ms OGILVIE - I will note also, because I think it might be helpful towards where you're headed, that the Department of Justice and the Salvation Army have an agreement for the ongoing delivery of a specialist through-care reintegration program called Beyond the Wire. This program offers assistance, particularly for high- and complex-needs individuals who are leaving custody and who have chronic accommodation and support needs. It might be worth having a look at that. The government has also introduced the Prisoner Rapid Rehousing Program to provide transitional accommodation back into the community to help maintain long-term stable accommodation. These programs are delivered through collaboration between

several NGOs, including Anglicare Tasmania, CatholicCare, Colony 47, Hobart City Mission and the Salvation Army.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, over the 2022-23 and 2023-24 financial years, how many times has a young person been held at the Hobart Reception Prison?

Ms OGILVIE - I'll seek some information on that. Kristy?

Ms BOURNE - I have figures for both of our watch houses, the Hobart Reception and Launceston Reception prisons. Between 1 January 2024 and 30 June 2024, there were 166 admissions of young people in the state's two watch houses, in Hobart and Launceston. This figure does not reflect a count of separate individuals admitted, but rather than number of times a young person was admitted. There are a number of young people who have been admitted to watch houses a number of times. In comparison to the 2023 calendar year, there were 344 admissions of young people in the state's two watch houses, and it's likely that the number of young people admitted in this current financial year will be similar to previous years.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, are the young offender cells in the same corridor and section of the Hobart Reception Prison (HRP) as the adult prisoners?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes.

Mr WISE - The cells in which we detain young people are in the same corridor as the adults, which does cause us some issues. Fortunately, we're able to ensure there is no physical contact between the young people and the adult offenders, but there is verbal contact between them, which we try to deter and make efforts to minimise the impact of that.

Ms BUTLER - Are the younger people provided therapeutic care whilst they're at the HRP? And are their names written on the cell door at the HRP, their surnames?

Mr WISE - There is no therapeutic intervention with the young people. The young people should only be in the watch house for a very short period of time. They are people who have been arrested by the police and are awaiting their attendance at court or awaiting an interview with police, or potentially waiting for the transport to arrive to convey them to Ashley. On some occasions, they are inebriated and are held in custody until they're sober. In many of those cases, therapeutic intervention would not be appropriate. The young person is not in a fit state to engage with therapeutic programs. It is really just a matter of holding them safely until such time as they can attend court, be seen by the police or get on a van to Ashley.

Ms BUTLER - Could the minister provide information as to the duration of time on each occasion a young person was held at the HRP?

Ms OGILVIE - The duration of time, but for what period are you seeking?

Ms BUTLER - The last two financial years, or to match up with the statistics that Ms Bourne previously provided.

Mr WISE - I'm not sure that we - we've got spreadsheets we could interrogate but it would be a fairly onerous task, I think. In most cases, as I've explained, it is a short-term placement only, for a matter of hours. Sadly, sometimes young people are held over for a day

or two. That might be because of transport difficulties; it might be because it seemed to be inefficient to transfer somebody up to Ashley on a Sunday evening only to bring them back again on a Monday morning so they can attend court. So, unfortunately, some are held for a couple of days. But we push really strongly to get them held outside the watch house environment.

Ms BUTLER - Maybe it might be better to ask: how many occasions have those young offenders been held at the HRP for more than two days. Could that be provided on notice?

Mr WISE - Again, I think we would have to go through the spreadsheet and identify line by line over those last 400 cases.

Ms BUTLER - Over the last financial year if that's okay, because it is a really important line of inquiry.

Mr WISE - We could endeavour to do so.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, could you take that on notice?

Ms OGILVIE - We can take that on notice. I'm very aware of what's been said about the nature of the task, so we'll take it on notice and we will look at what's possible.

Ms BUTLER - Under the Child and Youth Safety Organisations framework, standard 8 of the framework relies on physical and online environments to promote safety. Are you responsible for those young people whilst they are in the Hobart Remand Prison, minister?

Ms OGILVIE - I will respond to that by firstly asking perhaps Rod and David to talk through the process of handoffs, how it works between the police, the prisons and the HRP, and throughput, and then I can respond to your specific question about myself.

Mr WISE - It is a complex situation in that some of the young people that come into watch houses are part of DECYP's remit, some of them are initially in the custody of Tasmania Police. At some point in their transfer to the watch house, custody is transferred to officers of the Tasmania Prison Service, but they are not part of the Tasmania Prison Service. So, it's a sort of a strange position to be in. The custody is certainly transferred to correctional officers of the Tasmania Prison Service, but they're not part of the Tasmania Prison Service.

Ms BUTLER - Who is responsible for those young offenders? Which minister would be responsible for those young offenders when they're at HRP? Why wasn't this practice of holding young people at HRP included in the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings? Why was it missed?

Mr WISE - I'm afraid I can't answer the question about the commission of inquiry. Some of the principles that have been articulated by the commission of inquiry have been able to be used in the way that we manage young people in custody. If the young person is transferred into TPS staff custody, then the Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation is essentially responsible. We also have a memorandum of understanding with Tasmania Police that if a young person, for example, needs to have medical attention, then that will be transferred back to Tasmania Police. We share that custody a little bit.

Ms OGILVIE - Sorry, I was just going to add, the final piece of the question was around my ministerial perspective on this.

Ms BUTLER - Why was this not part of the commission of inquiry, because you've got young people in a correctional facility that aren't being given that therapeutic care. That is an institution. It just seems like it was missed.

Ms OGILVIE - I understand your question, but I'm obviously not the minister responsible for the commission of inquiry. I don't have oversight or understanding of how that process occurred. What I will say is that as minister in this area for Corrections and Rehabilitation, I do take my duty of care to all people who come through our process and are under our stewardship incredibly seriously. I recognise that there are handoffs that occur between departments, whether it's medical assistance, whether it's provision of support, therapeutic services, going to court, moving to Ashley. Those handoffs are managed carefully as well. Whilst people are in under my remit, I take that very seriously.

Ms BUTLER - We do know that in August there was a case -

Ms ROSOL - I've got a few questions about the Custodial Inspector's adult healthcare inspection report. The Custodial Inspector recommended that a needle exchange program be provided. The government's refused this recommendation to provide a needle exchange that would reduce current high levels of blood-borne virus transmission. The department claimed this might interfere with rehabilitation programs.

I'm wondering if there's any evidence to back this up. There's a wealth of evidence that shows that needle exchanges don't increase drug use. We know that in the report, it described current addiction treatment in prisons as woefully inadequate. On one hand we have inadequate addiction treatment, but on the other hand, we're also refusing to provide a needle exchange that would help to keep people safe. Are you able to explain that contradiction and why that decision has been made?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. I'll seek some advice, if you'd like to make comment.

Mr WISE - Needle exchanges in prisons effects questions nationally and internationally. The difficulties are compounded by a case in New South Wales, I think towards the end of around 1987 I think, where a correctional officer was stabbed by a prisoner who had a blood-filled syringe and he subsequently died from AIDS as a result of it. Industrially, prison officers and correctional officers across the country are very loath to engage in any practice that might encourage the presence of needles in the correctional environment, lest they be subjected to a similar attack. In the Australian Capital Territory, which I think is the only Australian jurisdiction that indicated that it would introduce needle exchanges, that was unable to be proceeded with after some years of discussions, and it continues to be resisted in, I think, every jurisdiction. What we can do is improve our capacity to give bleach to prisons so that needles can be cleaned and that more safe-injecting practices can be adhered to.

Ms ROSOL - Needles are there; they're not clean. You'll provide bleach for them to clean them, but you won't provide them with clean needles because of the risk to staff even though they already have needles? Surely, providing clean needles and a needle exchange doesn't increase the risk for staff because the needles are already there, but it does decrease the risk to people who are using them of bloodborne transmission.

Mr WISE - You're right and every correctional officer knows that there are needles in the environment and we take significant steps to reduce the risks of needlestick injuries as a result of that, but the correctional officers generally will say that they would prefer that small number that they try to discover and eliminate than to provide prisoners with new needles which could be then used with contaminated blood.

Ms ROSOL - That could happen anyway. What you're saying is the safety of the custodial staff is important and you don't want to provide needles, but the safety of prisoners having dirty needles is less important.

Ms OGILVIE - I'm not sure that that's exactly what he said.

Mr WISE - Thank you, minister. We do recognise the risks obviously to prisoners and discourage any sorts of intravenous drug use. One of the things that we have done recently is to introduce body scanners, as you might be aware of, and one of the benefits of that is that if people have secreted syringes and so on, then we've got a much better chance of detecting them and preventing them from circulating through the prison environment. We're doing everything that we can to keep the needles out of the prison and I think the body scanners will be a really strong weapon in achieving that.

Ms ROSOL - Meanwhile, they have bleach.

Minister, just another question about the Custodial Inspector's Adult Health Care Inspection Report. It was scathing of the command and control culture of the senior leadership team and the culture was criticised for the current staffing crisis. The report noted that it's a rigid, inflexible structure leading staff to be often afraid and required to follow orders regardless of their merit. The report also noted that the senior leadership team have a misplaced pride in this culture and are completely unaware of the negative impact this had on staff. I note the department rejected this categorisation, but do you accept recommendation 12 of the report, minister, to engage a management consultant? Will this occur?

Ms OGILVIE - I note that the characterisation has been rejected. I would ask Rod to speak to this.

Mr WISE - There are a number of parts of that report that were hotly contested by the Tasmania Prison Service. In this case, I think I'm able to talk from personal experience because I think that I was present at the meeting where Dr Petch formed the view that command and control is the prevailing management style of the service. It is my view, and certainly the view of the TPS, that the comments about command and control were taken absolutely out of context, that there is a place in prisons for command and control in prison emergencies, throughout our COVID experience, and there's no doubt that our staff take pride in the way that emergencies are managed inside the prison system.

The meeting that I attended certainly placed the command and control elements in that context and did not suggest that there was a more overarching pride in command and control and that was the prevalent way of managing staff. It may be that Dr Petch, independently of the meeting that I attended, gained that view, but it's not a view that either the Tasmania Prison Service or I would subscribe to.

PUBLIC

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, there is a plethora of evidence that shows that strong parent and child connections and bonds are a protective factor against reoffending. What access to prisoners have to parenting programs?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. I'll get that information for you. We certainly have some work that is occurring.

Mr WISE - I don't have all the information in front of me, I'm afraid, minister, but there are two elements to this. I think one is the Mother and Child Program, where we allow mothers to apply to have their children under the age of two in custody with them and, in that process, they get access to some additional parenting support. I've been speaking to the Department for Education, Children and Young People about how we could bolster that support for children and their parents coming into custody. There has been a parenting program also run by an organisation that has recently gone into liquidation and we're just trying to work out how we can potentially resurrect that program, but we agree that parenting programs are a useful part of the suite of programs that we deliver in prisons.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, what about men in custody? What access do they have to the parenting programs and to contact programs with their children?

Ms OGILVIE - That's probably a two-part question. I do have some information around personal contact with families, family visits, et cetera, which I can give you, but in relation to specific programs, I think Circle of Security is what you might have been referring to, Rod, that included men?

Mr WISE - I'm not sure that it included men, minister, but the parenting programs have been shown in other jurisdictions not to reduce the risk of reoffending in the way that we would like them to, so it's probably a bigger question that we need to explore further because we would want to see some link between the programs and a reduction in reoffending or a reduction in intergenerational offending, which is a little bit difficult to gauge.

Ms JOHNSTON - Then to the second part of my question about contact and facilitating contact, particularly for men in prison with children.

Ms OGILVIE - I can give you some information I think is helpful to have on the record. We understand the importance of the connection with family. The department and our government work hard to help prisoners maintain that, and also with community. Prisoners can stay in touch with friends and family through mail, telephone, email, virtual visits via Zoom, at the moment, and in-person visits, ensuring there are flexible contact options that cater for almost everyone. Since virtual visits were first introduced in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, they have proved so popular that they have continued, alongside face-to-face visits, with some people preferring them, for many different reasons. New wireless access points have been installed as part of the video conferencing upgrade project that provide quality wi-fi connections for prisoners to access Zoom visits. As we know, popular time slots book up quickly, but most weeks there continue to be sessions that go unused, so that gives you a sense of the demand, capacity and the supply. It's very uncommon for all sessions to be utilised. Some prisoners will exhaust all their visits and some prisoners have very few visits. I'm very keen, as I've said at this session, to explore the use of technology to improve, amongst other things, prisoners access to family outside unlock hours. On a weekly basis there are approximately 248 contact visits, 375 non-contact or zoom visits. I think it's helpful to know this information,

and it does not include the facilitation of compassionate or into inter-prison Zoom visits. On average, since November 2023, 60 percent of these visit spots have been utilised.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, could you elaborate on what it means to have a people-focused approach in the Budget for the correction system and how this human-centred approach will benefit both prisoners and staff in our correctional facilities?

Ms OGILVIE - I think it's a very timely question given what we've been speaking about. At a personal level, and also from our government, a people-focused approach is absolutely at the core of what we want to do. We want to create a correctional system that's contemporary and that prioritises safety and security, but importantly also focuses on rehabilitation and positive outcomes for everybody within the system. This commitment is clearly outlined in our Corrections Strategic Plan 2023 Changing Lives Creating Futures, which represents our vision to provide offenders with a solid foundation to adopt law abiding lifestyles, ultimately making Tasmania a safer place for everybody.

Our goal is to create genuine opportunities for rehabilitation through treatment programs, vocational skills development, education and transitional support. This approach goes beyond just confining people. It's about equipping them with the tools they need to support reintegration successfully back into the community. It's also really about people, the staff and the workforce making sure that they get the support, training, and resources they need to perform their roles well and to be happy in their jobs.

We also recognise that one-size-fits-all does not succeed when it comes to rehabilitation and we need to take an approach that is person centric, that takes into account the context of the individual, the specific challenges, circumstances and potential that each person has and they bring into this environment. We have a facilities-based interventions and reintegration team in each of our prison facility and these multidisciplinary teams provide a holistic and tailored service to prisoners ensuring that this rehabilitation journey is not just a process but is supported by program, facilitators, case managers and clinicians.

Our ongoing commitment to being person-focused, or people-focused, is evident in our dedication to recruiting and reinvesting in our correctional officers. They are the backbone of our system. They do an incredible job and I'm absolutely a strong supporter of our staff and what they do. They play a crucial role in maintaining safety and security, but not only that, we know that the work that they do makes a difference, is important, and it is a challenging environment and I'm so pleased that we've been able to boost the number of correctional officers. That's been a key priority. We have 53 new recruits. I'm always delighted to go out and see the graduations and to engage with them. They're really good and decent people. Full marks there.

We're also committed to providing ongoing training and support to our staff. Each of our correctional officers is offered the opportunity to obtain nationally recognised Certificate 3 in Correctional Practise, delivered through TAFE, which is our partner in education. We're also investing in staff through the Department of Justice, Wellbeing Hub - I spoke a little bit about that in the opening session - and targeted programs such as alcohol and other drug services, family violence interventions, increased support provided by skilled multidisciplinary teams are available. We want to help individuals to transform their lives if we can to break that cycle of reoffending and we know that this has a significant positive impact on community safety when we get it right.

Our plan's priority to build environments for change reflects our dedication to creating correctional settings that are humane but also effective. The development of new infrastructure is important, and I want to mention this specifically such as the 52-bed maximum rated unit and upgraded security systems designed to meet contemporary standards in corrections; physical infrastructure creating spaces where prisoners can engage in rehabilitation in a secure and supportive environment.

Safety for everyone is essential, we have body-worn cameras for reception prison staff engaging with young people which will enhance safety and transparency within our facilities and our recruitment strategy, we need to ensure we are delivering a robust and capable workforce, people with the right skills, the right values and commitment.

We are strengthening our capacity to support a rehabilitative environment and we've been able to recruit 372 correctional officers and we have lost 185 due to retirement, transfer or resignation. That demonstrates our commitment.

Ms BUTLER - I'm just going back to the holding of young, alleged offenders at the Hobart Reception Prison (HRP) in light of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings and the amount budgeted in this year's budget to ensure that our young people are safe. At the HRP, I understand in August just gone, alleged youth offenders were placed in a cell directly next to a cell with an alleged child sex offender some three metres away. This, I'm advised, is not an unusual practise and it's certainly not a reflection on the correctional officers because there is nowhere else to place these young offenders in the HRP because that investment hasn't happened by your government. Do you consider that that is best practise, minister?

Ms OGILVIE - As I mentioned before, I take the safety and security of all people under my stewardship very seriously. You've mentioned a very specific example. I don't have the details of that, but I will seek some advice around that one in particular and whether we have -

Ms BUTLER - It's quite easy to trace, even through *Mercury* articles, minister.

Ms OGILVIE - In relation to your question about the commission's recommendations, I can provide some answer on that. We, as Corrective Services, primarily manage adults in custody and our staff do have contact with children and young people as you have identified, most significantly in watch houses and in the Mother and Baby Program.

Department of Justice is taking a number of proactive steps to implement the Child And Youth Safe Organisations Framework. As members would be aware of, the Child and Safe Organisations Framework was recommendation of the 2017 National Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, which was supported by Tasmania's Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings.

We have made some progress in implementing the framework. We'll continue to progress implementation in relevant areas of corrective services and just to give the members an update of initiatives undertaken to date, these include engaging the Australian Childhood Foundation to develop and deliver trauma informed training to reception prison staff and senior managers on managing young people in custody.

The training was delivered in a seven-day full session in Hobart and Launceston in August 2024. Reviewing and amending relevant policies and procedures to reflect the ten Child and Youth Safe Standards and Universal Principal concerning Aboriginal cultural safety, which is incredibly important as we know and further policy work will be undertaken over the next 12 months.

And as I've mentioned previously, we've acquired body worn cameras for reception prison staff who engage with young people in watch house facilities and making some small improvements to the accommodation for young people in watch house facilities which we might be able to speak to a little further providing staff with information and resources on the Reportable Conduct Scheme. Then, I can say at an agency-wide level, the Department of Justice has launched its Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy and is undertaking consultation on a professional conduct policy. As I said, I'm absolutely committed to the safety of children and young people who engage with corrective services as well as ensuring that staff feel safe and supported at work when they're engaging with children and young people. We'll continue to work with all stakeholders, union staff and explore how to incorporate the voice of lived experience into implementation of the framework across relevant areas of corrective services. Having said that, I might also see if it's possible, Rod, perhaps through you to David, just to talk a little bit about the work that has been done to improve the cell situation.

Mr WISE - Modifications to some of the cells has been fairly minor but trying to make them more trauma-informed and we have some plans to do more of that work and provide things like furniture that wouldn't be available in a cell that was set aside for adult offenders.

I think that one of the things that we're pleased about is that the training that the minister referred to by the Australian Childhood Foundation and the work that the department has done in alerting our staff to the new legal requirements and reportable conduct and those sorts of things has absolutely increased their awareness of what they might be able to do to assist young people. I am seeing and I'm very heartened by the receipt of reports from correctional officers that weren't previously sent to us where they have expressed concern about the management of young people, particularly where they are being abused or threatened by other prisoners. Mind you, I was also in the Hobart Reception Prison the other day when I think a 13- or 14-year-old young person was received and everything was required except for that young person who was abusing all the adults around him. We have some responsibilities to ensure the safety of those young people and those reports are coming through to me and they're being able to be actioned and sent through to the police for follow-up where appropriate. Clearly, the government is open to exploring other alternatives for the placement of young people in that sort of watch house environment.

Ms OGILVIE - Absolutely. If I could just add a little bit more information you might wish to have, we also have \$1.9 million over two years to enable my department to become a child-safe organization, including the design of suitable roles, recruitment of staff, new and enhanced technology, employee screening processes and procedures.

The commission-related response policy development that you referred to, training, data management and sharing, and engagement with the reportable conduct scheme and code of conduct processes. That's at that strategic layer.

PUBLIC

Ms BUTLER - None of that which you've just outlined, and I do thank you for that, is dealing with the fact that you have, and it is happening, child sex offenders in a cell three metres away from young offenders in a cell. They can hear each other and can communicate with each other. You have a child sex offender next to young people potentially - well, in August, I know that did happen, and also the surname of those young people is written on that cell door because I've seen that myself and there's nothing to stop that alleged sex offender as they are entering noting the name of the young offender in the cell next to them.

Now, I think, it's not the fault of the correctional officers. They are doing the absolute best they can and they are uncomfortable as anything about that situation as well. How can that, in light of all of the information and our commission inquiry into sexual abuse of young people, be acceptable in 2024 in Tasmania, minister? It is just not acceptable. Can you explain how this has been overlooked and how that practice is still happening?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you for your question, which had a lengthy preamble -

Ms BUTLER - Well, it is a very important issue. It's harmful.

Ms OGILVIE - I'm just trying to answer your question.

CHAIR - Ms Butler, I'll let you ask a follow-up, but if the minister can answer the question in silence, and then you can follow up?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. We've given you quite a lot of information about how we're trying to manage the scenarios that we currently have in place with the existing infrastructure. I have, of course, also visited the facilities. The existing infrastructure is challenging. We need to deal with the infrastructure-level work. That is something that we are doing through our infrastructure program. That's at that layer.

In relation to the specific instance that you mention, I have not been informed about this. I would be grateful if you are able to give me more details. Obviously, you may not wish to do that in this public environment, but I'd be very happy to -

Ms BUTLER - I can send them to you.

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. If you could send those to me, I'm happy to have a look at it. I am really open to making changes, improving things. We have staff who are working really diligently and carefully in a challenging environment. We want to do all we can to make it better. If you have constructive ideas and you have suggestions, and you have challenges and problems that you have raised today, if you're able to send those to me, I would be grateful. We're happy to do more work. We're all ears.

Ms BUTLER - Going back to my question, how was this situation overlooked between holding of young offenders - by placing young offenders in the same cell area as sex offenders? How was that overlooked?

Ms OGILVIE - As I've said, I'm not aware of the specific scenario that you seem to have information on, but I'd be very happy for you to provide that to me, and then I can give you the answer.

PUBLIC

Ms BUTLER - Minister, I don't think it's actually up to me to provide you with that information. I think your department should have that information. Would you provide us or the committee that information on notice?

Ms OGILVIE - I'm very happy to see what the department can do.

Mr WISE - It is a complex issue. Our staff do have the capacity to - if they identify that there is a person who is accused of or convicted of child sex offences - move them to another part of the watch house so that they are not in such proximity to a young person. Notwithstanding that, as I've said previously, the physical safety of the young person is ensured at all times. There is no contact between the young person and the adults. We do have some capacity to move prisoners around to lessen the risks.

Ms OGILVIE - Having said that, I do take on board your comment about the names on the doors. Having visited, that is quite available to see, and that is something I'll take up with the department.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. I also want to ask you a question around the inmate to correctional officer ratio for 2022-23, and what is considered best practice. Could I take that on notice?

Ms OGILVIE - Is your question 'What is the ratio?' or 'What has the ratio been?'?

Ms BUTLER - What has the ratio been in 2022-23 and 2023-24, and what is considered best practice?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. Two parts to that question.

Mr WISE - There probably isn't a 'best-practice ratio', in that no ratio will take into account the different physical environments, the different classifications of prisoners, and so on. You would expect, for example, that a minimum-security environment will have fewer staff for the prison population than a maximum-security environment. Even in maximum-security environments, it depends a little bit on the physical environment - whether there are sightlines, whether there's reasonable CCTV coverage, all of those sorts of things where the technology can assist in the supervision of prisoners. It's probably unhelpful to rely on a standard prisoner-to-staff ratio.

Ms BUTLER - So, there is not an inmate-officer ratio at the moment that you work to as a department when you're going through different areas within the prison?

Mr WISE - No, but all the staffing levels are arranged after consultation with the unions and so we get to a position where we believe that they're safe and appropriate.

Ms BUTLER - Have some of those staff shortages contributed to that excessive use of overtime over the last financial year and the previous financial year?

Mr WISE - The unavailability of staff for whatever reason contributes to overtime.

Ms BUTLER - Can you provide the amount of overtime shifts accrued by correctional officers in 2023-24, and how many hours does this equate to?

Ms OGILVIE - We can assist with that information, yes.

CHAIR - Then we'll move on to Ms Rosol.

Ms OGILVIE - For 2023-24, the figure was \$12,286,789.

Ms BUTLER - How many hours does that equate to, minister?

Ms OGILVIE - I don't have that. We can take it on notice.

CHAIR - Ms Rosol.

Ms OGILVIE - Sorry, just to interject, I think we can have an approximation from our finance person. If you'd like to join the table.

Mr WAILES - An approximate answer would be about 135,500 hours across the financial year.

Ms ROSOL - I have some questions around workers compensation. What percentage of Tasmania Prison Service staff have been on workers compensation in 2022-23 and 2023-24? Do you have a figure for the number that are currently on workers compensation?

Ms OGILVIE - I'll give you what I've got and see if that answers your question. We could do more of a deep dive if we need to. The Tasmania Prisons Service has established processes in relation to identifying risks and hazards to address them. As part of our focus on safety and wellbeing, the WHS team has been working on 19 health and safety initiatives.

We have a raft of those, including wellbeing initiatives and I can run through those. I am getting to the health and safety reps. The next page, thank you. I want to give you the specific information as I can. We take work health and safety seriously. From 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024, 122 workers compensation claims were received from employees of the TPS. This represents an increase from the 106 claims in 2022-23.

There has been a downward trend in the number of claims made in the first couple of months of 2023-24. There is more information that might be helpful to you by way of context. The department's injury management unit, which is part of the agency's human resources branch, oversees and provides case management for TPS employees with workers compensation claims.

The injury management unit continues to work closely with the TPS and the Department of Justice workplace health and safety teams to identify risks and implement controls to reduce work-related injuries. I believe that answers the question.

Ms ROSOL - Are you able to give that as a percentage? You have the staff numbers and you said a downward trend in 2023-24; did you mean the first couple of months of 2024-25?

Ms OGILVIE - Let me confirm.

Mr WISE - That is correct; in 2024-25 there has been a downturn.

Ms OGILVIE - Sorry, I might have a typographical error in my notes. Yes, it is a typographical error, 2024-25.

Ms ROSOL - Thanks. Are you able to give percentages of staff who are on workers compensation? You've given figures of the numbers of claims.

Ms OGILVIE - I'll see if we can get that information for you.

Mr WISE - I haven't got that in front of me, but I can say that, as you've already indicated, the number of claims this financial year has dropped markedly by more than 3 per cent, which is encouraging.

There are still a lot of claims, clearly. It's a little unhelpful to identify the number of claims because some of those people are actually at work but still receiving medical treatment. Some of them are at work but doing adjusted duties. Some of them are at work in other agencies, so they're working but not with the Tasmania Prison Service.

It's a reasonable number of our staff and that is concerning. The good news is that the claims this year have dropped, that the overall cost of claims has reduced over the last couple of years, and the amount of time people spend away from the workplace has reduced also.

Our injury management team has been really successful in getting people back to work more quickly and into suitable duties more quickly, and that is paying dividends. The average cost of the claims has come down markedly.

Ms ROSOL - Are you able to provide a breakdown of some of the key reasons that people are on workers compensation? Is it stress-related, burnout, bullying and harassment, assaults, workplace injuries - do you have data on that, please?

Mr WISE - I can say that in terms of the physical type injuries and the psychological injuries, in 2023-24 there were 88 of the musculoskeletal injuries and 34 of the psychological injuries. The psychological injuries have reduced by about a third since 2021-22 and, sadly, a lot of the physical injuries are incurred during training for new staff when we go through control and restraint training, and they amount to a significant proportion of the physical injuries.

Ms ROSOL - You referred earlier to an incident in New South Wales in 1987 of a corrections officer being injured with an inner sharps incident. How many assaults are there of corrections officers?

Mr WISE - I do have that information. In 2020-23, there were 30 assaults on staff, three of which were serious. In 2023-24, there were 21 assaults on staff, so a significant decline and only one of those was serious.

There are assaults that result in some sort of physical injury. There are others which we don't record in that way, for example, someone brushes past the staff member and gives them a nudge or a cup of water is thrown over somebody's legs and those sorts of things. These are injuries sustained by staff where there was some sort of physical injury.

Ms OGILVIE - Could I just add a comment as well to say we take workplace safety incredibly seriously and it is something that I take a personal interest in as well. I know that work is being done to improve the safety and security of all in our facilities.

I can also add, you asked after a percentage of claims per headcount. The headcount at 604 with 122 claims in the 2022-23 year gives us 20 per cent. I've just been advised of that calculation.

Ms ROSOL - With staff off on workers compensation and other types of leave, are there times when you're needing to bring in contract staff from other states? How are you staffing the prison service?

Mr WISE - We certainly don't bring in contract staff from other states. Most of those vacancies are filled with overtime by our staff. We have spoken to the unions about employing a casual workforce. We haven't had much traction on that, but that seems to be an obvious area which might deliver additional staff into workplaces quickly. We certainly don't contract staff in.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, in the budget papers, under the heading Correctional Improvement Program, it states:

Additional funding has been allocated to the Tasmania Prison Service to improve intervention and rehabilitation services across the state with an initial focus at the Risdon Prison site. This will include additional drug and alcohol treatment programs in the TPS and a new program in the north-west to support female prisoners to transition back into the community.

That's all welcome. However, minister, can you please outline and elaborate on whether there are any programs that prepare prisoners for release that deal with issues such as domestic violence, gambling addiction, financial literacy and consumer credit that they have to deal with when they are released?

Ms OGILVIE - Your question is what programs are available now?

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes, to deal with domestic violence, gambling addiction and financial literacy.

Mr WISE - Certainly we have family violence programs and they are operating well. In terms of the gambling, I am not aware of any, but we have a team of clinicians who do a lot of one-on-one work with prisoners across our five prisons.

Most of those are centred at the Risdon Prison complex, the Ron Barwick prison and the Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison. They are in a position to do that one-on-one work for other issues that aren't addressed by specific programs.

Ms OGILVIE - I can add a little bit more information, particularly in relation to the family violence query that you had. Obviously we have a suite of intervention programs available to family violence offenders, and we know that rehabilitation and reintegration teams concentrate on interventions focused on the drivers of crime, including family violence treatment.

In the 2023-24 state budget, the government provided \$1 million to expand and prioritise the delivery of family violence intervention programs within Corrective Services. The TPS has recruited two specialist case managers to provide comprehensive and specialised case management support to family violence offenders. This funding complements the Commonwealth Government's \$1.5 million to develop innovative interventions for people on remand and serving short sentences.

The Family Violence Program is currently being delivered in the Ron Barwick facility targeting family violence offences. This is a moderate to high intensity program aiming at reducing recidivism by targeting controlling behaviours in interpersonal relationships.

The Dialectical Behaviour Therapy Program is being delivered to prisoners in the Mary Hutchinson Women's Prison and the maximum precinct of the RPC. That's teaching and practising emotional regulation skills and coping strategies. In 2024 the Friends Not Strong Enough resilience program is being delivered to remandees at the Southern Remand Centre and male prisoners in maximum RPC. The program has been developed to provide prevention of and early intervention in anxiety and depression, to address attachment emotions, and physiological, cognitive and learning behaviour processes.

In our maximum-security prison facilities, the TPS primarily delivers individualised versions of the recommended program for any prisoner based on their assessed criminogenic risk and need and, in addition, where possible, group-based programs are delivered including resilience and dialectical behaviour therapy.

Ms JOHNSTON - Quite clearly, there's a range of family violence programs, but not specifically gambling programs. It's more individualised. Can you give me an indication then around financial literacy and consumer credit issues? Obviously, when prisoners are released, sometimes they can be released out into a situation where their financial affairs are in disarray and of significant concern. Is there any assistance or programs offered to prisoners in relation to financial literacy and consumer credit assistance?

Mr JACKSON - We use some non-government organisations such as Anglicare. They work with prisoners to get their financial stuff all in order prior to release and provide some assistance once they have been released.

Ms JOHNSTON - Is that funded through Corrections, or how is Anglicare funded to provide that service? Surely they don't do it out of the kindness of their heart.

Ms OGILVIE - I am advised it is part of their base funding. We don't fund specifically for that program. It is something they provide out of the overarching funds that we give them in their base funding.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, how many prisoners approved for parole by the Parole Board were rejected on the basis of suitable housing in the last financial year? It is our information that this is a significant issue.

Mr WISE - The answer is none, Ms Butler. The Parole Board does encounter issues in relation to accommodation options for prisoners that they are considering to release on parole. In some cases the prisoners have no accommodation set up, and in others they have identified

that they want to live in unsuitable premises or with people that the board thinks will increase their risk of reoffending. In those cases, they adjourn the matter and ask the prisoner to provide other options if they can. I am advised that the Parole Board has refused parole for no prisoners on the basis of inappropriate accommodation.

Ms BUTLER - Apparently, according to the Parole Board's annual report, 36 per cent or 71 applications were adjourned due to the applicant not having suitable accommodation. What is the number? Does that lead to additional time in prison for any of those parole applicants due to that inadequate housing? Is there any delay at all in that adjournment process?

Mr WISE - Yes, it can, in some cases. In some cases, you will appreciate that prisoners will nominate their home address where there might be an outstanding family violence order, for example, so they cannot go back there. Until such time as they can arrange alternative accommodation, they will be held in custody, so it can result in delays. If there is early discussion with a probation officer about those sorts of issues, then the prisoner gets the opportunity to try to source alternative accommodation prior to their earliest release date.

Ms BUTLER - Could you provide to the committee the number of applicants or parolees whose applications were adjourned due to the applicant not having suitable housing? Could you provide the length of those adjournments over the last financial year?

Ms OGILVIE - It was 73 people.

Ms BUTLER - And the length of those adjournments?

Mr WISE - I don't think that we would keep those data at all.

Mr CARNEY - I suppose there are a couple of considerations there. One is that the Parole Board makes an independent determination to adjourn matters, often to allow for accommodation, but accommodation is only one part of an entire assessment that we undertake. What we are trying to do is find accommodation that is suitable for that person at that time. The Parole Board considers a range of factors in determining whether that accommodation is going to be suitable, but they may also require somebody to undertake further courses, further programs or further intervention, or address a range of issues.

Ms BUTLER - I am only asking about when housing or lack of housing has been an impediment to someone being able to start their parole. I am only asking about the accommodation side of things.

Mr CARNEY - It depends on the reason that the housing was found unsuitable. A house, in and of itself, is seldom found unsuitable. It could be who's living there or it could be who visits. It could be a range of factors that may not have anything to do with the housing needing to change, or with the housing in and of itself being deemed unsuitable. I suppose that's why there's a complex consideration and assessment that we need to undertake.

The Parole Board makes an independent determination around the adjournment of those matters and the assessment of someone's suitability, but they've never actually refused anyone - well, they have, but not for the past number of years - for a lack of suitable accommodation, because it exists within this broader patchwork of risk assessment that they're undertaking.

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Ms BUTLER - Minister, is the housing crisis leading to more people staying in jail longer, to parole applicants being rejected and adjourned due to lack of accommodation?

Ms OGILVIE - I think we've just heard that parole is not rejected.

Ms BUTLER - No, adjourned.

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, but in relation to adjournment, your specific question is?

Ms BUTLER - Is the housing crisis contributing to parolees' release being adjourned due to lack of suitable accommodation?

Mr CARNEY - As Rod raised, the majority of people can find housing. It's about whether that housing is suitable and appropriate to support them to manage their risks safely on parole. It's not necessarily that there's a lack of housing. Almost everybody leaving prison who wants a house is able to find it, and they're able to find it with the support of the TPS. It really is about whether that housing option meets their risks and needs within the context of the parole order conditions.

Ms BUTLER - How many can't find accommodation?

CHAIR - Ms Butler, I've been doing my best to give people a full line of questioning, but we have five minutes left, and in the interests of fairness and keeping to the ratio of questions, I'll go to Ms Rosol.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, last year the IPA released their report The Cost of Prisons in Australia 2023, which noted that in 2022 Tasmania had 232 non-violent offenders incarcerated at an annual cost of \$47 million, with non-violent offenders meaning offenders who committed offences against organisations, government and the community in general. Our understanding is that in 2022 this was close to half of the prison population. What proportion of the current prison population is made up of non-violent offenders and what's the total cost to the Budget of detaining them? What other non-custodial and rehabilitative options are available to reduce the financial burden?

Ms OGILVIE - I will just open by saying that in my opening statement and during some of these conversations, I talked about the fantastic work that we're doing with technological advances to manage and monitor people to alleviate the strain in the system. I won't go over that again, but I am very happy to provide more detail at a later time. I think that Rod might be able to assist with the overall figure, but I can tell you that the cost per day, per prisoner, is \$472. What was the other part of your question?

Ms ROSOL - What proportion of the current prison population is made up of non-violent offenders?

Ms OGILVIE - Do we have that?

Mr WISE - I don't think so, minister. Again, it's complex. A lot of the non-violent offenders are people who are active drug users, and the courts are of the view that they might commit further serious offences if they were released back into the community under the throes of a drug addiction. We can get that information for you.

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Ms ROSOL - Are you able to take that on notice?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, we can take that on notice.

CHAIR - The time being 11.30 a.m., the time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is Women and the Prevention of Family Violence. We'll now take a short break.

The Committee suspended from 11.30 a.m to 11.39 a.m.

DIVISION 9

Department of Premier and Cabinet

CHAIR - I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard.

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. I have with us today Mel Gray, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Reform and Rebecca Pinto, Executive Director, Community Partnerships and Priorities.

CHAIR - The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Women and Prevention of Family Violence is one and a half hours. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Ms OGILVIE - I certainly would. As Minister for Women and Prevention of Family Violence, I take gender equality as fundamental to the success of our state. I'm really proud to say that Tasmania is a great place for women to work, live and thrive.

Our government continues to deliver Equal means Equal: Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027, which ensures we continue to foster a society where women and girls are equal and able to thrive in all facets of life. That document outlines our government's commitment to ensure women have access to the necessary resources and opportunities to fully participate in economic, social, political and community life. It's so good to see so many women members at the table today.

We know our efforts to support women's leadership are working. We're trying to lead by example. Women now hold 48.3 per cent of positions on Tasmanian Government boards. We know that it's critical to strive for gender equality across a range of issues and particularly in relation to leadership. We are partnering with Healthy Tasmania to deliver the latest round of Women's Leadership Scholarships. We're very excited about this. Through this program, more Tasmanian women, particularly those in male-dominated industries, will be supported to build their leadership skills and grow into the leaders of tomorrow.

I brought today, and I'm sure you've had a chance to have a look at it, our budget statement. I hope we get to do a deep dive in relation to that. It's an iterative process, but I'm pleased with how it's coming along. Certainly, I would like to thank my colleague and Treasurer, the honourable Michael Ferguson and his department for the support and that we've brought it in House. This is a good thing that we've done. Not only is it cost effective, but it actually gets us closer to the data that we need to use.

We are leading the way in closing the gender pay gap, currently at 5 per cent in May 2024, down from 8.3 per cent in May 2021, which is significantly less than the national average of 11.5 per cent.

Our gender budget statement in particular highlights some of the commitments that we've made. I won't go through them all; you'll have a chance to look at that. Certainly the \$15 million commitment that we've made to the Breast Diagnostic Care Centre is a very good one. I look forward to really building this document. I'll talk a little bit more about some of the other work we're doing that underpins the information that's flowing into this.

In relation to Prevention of Family Violence, which is the second part of today's discussion, we are on track to meet our target under the National Action Plan's 500 Workers Initiative, with 24.6 FTEs additional workers commenced by 30 June 2025. Since 1 July 24, it is anticipated that a further 5.4 FTE workers will have commenced by the end of September 2024, taking the total from 15.6 FTEs to 21 FTE workers. Recruitment action is continuing for the balance of 3.6 FTE workers.

Ultimately, the impact of family and sexual violence for victim/survivors, women, and children and young people are widespread in the community and across government in terms of prevention, responding, healing and recovery. It is a large issue.

Areas of impact include education, health, housing, justice and police; therefore, we have adopted an inter-agency and coordinated approach. We know that that's incredibly important. I acknowledge, our government acknowledges, and I think our community acknowledges, that while much has been done, we can and must do better. Eliminating family and sexual violence is a key priority of our government. We have our Tasmania's Third Family Violence Action Plan 2022-2027: Survivors at the Centre in place, supported by funding of \$100 million over five years to deliver actions.

Some at the table today have already heard of our nation-leading electronic monitoring program, not only holding perpetrators to account and addressing risk and safety, but also providing victim/survivors with the option of a discrete monitoring device that alerts them when their family violence offender is nearby. We have multidisciplinary Arch centres in the north and south of the state. We're building a third one in the north-west. Since 2015 we've funded three comprehensive whole-of-government family and sexual violence action plans.

Given the priority focus in addressing family and sexual violence and ongoing efforts through national Cabinet, we have recently realigned the Family Safety Secretariat with the Department of Premier and Cabinet. The Prevention of Family and Sexual Violence portfolio is now placed within the Keeping Children Safe reform group, with the Department of Premier and Cabinet reporting through to the Chief Reform Leader and Secretary. This realignment acknowledges the synergies between the work of the Family Safety Secretariat, harmful sexual behaviours, and implementing the recommendations from the commission of inquiry.

A central aspect of Survivors at the Centre is the establishment of the Victim/Survivor Advisory Council, which has been undertaken through a trauma-informed approach. Ten people have been appointed as members of the advisory council following an expression of interest process. Council members are undertaking induction and training this week to support

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their participation and advocacy journey with the council. We anticipate and hope that the council will meet later this year following this training. It's a big step forward.

We have a vital role also in coordinating ongoing cross-jurisdictional work to achieve the shared goal of ending gender-based violence.

Ms BUTLER - Chair, this is a really short committee.

Ms OGILVIE - We know that a key part of our future is keeping women and children safer. I'll wrap it up.

CHAIR - I was going to say, I did get some advice after this morning. The orders are silent on the opening statement, so it's not classified as an answer.

Ms OGILVIE - I'm almost done.

CHAIR - If the minister can wrap up quickly, that would be appreciated.

Ms OGILVIE - That's just to give you the highlights across all of the areas that you might like to ask questions on, anything that you're interested in. I will be taking a leading role through the Women and Women's Safety Ministerial Council, which oversees the collective response to the rapid review report Unlocking the Prevention Potential, and reports back to national Cabinet on progress of this response. It's a vital council. I look forward to having inputs from people.

Finally, national Cabinet has agreed for the council to negotiate a renewed five-year national partnership agreement on family, domestic and sexual violence responses to commence on 1 July 2025. This will deliver over \$700 million in a new matched investment from the Commonwealth and states and territories. I'll close there.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms BROWN - Chair, can I have some clarification? I'm hoping to start with prevention questions. Are you happy for us to be fluid in that?

Ms OGILVIE - I'm very happy, which is why I put the opening statements together, so that we could roam across the topics. I'm comfortable with that. I'm in your hands. It's your committee.

Ms BROWN - Fabulous. How will the budget efficiency dividend be managed in this area?

Ms OGILVIE - I will ask Ms Gray to make some comments.

Ms GRAY - The budget efficiency dividend applied to the whole Department of Premier and Cabinet in 2024-25 is \$969,000, increasing to \$1.9 million in 2025-26, and \$2.9 million by 2026-27. DPAC is well on track to meeting this dividend. We're currently undertaking an extensive review of DPAC staffing establishment management practices in order to meet the efficiency requirements. Through an active establishment management project, DPAC is

investigating improvements on processes around salary budgeting, and looking to opportunities to optimise staffing resources, and how they're used to meet government priorities.

The initial work from this project has identified that budget efficiencies can be achieved through funding staffing establishments based on workload variation. That is how the staffing establishment is actually being paid. Changing the basis of the staffing budgets to this methodology will deliver the savings on the department's 2024-25 Budget in excess of the \$969,000 target. It's important to note that this isn't a vacancy control process and it won't result in any job losses because it's simply funding the FTE for the amount that it works. So, if I work 0.8, at the moment the department funds one full FTE for that, but across the entire department it will still allow for flexibility if an employee wants to increase from 0.8 to the one FTE. It's not a vacancy control process, it won't result in any job losses, and it won't impact on the delivery of any key government priorities. That's the methodology that DPAC's looking to employ to meet its savings across the board.

Ms BROWN - The Premier and other ministers have committed to tabling their savings strategies. Minister, will you do the same?

Ms OGILVIE - The saving strategy that we've just heard? Yes, I think we're very happy to do that.

Ms BROWN - Yes. And itemised?

Ms OGILVIE - Let me just see what format we've got it in.

The advice I have is it's just simply what has been read out, but if you would like a more formal statement tabled, I guess we can do that for you.

Ms BROWN - Okay, great. Thank you.

Ms OGILVIE - It's a simple approach. Thank you.

Ms BROWN - Minister, in order to protect victims of family and sexual violence, will you commit to ensuring that all organisations have the funding necessary to provide the community with timely services? And that under your watch no cuts to staff will occur due to budget requirements?

Ms OGILVIE - Do you mean no cuts to government staff or -

Ms BROWN - Organisations.

Ms OGILVIE - Organisations. Well, I can't control what organisations do with their decision about internal staffing.

Ms BROWN - But, if it's a funding requirement.

Ms OGILVIE - What I can say is we've got the budget we've got at the moment. I am working very closely with a couple of groups, particularly Laurel House and SASS, to see what we can do to meet their - what I think are very sensible - arguments around the level of demand

that they're dealing with and the need to expand services. That is work that's happening at the moment. I'm in dialogue with them.

There is additional funding. So would you like - can I borrow this? Thank you - just a bit of extra information in relation to job cuts internally? We just heard that that's not how we're approaching things in this area at all.

Ms BROWN - No, just limiting the employment though, really.

Ms OGILVIE - Well, I think it's managing the – okay. I'm just getting some advice that there will still be flexibility because the savings identified for implementation are much less than the work will deliver with those realignments, so, no job cuts.

I do take your overarching point that this is such an important area. We want agencies and groups and organisations that provide services to be fully funded and to be funded more. This work happens both at a state and federal level and I was very pleased to see National Cabinet make it a priority issue and certainly our Premier was at the table for that.

I have just received a little bit of extra information that since 2021 we have provided significant additional funding to specialist sexual violence services to respond to increased demand and the additional funding represents an over 200 per cent increase in funding for these organisations since 2019.

This budget continues that funding with no funding decreases at all and that is part of our \$423 million investment to deliver the recommendation also of the commission of inquiry over the forward Estimates. I also take your point - there is a lot more to do.

Ms BROWN - Just to confirm, you will commit to no job cuts for organisations if it's due to budgets.

Ms OGILVIE - I'm in dialogue with organisations as is the department. I will actually ask Ms Gray to talk a little bit about that, particularly about Laurel House and SASS?

Ms GRAY - Yes, through you, minister, we work very closely to monitor the wait list and demand data for both SASS and Laurel House. We work in close collaboration with them and take any needs that they may have back through the department and through to the minister.

Ms BROWN - I'll take that as a commitment of, yes, you will make sure that there are no job cuts due to Budget requirements.

Ms OGILVIE - I will continue to work really carefully with organisations to make sure we're doing all we can to meet demand.

Ms BROWN - So, no. That's fine, thank you.

Ms BADGER - Minister, I just want to circle back to some questions from the Legislative Council Estimates yesterday and whether we can have some more clarity over the funding for the family violence peak body. There's \$170,000 for this financial year from the Tasmanian government, then you said there was \$200,000 from the federal government for the

following two financial years. Is that \$200,000 in addition to another, and ongoing, \$170,000 from the State government each year? So, we should see a total of more than \$200,000?

Ms OGILVIE - I've just received some information on that. There is \$170,000 annually in the Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan as part of the \$12.5 million to fund the alliance. It was allocated from 2022-27 and was approved by the then-minister for this purpose. The \$200,000 funding is in addition to the above, in recognition of the feedback from the alliance members that the allocated amount was not enough. It is \$200,000 annually for 2024-26. Ms Gray, is there anything you'd like to add to that?

Ms BADGER - Just to be clear, because it wasn't in the line budget, that is ongoing, the \$170,000 - plus the \$200,000 from the federal government?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes.

Ms BADGER - Following on, I'm also after a bit of clarity around the composition or the breakdown for the funds of the financial year 2025. Specifically, holistically there's just over \$19 million for the Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan. What of each of the services is going to be funded? I'm happy for this to be tabled on notice - but I'm after a breakdown of what part of that funding is going towards policy in DPAC. I know yesterday in the Legislative Council Estimates you said 5.7 full-time equivalents would go in, and I know you're committed to a high-level breakdown. We're just wondering, for the sector, if we can have that itemised a little further so they've got clarity. It goes a little bit to Ms Brown's question, because obviously you can't control the employment the sector's doing. They'd just like to know what allocation they have and what they can work with.

Ms OGILVIE - I want to help, obviously. Let's see what we can provide you. What we've been trying to do is provide information at the table as you ask the question so as to reduce questions on notice, and you get the information. We can't always do that but we'll just see what we can provide at this stage.

Ms BADGER - I'm also just very conscious of time. I'm more than happy to get it later if it means more people can get questions in.

Ms OGILVIE - Let's see if this answers it, then if we have to provide more. The 2024 total expenditure budget for Output 7.5 is \$19.4 million, which reflects a \$6.9 million increase on 2023-24 (\$12.5 million) and relates to the additional funding provided through the national partnership agreement for family, domestic and sexual violence responses.

Under the federation funding agreement, the Australian Government has allocated more than \$21.1 million to Tasmania, which is in addition to our own investment of \$100 million under our 'third action plan' to address family and sexual violence, and we've increased core funding to our specialist family and sexual violence services by 37 per cent, which we've just discussed.

Then in 2024-25, I can add core funding to services is \$4,702,459, and Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-27: Survivors at the Centre is \$12.5 million. I think that gets you there.

Ms BADGER - No, that's still that high level. I'd like a breakdown for the sector. The sector is more than capable of reading the budget papers. They need a breakdown of, specifically, what is going to be funded throughout that. I'm happy to take it on notice.

Ms OGILVIE - Which organisations - is that what you're seeking? It will help me get the information you want. An itemised list?

Ms BADGER - Itemised for the Sexual Violence Action Plan of exactly what's been broken down.

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, I understand what you're saying - itemised. We'll probably need to take that on notice.

Ms BADGER - I hope so.

Ms OGILVIE - I could read it all out, but -

CHAIR - Order, order. Sorry, I know there's been a bit of trying to get clarity on the questions. For the benefit of Hansard as much as anything else, can we not have members taking over each other because it makes it impossible to differentiate who's speaking.

Ms OGILVIE - I'm very happy to get that information for you, but we'd have to compile that, so we will take that on notice.

CHAIR - Mrs Pentland.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, first of all, I just wanted to congratulate you on the Gender Budget Statement. I did thank the Treasurer and he did say that it was an initiative from yourself. I think it's a very good document. Well done.

In regards to that, it confirms that around 11 per cent of girls and women aged 15-24 are not engaged in work and study. That's way above the national average of 7 per cent. We have heard about the High Vis Army, which is helping with that age for men getting involved with employment and study. How are we advocating for women in this space to try and get them involved with study and work?

Ms OGILVIE - What was the age bracket you mentioned?

Mrs PENTLAND - It's 15-24.

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, it's a critical part.

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes. It is a page in the document.

Ms OGILVIE - I'll see if we have a bit more information about what we're doing to address that exactly. I think I can assist with that. Bear with me one second. Fifteen-year-olds ought to be probably at school. I should say that, first up.

Mrs PENTLAND - Or apprenticeships perhaps.

Ms OGILVIE - Or apprenticeships, depending on the trajectory.

That's what I was looking for. So, lifting female participation in the workforce is incredibly important and I know, particularly in your electorate, there are many great opportunities to do that, but we need to make sure that we're finding the people who need the help to do that. It's critical and, in my view, this is one of the key challenges we need to address nationally - that we tackle this issue of women's economic independence. It's never too early to start, particularly at the younger stage of life and also the older stage, when family life is concluding, to make sure that women in retirement are economically independent as well.

Since 2020, we've committed approximately \$4 million in women's workforce participation activities. This investment has supported the delivery of lots of initiatives under the Leadership and Participation Action Plan for Women, and Equal means Equal Tasmanian Women's Strategy. The documents always have such long names. I apologise for that.

We are making progress. We know that the gender pay gap continues to fall. I've spoken a little bit about that in the opening statement. It's now 5 per cent, down from 9.1 per cent - significantly below the national average. There are 139,400 women employed in Tasmania and our unemployment rate generally for women is at an all-time low.

We are seeking to find more ways to reduce the barriers to seeking employment in stable and good work, and one of the things that I know we're doing really well is working across the sector. It's not just what we do with government, but working with TAFE, working with schools, particularly working with trades as well. I've done a bit of a deep dive into the electrical trades and they're doing incredible work around women's workforce participation, particularly in that apprentice side.

NECA, in particular, I can mention, they have a great women's program. What I'm seeing as I get out and about around the sector with businesses, government, local government and the not-for-profit sector, is there is a great deal of interest in building up what we do to support women to come into these areas. I often say government can learn a lot from that.

The leadership programs we do, apprenticeships. I was just talking the other day about getting interns engaged across the tech sector. It's often a sector which women might not feel it's a natural place for them to go into. The games and gaming sector's really interesting for younger people generally.

So, there's a lot of work we can do. I try to take a leadership position on this across government to say for each of our sectors: it's work we can all do, and work we can do in the community, too, to reach out to the young people, to young women in particular, and encourage them to engage with some of these projects and programs. But particularly when it comes to the advanced manufacturing areas and all those great things that are happening in your neck of the woods, if you look at TMEC and the work they're doing, it's quite incredible. So, we've very open to doing more, and love to hear great ideas from everyone. Thank you.

CHAIR - On the timing, just a reminder that there has been the order on questions taking a minute and answers taking three minutes. We have had some pretty comprehensive answers in the previous session as well. It hasn't been called out, because I think members were appreciating the detail. I'm leaving it so that if people want to call the timing for answers, they can do so. Otherwise, I'll let them go if people are satisfied with the answers that they're getting.

That was Mrs Pentland's first question. Did you have an additional question?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, on the Youth Jobs Strategy. I won't be offended if you cut me off, just go right ahead.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, the Equal Means Equal: Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027 outlines important goals for gender equality, particularly around cultural change and empowerment for women and girls. Could you provide an update on what specific measures the government has implemented to drive cultural change across Tasmanian society since the release of this strategy?

Ms OGILVIE - I believe we can assist with that. Let me just get that information for you. Just bear with me a moment. I'm just locating the information. We have two sets of documents here because we're dealing with the two areas.

The Tasmanian Women's Strategy which you've referred to is our vision for a gender-equal Tasmania, and it does outline a vision for Tasmania where women and girls have access to equal choice, equal opportunity, resources to participate in economic, social, political and community life. I had the great joy and benefit of launching this originally, and I was pleased to do so. Equal Means Equal seeks to embed gender equality in our culture, attitudes and practices. I think that is the question that you're asking. We do need to recognise the diversity of Tasmanian women and girls - not just diversity in cultural aspects, but there's geographic diversity, there's capability diversity, and there's aspirational diversity. So, we are dealing with an area which is fantastic but can also be challenging.

The 2022-23 State Budget did allocate \$800,000 over four years to support the implementation of Equal Means Equal. As I've mentioned, economic security, leadership and participation are key elements of the work that we're doing. We're continuing to roll out some key deliverables which you might be interested in, including a gender impact assessment toolkit which sits alongside our new gender budget statement. We'll talk a little bit more about that. I think you'll be interested in that. It will help us to really analyse the impact of work on different genders and to enable government agencies to use that toolkit to do so, and with that, we will be able to build this gender budget statement in relevance as well.

We have the annual gender budget statements, with the latest iteration being released, pleasingly, alongside the 2024-25 state Budget. This was a good thing and a timely thing to do - a bit of a win for the statement. One area that I'm really keen on developing is our annual Women in Leadership program which helps women in male-dominated industries to build their leadership skills. As we know, being women in senior roles, it can sometimes be quite challenging to do that.

That's at the heart of what we're doing. I impress upon everybody here. I think we would all like to walk the talk, but as women in leadership roles, and I include our partners and friends, it is important to bring young women on the journey with us. So, thank you for being allies, Mr Fairs and Mr Behrakis.

We have the Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women and International Women's Day as well to provide that cultural and inspirational piece.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, how will the combined investment from the Tasmanian and Australian governments under the national partnership agreement enhance the delivery of initiatives outlined in the Survivors at the Centre Action Plan, ensuring that family and sexual violence prevention efforts are effectively implemented across multiple agencies, and meet the diverse needs of the Tasmanian community?

Ms OGILVIE - Eliminating family and sexual violence is a key priority for our government. I've said this a few times and we are genuine in our absolute resolve to address this. We are resolute in our commitment to ensure that every Tasmanian can live in safety, free from violence. It's just a non-negotiable aspect.

Our investment in Tasmania's third Family Violence Sexual Action Plan, Survivors at the Centre, demonstrates this dedication. Over the next five years, we will invest more than \$100 million to deliver actions that directly support victim survivors, prevent violence before it starts, and ensure perpetrators are held to account. This action plan represents the most significant reform in this area that our state has seen, and our focus is on delivering a whole of government and whole of community response.

We've got support from the Australian Government through the National Partnership Agreement, which has been pivotal in amplifying our efforts. With their investment over \$21.1 million, we have been able to enhance and expand our initiatives enabling us to take significant steps forward in the fight against family and sexual violence. It is something that we are resolute in addressing.

We know we need to deliver coordinated, integrated responses that span multiple agencies. This is where some of the challenges come in - ensuring that our efforts are comprehensive and tailored to meet the needs of diverse communities across Tasmania. Our investment allows us to introduce and expand critical initiatives such as the Arch centres - which I think you're all very familiar with - which are game changers, so to speak, in the way we provide holistic and integrated services. Indeed we are building a new centre.

We also want to ensure that funding reaches the frontline services where it needs to be placed and this is crucial in providing immediate support to those in need at the frontline. We have increased core funding to our specialist family and sexual violence services by 37 per cent over a five-year period which is a substantial increase. We know that they provide what is often lifesaving support and assistance in times of great stress and duress. This funding boost means that services such as Safe Choices, Engender Equality and Laurel House can continue to provide counselling, advocacy and support that we know they need to do.

We're working with Our Watch, which is embedding respectful relationships and consent education across schools. I think this is a good step so that people learn about healthy relationships, the importance of consent and the unacceptability of violence in any form.

We've had a recent decision by National Cabinet to provide additional funds to Tasmania and we're very pleased about that. The Premier has taken the baton up to National Cabinet and he has worked to push for this and I would like to give him a great deal of credit. We remain committed to consultation with victim/survivors and we have established Tasmania's first Victim Survivor Advisory Council. I'm really proud of this work and I thank the department. I'm just one of the number of ministers who have helped bring this to fruition, but it is the people within the department who have really shepherded that through.

Ms BROWN - Minister, what funding is provided to SASS and Laurel House to support victim/survivors and children and young people with harmful sexual behaviours?

Ms OGILVIE - I'll get that information for you. I have the exact figures for you. In 2018-19, SASS received \$1.5 million in annual funding. In 2024-25, SASS will receive more than \$5 million in funding across various funding streams. In 2021-22, Laurel House received \$2 million in funding and in 2024-25, this funding will increase to more than \$3.5 million.

Ms BROWN - Did SASS and Laurel House put in a budget submission?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes.

Ms BROWN - How much for?

Ms OGILVIE - Let's see if we have that information for you. I have mentioned I have met with them on all this. We'll just see if we can get the exact figure for you.

Ms BROWN - If you'd like, you can take it on notice.

Ms OGILVIE - They don't have the document with them, so we'll take it on notice.

Ms BADGER - I've got that figure here. They requested a total of \$2.72 million for the 2024-25 delivery of the past Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB) program. They've been informed that they'll be provided \$1.2 million, which is for Laurel House and SASS combined. That is a shortfall of \$1.52 million, which I believe you acknowledged yesterday in the Legislative Council. So, they're going to be awarded funding of \$1 million for every \$6 million of service delivery they need. In real terms, this means that the uplift in staffing they were able to achieve due to the announcements last year will now not be able to be sustained.

Could you further elaborate on what is currently available for the therapeutic services as per Laurel House and SASS's budget submission? These have come under the HSB in table A2.2. What's being delivered in terms of the children's services, children and family and detail that? Again, I understand that's quite detailed information, if you want take that on notice as well.

Ms OGILVIE - Let me see if we can answer that. Would you like to respond to that?

Ms GRAY - Yes, we do have a breakdown, but we would like to take that on notice just so we can be confident and verify all of the figures there relating to funding that's coming not only through the state but through the national partnership agreement for both SASS and Laurel House.

We are continuing to work closely, as I mentioned previously, with what we see as deeply valued service providers. We've worked very closely with both SASS and Laurel through the response to the commission of inquiry. That close working relationship will continue to monitor demand and need. This, too, is to inform our negotiation with the Australian Government on the new national partnership agreement for family, domestic and sexual violence. Those negotiations have commenced. Also through the delivery of related recommendations on the commission of inquiry - the recommendations relating to workforce,

service gap analysis and future funding needs, which are due by 2026. We continue to work closely with both of those organisations so we can inform how that funding relating to those recommendations is implemented, as well as the national partnership.

Ms BADGER - On the first question, as part of taking that on notice and that breakdown of the budget items in that table, can that also include the difference between the national partnership funding and what's been contributed by the Tasmanian government?

Ms GRAY - Yes, that's fine.

Ms BADGER - Thank you. My second question is, given that shortfall in funding for HSB and the services, we know there's an increasing demand for those services and that will continue. What is the government going to do to support children and young people across this state when they desperately need those services?

Ms OGILVIE - We rely very heavily on the specialist services provided by those organisations. I've got a deep level of respect, and their dedication to the task that needs to be done is huge. But as you correctly point out, the demand is increasing. I find this incredibly sad for our state. As to how we best address that going forward in a contemporary environment, we have the National Cabinet work for this happening with additional funding. This budget is obviously set, but we continue to work very closely, particularly with Laurel House and SASS about a way forward. They have my support in that. Very supportive and want to assist.

Ms BADGER - No other set plans than continuing? Which is important, continuing work with Laurel House.

Ms OGILVIE - Mel Gray has a contribution.

Ms GRAY - I would note that SASS and Laurel House have been provided with additional funding through the Australian Government's 500 Workers Initiative, along with funding from the commission of inquiry, which increases support and extends the Harmful Sexual Behaviours Program. Recommendation 21.03 of the commission of inquiry is for the Tasmanian government to establish a peak body for the sexual assault service system, including therapeutic interventions for children who have engaged in harmful sexual behaviours. There are a number of priority areas in Change for Children, the strategy relating to recommendation 19.1 of the commission of inquiry. The government is working across government agencies, but also in close collaboration with both SASS and Laurel House in relation to the harmful sexual behaviours priority area.

Ms JOHNSTON - Arch is mentioned at several points in the budget paper, but it's quite difficult to identify where funding is going and to what service and what agency its coming from. Could you provide more clarification about what funding will be provided to Laurel House and Sexual Assault Support Service for delivery as special supports in Arch?

Ms OGILVIE - Sorry, can you repeat that?

Ms JOHNSTON - Can you provide clarity about what funding will be provided to Laurel House and SASS for delivery of specialist supports in Arch?

Ms OGILVIE - We did have this question last night. The answer is that it sits within Mr Ellis's portfolio. This is a multi-disciplinary approach. I did ask him to check that. I spoke to him this morning

Ms JOHNSTON - Do we have an answer then, because it does sit across a number of portfolios?

Ms OGILVIE - I know. It's not you, it's the fact that it is highly matrixed. I'm not even sure that we can answer that specifically. It is a question for Mr Ellis. I did speak to him this morning to say to expect that question to be asked so that he could provide a response.

Ms JOHNSTON - Currently, family violence orders can only be obtained against an intimate partner. There's been a call from a number of people in the sector to extend that to other instances of family violence. I'm sure you'd be aware of an unfortunately high level of incidents between parents and children, siblings, other family relationships. Do you have an appetite to consider reform in this area and to match other jurisdictions by extending who a family violence order could be issued against?

Ms OGILVIE - I have some personal views around exactly the queries you raise. The act sits under the Attorney-General. Another example of the highly matrixed nature of this portfolio. But I have committed to having a conversation with him about that, which I'm happy to do.

Ms JOHNSTON - What are your views around that? Obviously, your advocacy in this space is important to the Attorney-General, so what's your views on that one?

Ms OGILVIE - I am very happy to look at this issue and I am very aware of the nature of what can happen within families. I'd like to have a look at it and I must say I have not done that yet because it does sit within the administrative arrangement under the Attorney-General's portfolio. But I'm happy to have that conversation and have a look at it.

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm assuming the Attorney-General wouldn't act without having consulted with you in the first place.

Ms OGILVIE - We try to work closely together.

Ms JOHNSTON - I am sure you do. Is this a body of work that you're looking at doing soon, or is it something that is on the backburner?

Ms OGILVIE - There's no backburner in my world, unfortunately. It's a 24/7 operation. My view is that we need the most contemporary legislation we can have. Yesterday, I was able to talk about some other areas in which violence against women is perpetrated in the online space as well and moves for legislative reform there also. I am very interested and, as I move across portfolios and find areas in which we can act, I try to do that work. This is one that is on my radar. I want to be very open that I have not been able to have time to sit down with the Attorney-General about it, but I will push for contemporary legislation.

Ms BROWN - Minister, when will the north-west Arch be operational?

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Ms OGILVIE - We might have that information available. I think in relation to the delivery of projects, particularly ones that are funded by Mr Ellis's department, that is where you would want that information, but let's just see if we have a projection.

Ms BUTLER - You've gone into Arch already within this.

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, because it's a highly matrixed organisation.

Ms BUTLER - Exactly, so it's a fair enough question for this portfolio.

Ms OGILVIE - I'm not saying it's not a fair enough question, it's whether we have the information at hand.

Ms BUTLER - For this allocation, I mean.

Ms OGILVIE - No, I don't think we can provide you with a date and certainly it does sit within Mr Ellis's portfolio, but I believe funding has been allocated.

Ms BROWN - Minister, in the commission of inquiry recommendations, and there are quite a few of them, it calls for the establishment of a peak body. However, the organisations are actually looking for a commitment for funding to scope the work of a sexual violence peak body. Are you willing to commit to that funding?

Ms OGILVIE - Is this outside of the alliance?

Ms BROWN - No, this is within the alliance.

Ms OGILVIE - We have made a commitment to funding. We have spoken about that with \$170,000. Is there more that you wanted about that?

Ms BROWN - No.

Ms OGILVIE - The answer is we want to support the alliance.

Ms BUTLER - They're getting the money.

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, that's good, we're all happy about that.

Ms BROWN - Every one of our prevention of family and sexual violence organisations have wait lists that are months long and without more funding these wait lists will blow out even further. Do you know the average wait time for Tasmanians waiting to access these services?

Ms OGILVIE - I don't know the average wait time, but what I do know is that it is a long time. I just can't recall the exact figure that Laurel House and SAS have provided me with. It is a seemingly intractable challenge, the solution to which is the prevention of violence in the first place. That in itself is obviously a huge hill to climb, but when it comes to the increasing demand to which you refer, we want to do all that we can within the constraints of the Budget that I have to work with to support the delivery of services. As I've said, the department and I will continue to work closely with the providers on that.

Ms BROWN - Will you take on notice providing the exact wait time?

Ms OGILVIE - I would need to ask the organisations for that, which I'm happy to do. I think that's not information that I hold. I'm just referring to the department.

It might be that we do. If you want granular detail, we would actually need to take that on notice, but I understand, from information that I've just been provided, the combined wait list for Engender, Huon Domestic Violence Service and Yemaya was 318 people as at 30 June 2024. SafeChoices and RAIN do not hold wait lists. In the time between a referral being received by a service and first appointment, services generally maintain active holding of wait-listed clients which include check-in calls and reprioritising them. That's the information that I have at hand. If you want further details - there's a little more: on sexual violence in 2023-24, reporting showed that as at 30 June 2024, DPAC funded Sexual Violence Support Services were actively supporting 1947 clients, which was a significant increase from 787 in 2022-23. That increased demand has impacted the statewide wait list with a combined wait list of 607 at 30 June 2024, up from 167 in June 2023. But that does not give you the timing.

Ms BROWN - No, and that's really what I am after because if you are not aware of the timing, how do you know that you are actually adequately funding these organisations?

Ms OGILVIE - We will seek that for you.

Ms BROWN - Thank you.

Ms BADGER - Minister, we know there is a lot of work happening on police misidentification and I understand that is not in your portfolio, but you would be working with Mr Ellis to ensure that that is happening. As we learned earlier in the week, the Small Steps 4 Hannah Foundation is going to be running workshops with Tasmania Police about coercive control. What else are you advocating for and working with Mr Ellis on in the coercive control space?

Ms OGILVIE - My engagement with ministers in their portfolios by way of being the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence includes a range of advocacy pieces that I work on for the Arch centre, et cetera. In relation to work Mr Ellis is doing on that area, I am not yet engaged in that. I am always a little bit careful to make sure that as the minister who has the administrative responsibility for the act that he is looking at leads the conversation. No doubt I will be engaged.

Ms BADGER - I would hope so, as the minister for women that is very important.

Ms OGILVIE - DPAC, which I will ask Mel to speak to, has held a workshop on this at that organisational level. Are you happy to speak to that?

Ms GRAY - Thank you. Last year, DPAC held a workshop on misidentification of the predominant aggressor and this was off the back of a report from Engender, I think, from memory.

Ms BADGER - Coercive control or just -

Ms GRAY - Misidentification of the predominant aggressor.

Ms BADGER - Sorry, I'm not sure if my question was clear that it was about coercive control and what advocacy you are doing, minister, in that space.

Ms OGILVIE - I don't have information at hand, no advice in relation to coercive control and what we are doing about it, but I can say from a personal perspective that I understand completely this issue. I'm a strong advocate for being resolute in our efforts to provide legislation that deals with these issues. As I said, I have been looking at particularly the technology side of coercive control recently. We are doing a deep dive on tracking of women and taking of telephone numbers and those sorts of issues, particularly with the technology side of it. No doubt there's a conversation to be had, and if there are law reform proposals coming forward, I will be brought into that loop by Mr Ellis, no doubt.

Ms BADGER - Great. My second question, minister, this is the 10th year since we had the motion before parliament on White Ribbon Day for an apolitical approach to the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence. That was put forward by all the male leaders of the three political parties at the time. Will you work with Premier Rockliff, given that White Ribbon Day this year is on a sitting day, to rework that motion to recommit for another at least 10 years on that agreement and seriously upscaling the actions that we need to take for the prevention of domestic, family and sexual violence in this state? Will you work on a cross-parliamentary agreement on such a motion with all independents and all political parties?

Ms OGILVIE - Of course, I will work with everybody who wants to develop an approach that is truly inclusive. I am not sure I was here when that original motion - I might have been, I just can't recall it. I would like to do that and I would warmly welcome everybody's input. We need to do it not just with the prevention of family violence, but in relation to the women's portfolio more generally. I have started some conversations around that with party representatives and others. I think we have a moment in time right now where the national conversation in relation to the prevention of family violence and women's leadership generally, and fairness to women economically, and security in retirement and all of those issues that we know are part of women's lives ought to be front and centre. There is nothing I would like more than to have us with one voice in the Parliament of Tasmania putting a stake in the ground on that.

Ms BADGER - You will work with the Premier to put that motion forward for family violence? That's everybody, inclusive, absolutely?

Ms OGILVIE - I am very happy to work with all of my colleagues. I certainly will speak to Premier.

Mrs PENTLAND - According to the *Mercury* article in July this year, Tasmanian women are three times more likely to experience relationship violence between the ages of 18 and 19 years against the national average. It also states that 32 per cent of Tasmanian women have experienced violence and emotional or economic abuse by a partner since the age of 15. Given how alarming these statistics are, can you please clarify if Tasmania does in fact have a domestic violence review team? If not, why?

Ms OGILVIE - To clarify, domestic violence review team in?

Mrs PENTLAND - Other states have a domestic violence review team. We're the only state that doesn't have one.

Ms OGILVIE - Let me find out what the rationale is. I'll see if I can get some information on that. I don't know that this has come across my desk before.

Is it in relation to coronial matters? I think other states and territories do this, where there has been a death and if it's -

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes, that's right. They review the deaths and they look at -

Ms OGILVIE - I've had some conversations about this with some of my colleagues. Having had some experience with the coroner's court, and understanding the really challenging, sad and difficult environment that can be for families, what I want to make sure of when we're looking at this issue is that we are understanding what the families also want. That's my being a human response.

In relation to the benefit that such a team could provide, I'm certainly happy to have a look at that. I think it does sit within the Attorney-General's remit, but I am very happy to add my, not interest, but my views to that conversation and consideration of that. I see the benefit. I want to make sure that things are handled sensitively also for family. Good question.

Mrs PENTLAND - Instances of police call-outs on family violence on the north-west coast are as high as the southern region, so by my calculation about 2.5 times by population. What is specifically being done in that region?

Ms OGILVIE - In relation to call-outs by police? Again, I don't want to do this because I know the north-west coast has a real challenge. I'm seeing it in the corrections and rehabilitation space as well, with the amount of crime, and prisoners that are now coming into the prison. I'm broadly aware of the challenges you have there. In relation to police call-outs, because it is Police portfolio, that would be Minister Ellis. We might be able to provide some information if we can. We're always happy to try.

I'm seeing if I've got a little bit of information that could help. I think what I can assist with, recognising that it cuts across a number of portfolios, I would point to the Arch Centres and the assistance with the north and north-west issue. \$15.1 million has been allocated for Arch Centres in Hobart and Launceston. There is an additional \$5 million to establish a third centre in the north-west.

You may not have had a chance to visit an Arch Centre. I think we will offer you that opportunity. It's eye opening, and it'll be helpful, I think, to understand what we can do when you get this multidisciplinary capability into a community, and what a difference it can make.

I think that's probably the best answer I can give you outside of police call-outs. We have specific commitments around Safe at Home, \$4.9 million. We've talked a bit about the technological advancements this morning - you weren't here in the earlier session - around the work we're doing with ankle bracelets and monitoring so that victims of family violence who need it can have a duress alarm and the technology that cuts across that.

I would like to just speak a bit about the building of the capability that we're doing in the technology area of Community Corrections that manages this. We really have some quite sophisticated capability to track offenders, and parolees and remandees and whoever we need to, to make sure that victims are protected and quarantined from the movement of perpetrators. That stuff is really helpful. Again, I am happy to take you on a tour or show you more of that, given you weren't able to come to this morning's session. We did quite a deep dive on that. They're two things that we're doing. I hope that is helpful.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, how will the establishment of the Victim Survivor Advisory Council under the Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan ensure that the voices of those who have lived experience are effectively incorporated into the Tasmanian government's policies and programs to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence?

Ms OGILVIE - The establishment of our first Victim Survivor Advisory Council represents a significant step forward in our commitment to ending family and sexual violence. The council will provide a direct platform for victim/survivors to contribute to shaping policies and programs that impact them, and to ensure that their voices are heard and are central to the decisions that we make as a government. I think we are the first state to deliver it.

We recognise that those with lived experience possess unique insights, and input is crucial in developing effective, responsive and compassionate approaches to preventing and responding to family and sexual violence. The council has been established as part of our \$100-million Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan: Survivors at the Centre to prioritise the survivor-centred approach. It is so that those with lived experience are able to share directly with us, helping make sure we get as much information as we can around how what we're doing meets their needs, and so that we understand the trajectory that we need to go on.

We're listening to their experiences and insights and recommendations so that, as we develop our policies, from this right through to how we deal with Arch Centres or technological innovation, we're hearing from people who've been through the complexities and challenges that victim/survivors face.

We've managed to secure remuneration for the council for the first time for their time and expertise, which I think is fair and good for women - well, it won't just be women, but it is good for people to be paid for the work that they do. Diversity within the council is a key feature. We know that people who've experienced family and sexual violence come from all sectors and all walks of life. We acknowledge that. We're looking for people and have looked for people from different backgrounds, communities and areas, and we want to be inclusive and have that representation.

We've got the council members undergoing induction and training to support their involvement and work, which I think is fair. It can be challenging work. Coming into this sector I've seen how challenging it is each and every day. The training will help provide them with the tools and effort that they need to make the contribution that I know they want to make. In achieving our vision, we want to make sure that everybody feels safe, supported and respected. The work of the council will complement existing initiatives with increased funding and support for specialist family and sexual violence services.

I want to emphasise in closing that it's more than just an advisory body. We feel that it's a true partnership. I know the work that's gone into it, and as one of a number of ministers who's been across this area, I know how long and deep the work has been. We really want to be listening to those with lived experience. We'll do this together. We'll take a step forward, creating a safer, more inclusive Tasmania.

Ms BUTLER - My question is around crisis accommodation for women fleeing family violence. From statistics I was given by the Hobart Women's Shelter, the total number of women and children requesting assistance between the years 2020 and 2024 was 2123. These are individuals, and each individual that comes in doesn't contribute to this total. For children, the number was 2401 out of a total of 4524. The total women and children receiving assistance was 951, and the total women and children not receiving assistance was 3573.

Their statistics are that 79 per cent of women and children that presented to the Hobart Women's Shelter over that four-year period were rejected, and they were rejected from seeking that crisis accommodation due to a lack of space. We know that in Tasmania, the number of women that we turn away from shelters is more than double the national figures.

I don't see accommodation highlighted especially in the gender budget, but it is a really big issue when it comes to the prevention of family violence. Can you run through for the Committee what you intend to do as the Minister for Women and the Minister for Prevention of Family Violence in this space?

Ms OGILVIE - Firstly, let me say it's just completely heartbreaking that we even have this situation. I've been to the Women's Shelter and connected with them, and I understand how terribly difficult this is and what a blight it is on our state that family violence is leading to this situation.

As Minister for Prevention of Family Violence, I can give you some information around housing, but I speak in my capacity as the Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence. Minister Ellis is Minister for Planning and Housing and he does the shelter's funding, which is why, if you're looking for it, it will be in a different output.

But I'm very happy to speak to it, particularly as it is such a critically important issue. I'll give you some information, and then perhaps if you need more, you can let me know. Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan: Survivors at the Centre includes the following actions to address this. The Family Violence Rapid Rehousing Program, which is administered by Homes Tasmania, will receive \$6,334,000 over the five-year plan, including a funding boost of \$1.5 million in the 2024-25 state Budget.

Action 16 - Flexible Support Packages - will receive \$1,650,000 over the five-year plan, enabling individuals to access payments of up to \$6000 to assist with bills, relocation and other costs. We know that that's a critical issue as well.

Action 17 - Keeping Women Safe in Their Homes program - receives funding to support victim/survivors to stay in their own home when safe to do so. These initiatives support a longstanding criminal justice response to family violence designed to remove the perpetrator and, where possible, keep women safe at home.

Further to this, Tasmania's first 20-year Whole-of-System Housing Strategy 2023-24 and associated Action Plan 2023-27 prioritises support to people in need, and this includes a focus on service to women and children experiencing family violence, which I think was your question.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you for that information. It's my understanding that when a family has to flee their home due to family violence, there's a certain amount of nights' accommodation that's provided, either in caravan parks, motels or hotels, when the women's shelters are full. This is for women who need to find alternative accommodation, who don't have any friends and families to stay with, and for whom home is not a safe option. Do you know how many nights' accommodation are funded?

Ms OGILVIE - Through Housing Connect, is that your question?

Ms BUTLER - Is it through Housing Connect or is it Safe at Home?

Ms OGILVIE - I think it's Housing Connect, but I will just seek some information on that. I don't think it's in this output. I think it's through Housing Connect, but I would have to find information about that. I don't know if it's a specified number of nights.

Ms BUTLER - It's three. What I'm looking for is the total amount of nights that the government has funded for women and children fleeing homes because the shelters are basically full - so, having to flee to motels, hotels or caravan parks.

Ms OGILVIE -It's a really important question. I appreciate that.

Ms BUTLER - It builds into this portfolio because it's prevention of family violence.

Ms OGILVIE - I understand the highly matrixed nature of it. It is Mr Ellis's portfolio though, so I would want be very careful not to step across and give wrong information, or even to take on to seek it, because I think it has to come through Mr Ellis. I'm not sure if you've already had your session with him.

Ms BUTLER - No, we only had a short time with Mr Ellis and, actually it was in the police portfolio.

Ms OGILVIE - No housing portfolio yet? that's where it sits.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, a question relating to your role as the minister for women. Looking through the Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-27, there was an industry liaison officer that was funded under this strategy after the COVID-19 pandemic to encourage the role of women in the recovery of industries, to help them get into there.

I understand that role hasn't been funded in an ongoing capacity. Having said that, looking at the gender budget statement, there are many industries that have a low participation of women in their workforce. Is that role something that you'd be willing to commit to funding further? If not funding that role, what are you doing that will help women to participate in those workforces?

Ms OGILVIE - I just want to make sure I really understand the role that you're referring to. What did you say originally?

Ms ROSOL - It was called an industry liaison officer for women's workforce participation. It's on page 22 of the women's strategy. It seems to have been a short-term role. I would say there's capacity for that kind of position to continue even though we've kind of moved on from COVID-19 financially, one hopes.

Ms OGILVIE - Let me see if I can find some information on that. Did you find that?

Ms ROSOL - I found a SOD for January 2023.

Ms OGILVIE - I'm just trying to get some information because it's not clear to me that it's not continuing. I will just try to find out for you.

Ms ROSOL - That would be great.

Ms OGILVIE - It could be a win. So, let's see if we can find the information for you. This is the challenge of roaming across both outputs in one go. We're jumping around a little bit. If we can't find it immediately, we'll bring it to you.

Ms ROSOL - I can put it on notice.

Ms OGILVIE - I'd also just like to, again, in the skills portfolio area, which is Mr Ellis's, there is work being done on the Youth Jobs Strategy, which does assist with those issues as well. We'll see if we can get that information for you. I'm sorry we couldn't find it quickly.

Ms ROSOL - That's okay. This question is around reproductive health issues; it's another one that overlaps. Reproductive health issues like menstruation and menopause have physically and mentally debilitating effects on women, on trans men and gender-diverse people, and it impacts their ability to participate in the workforce and for some it leads to an early retirement with serious financial impacts.

Experts have recommended paid reproductive leave of 12 days a year to help women, trans men and gender-diverse people cope with the financial ramifications of those reproductive issues. Queensland has introduced it for their public servants. Will you commit to introducing paid reproductive leave, or advocating for that, on behalf of women?

Ms OGILVIE - I will turn to that question, but I think I've got that other information here, so we might just deal with that quickly if we can. I'll read this and see if this helps. Since November 2020, the Tasmanian government has invested just over \$4 million to strengthen recruitment, retention, advancement of women in sectors where women are traditionally underrepresented. This funding supported the employment of an industry liaison officer within the Department of Premier and Cabinet, whose role was to work with the industry to drive change and support the participation of women in sectors critical to Tasmania's recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The role has concluded and this work is now embedded into the broader work program of the women and prevention family violence team within DPAC, and this team works closely with other agencies, including the Department of State Growth and the Department of Natural

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Resources and the Environment Tasmania to ensure that we can continue to work collaboratively with key industry bodies and support women's employment in non-traditional roles. The work continues but the allocated role is not continuing. Back to your other question.

Ms ROSOL - That was around the paid reproductive leave. Is that something that you would be willing to advocate for on behalf of people who have reproductive health issues that impact on their ability to work?

Ms OGILVIE - I am happy to have a look at it, particularly the menopause space. We forgot the fans. We were going to bring some fans.

Ms JOHNSTON - Touching on an issue and extending an issue that I believe Ms Brown raised earlier in relation to waiting lists, particularly for therapeutic services. My understanding is that Laurel House and SASS have been funded \$770,000 each, which is the total of \$1.54 million to deliver therapeutic services. This is a funding shortfall, they tell me, of \$860, 000 or \$430, 000 each.

This means in real terms, the uplifting of staffing that they were able to achieve during the announcement last year won't be able to be sustained moving forward. Given the wait list in the south and the north-west, they're telling us is around six months, if they are to fully fund, the service will see an increase in wait lists. What are you going to do to try to avoid the wait list from being exacerbated during those times?

Ms OGILVIE - We have touched on this topic a few times but totally appreciate your concern. I'm concerned too, and I care deeply about what's going on and the demand that we see and how we're going to address that. This Budget has been handed down. There is opportunity going forward in future budgets to look at more options.

I have said previously, and to reiterate, the department continues to work with SASS and Laurel House. I've recently met with them. I've received correspondence as well. I have phrased this directly with other ministers also who do take an interest in this area. We want to find a solution to this and we will work with them to find that solution.

Ms JOHNSTON - You probably didn't hear the response to a question I asked in the earlier portfolio with the Police Commissioner in relation to the number of callouts they had in a day. I'll give you the answer. I asked the Police Commissioner how many callouts a day were in response to a family violence incident and they were able to indicate that 23 a day on average is what they receive.

I'm told that the figures are around that only one in five instances are reported to police. There is substantial amount that isn't reported. On those figures you can assume that 92 instances a day of family violence aren't reported to police. If police are getting 23, you can assume that 92 at least aren't reported. That means that there's an enormous pressure on the community sector to respond to those instances, because often people will go to a community sector provider to seek support rather than to the police for a formal justice response.

The funding shortfall is significant. What assurances can you give to the community sector that you understand there is significant pressure on them to deliver services when the government's response is only at the pointy end of the one in five who are fronting up to police

services? How can you give assurances to the community sector that you understand the burden that they have is disproportionate to what the police response is? Does that make sense?

Ms OGILVIE - That was a long question, but I understand the premise. The premise is we have this huge demand and it is a real challenge for everybody in how we tackle this problem and the question of increasing demand and what's being reported, what's not being reported and extrapolating numbers. Very appreciative of all of that. We know that Laurel House and SASS are service providers are at the front line. They know it; they see what's going on and we back them in. My assurance around that is that we truly understand the work they do, how important it is and what needs to be done.

I will sort of again separate out the police portfolio which is not mine, so I don't know about callout numbers and those sorts of things, but I do know that the Arch centres are a good model as well. When we get this multi-disciplinary approach planted into our three regions, it does help. I want all people, all women, all family members, everybody of every gender to be safe at home and on the streets. This is the goal. Violence is unacceptable in all its forms. That is the goal. We are resolute in this effort.

Now I am constrained, like other ministers are, by budgetary pressures. We are doing everything we can with what we've got, but there is hope, and the hope comes by way of the elevation of this national conversation which we've seen right across Australia and globally, but right across Australia recently, to National Cabinet where we have a Premier who has his hand and shoulder to the wheel on this issue and that is really important.

My commitment is to continue to understand what is going on, to work closely with our department who are working closely with the providers and do more. We know there is more to be done. Funding is one thing, but it is a whole of community conversation, and simple things, such as, I think last year, I was out with the Tasmanian Netball League, who'd come up with some ideas about ways that they could participate genuinely in a conversation in an environment that is safe, particularly for women and for young women.

We all know we're all in it together. That's why I'm happy to work collaboratively across parliament on a number of these fronts. Money is one thing, culture is another - leadership, and that's up to all of us.

Ms BROWN - According to your own gender statements, sexual assault in Tasmania is getting worse. Given the shortfall in funding provided by your government, why have you not invested more in therapeutic services and harmful sexual behaviour services?

Ms OGILVIE - To get really specific about your question, are you talking about services as part of corrections or are you talking about generally in the community, because I can't force people to do programs, but what we can do is make sure -

Ms BROWN - I'm asking why haven't you provided more funds for therapeutic services and harmful sexual behaviour services to organisations, given the shortfall?

Ms OGILVIE - SASS and Laurel House in particular? We have had quite a lengthy conversation about this. We have provided the funding that we're able to provide in this budget. The department continues to work closely with them. I did sit with representatives from SASS and Laurel House recently. I invited them one by Zoom and one in the room to talk about this

challenge. I'm on side, I'm wanting to help, I will fight for them as well. This budget has landed, so we are where we are with this round but I truly appreciate the demand that is out there and increasing.

The question is, is it increasing in reporting, also increasing in the levels of sexual violence? I want to find a landing for this and I'm working closely with the department, which I know is actively looking to find a landing for the budget concern that they have.

Ms BROWN - So what is your long-term strategy for Laurel House and SASS to ensure that they are able to deliver these services without the budgetary requirements that you have.

Ms OGILVIE -We are always constrained by budgetary requirements on the government side so there will always be a balancing of what we have against what we need to deliver. But again, it comes to, I think this work that is happening currently within the department to find a landing for them. I'm just really hopeful that with the federal government funding, more money coming through the federal government that we will have more funds to deploy more generally as well. I'm getting nods from the department. Would you like to speak to this a bit?

Ms GRAY - Around the long-term strategy as well. I would point to the collaborative work that's going on around the commission of inquiry and the number of recommendations that I referred to earlier around that, including workforce service gap analysis and future funding needs. That work has to be done in collaboration with government agencies and with the community sector, and the great work that our community sector service providers do. It's part of a \$423 million investment, and as we work out how those recommendations roll out, that work is being done now, so that is part of the longer term planning for a sustainable community services sector, in addition to, as minister has said, the work with the Australian Government on the new National Partnership Agreement for family and domestic violence.

I would also note that the funding that has been provided to SASS and Laurel House is flexible in terms of how they use that funding. There haven't been constraints; we work with the sector to ensure that the funding to them is flexible and streamlined and reduces red tape. It's all part of us growing a sustainable sector that we fund in a way that we can achieve the significant systems and cultural change that's required to address not just family violence, but sexual violence as well.

Ms BROWN - How does the government intend to build trust with victim/survivors within institutions like SASS and Laurel House without maintaining suitable funding for these programs, if you're relying on federal funding?

CHAIR - Last, and then we'll see if we can get to Ms Badger with the time we have left.

Ms OGILVIE - We as a government, with all of our programs, are always welcoming of federal funding. It is important to the state of Tasmania that we do welcome that sort of funding. We've seen some funding recently for the Heart Centre in the north. So, it is good to get federal funding in the door. I understand the desire for everybody to have that security and certainty. I will say again that I completely understand. I will be a voice in support of SASS and Laurel House, particularly around this funding issue, and to the people that use those services, of course. I'm very aware of the sensitive and difficult conversations and support and services that are provided. Very aware of that, and I always seek not to politicise these issues.

We do have a budget constraint. We are working to look at that going forward. I am hopeful that federal government funding will provide that certainty over the longer term, but I'm not able to say yet what that will look like.

Ms BADGER - Just a question around the Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan and what measures you are using to indicate how successful that is to keep it contemporary, noting that there are a lot more indicators than just the wait times of any kind of service that we have. There is, of course, also the outreach programs that they're running, in terms of the prevention space as well.

Ms OGILVIE - So, the 'measuring' question?

Ms BADGER - Yes.

Ms OGILVIE - Let's just see. Perhaps, Mel, you might like to respond to that. I think we do have that.

Ms BADGER - If we run out of time, happy to take it on notice as well.

Ms OGILVIE - We'll see how we go. We're close. We'll see what we can find; there's a lot of paper.

Ms GRAY - Through you, minister. I think, we spoke about this the other day. At a very high level, we've really looked at other jurisdictions in the family and sexual violence sector, in particular Victoria, and learnt from the Victorian experience in relation to their Royal Commission, and monitored its performance as a lesson for the way we embark on reform in the commission of inquiry space. Because there's lots written about their approach to family and sexual violence, rather than being a tick-a-box exercise. So, 100 per cent agree jurisdictions are moving more to embedding long-term systems and cultural change, whether that's through government agencies and through partnering and working differently with the community sector and empowering the community sector organisations and lived experience to do that. The way that we're evaluating the strategy is also linked to the Gender Impact Assessment Toolkit and a framework that's going to be attached to that. So, rather than going from having really small teams trying to be the champions of this from within government or across the community sector, we're going more to a model where we educate and empower others and we partner with others to empower that -

CHAIR - Sorry, I've tried to drag that on as long as I can, sorry. It's a hard cut.

Ms BADGER - I'll just say, given that was the high-end view, if I can get the details that would be fantastic.

Ms GRAY - I can give you the details on the percentage of actions that have been completed against the milestones rather than go through that now.

Ms OGILVIE - Sorry, Chair. Are you able to get that today, Ms Gray?

Ms GRAY - Yes.

CHAIR - The time being 1.09 p.m., time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Science and Technology at 2.00 p.m.

The Committee suspended at 1.09 p.m. to 2 p.m.

DIVISION 9

(Department of Premier and Cabinet)

Output Group 3

Electronic Services for Government Agencies and the Community

CHAIR (Mr Behrakis) - The scrutiny of the Science and Technology portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table.

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. At the table I have Dr Justin Thurley, Tasmanian chief information officer, Digital Strategy and Services, Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPAC). I don't know if that's how it will be any longer. Jenna Cairney, deputy secretary, Business and Jobs, Department of State Growth. We have behind us Malcolm Smith, manager, Tasmanian Government Cyber Security, Digital Strategy and Services, DPAC, Noelene Kelly, deputy secretary, Community and Government Services, DPAC, and Dennis Hendriks, executive director, Business Tasmania, Department of State Growth.

Before I commence, I need to table this document for Ms Badger, as promised earlier.

CHAIR - Thank you. The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Science and Technology is half-an-hour. Would the minister like to make a short opening statement?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes. Last time we came together to discuss this portfolio, I was pleased to advise that our science and technology sectors combined contributed more than \$1 billion in Gross State Product. It's a good amount of money this year. Estimates suggest this figure is around \$2 billion. Of this, around \$300 million can be attributed to the science sector and \$1.7 billion to ICT. What a great area that is, directly employing some 4000 Tasmanians. In science, we're proud to continue our support for events like National Science Week, Science Meets Parliament and the annual STEM Excellence Awards. These events alone saw around 20,000 people get directly involved in science in one form or another. Equally, we're proud to continue to partner with key organisations such as UTAS, CSIRO, the Antarctic Division and Menzies Institute for Medical Research.

We continue to focus on workforce development and growth for ICT. There's around 10,000 Tasmanian technology workers employed across our economy and this number is projected to grow to 12,300. Everybody, we know, will need upscaling in technology as it transforms our economy. That is why we're working closely with industry and the peak representative bodies, TasICT and the Australian Computer Society. In May, we signed the first-ever Tasmanian Technology Industry Skills Compact to shape our future workforce.

We are committed to digital transformation for our government - around \$80.3 million in 2024-25 to support ICT delivery and substantial progress of major actions on the Tasmanian government's digital transformation strategy. Our Digital Future is ensuring fit-for-purpose digital policy, strategy and whole-of-government services. Whole-of-government services

include cybersecurity, data governance, digital priorities, cloud services, digital literacy and inclusion, and digital workforce capability and career pathways within the Tasmanian State Service.

Whilst it was disappointing that the Australian Government was unable to support the connection of our proposed HyperOne subsea cable to Tasmania, the Tasmanian government has committed \$11.5 million towards this cable and the investigation of better connectivity. This investment ensures our telecommunications infrastructure is at a level of quality, reliability and performance required by the Tasmanian community, business and government services. While these opportunities are rare, we are ready to co-invest on new subsea cable proposals if the right opportunity arises.

CHAIR - Noting that there is only half-an-hour on this, I've been trying to be pretty flexible with the committee on times and whatnot, but I will try and keep to the times just so we can get through as much as possible.

Ms FINLAY - Minister, as an indication on how seriously your government, and under your ministership, you take this sector, we've got half-an-hour for scrutiny -

Ms OGILVIE - That's the choice of your committee.

Ms FINLAY - ICT is largely absent from the Budget and the flagship Advanced Technologies Industry Strategy is not funded. STEM is not mentioned, UTAS STEM is not mentioned. There's an emphasis on turbocharging TAFE but ICT is not mentioned. There's no communications infrastructure fund. The Technology Industry Skills Compact's not funded.

And I am not going to let you pass the buck to the federal government on you not fulfilling your election promise to fund the SMAP cable. The Budget does show significant investment in digitising health information. That will see us more heavily rely on the cloud and, therefore, our three submarine cables. From work done by Deloitte in 2022, we know there have been eight disruptions to broadband connectivity caused by incidents with submarine cables in the seven years since 2015. We know that fault and failure events put a share of economic activity dependent on digital connectivity at risk. Based on a moderate event or a catastrophic event, that risk is somewhere between \$51 million and \$1.6 billion. It's been recommended that you improve redundancy in Tasmania in the submarine cable network and strengthen the infrastructure to mitigate these risks.

My question is, given that we know all of that, what are you doing to manage the risk of Basslink turning off, to that failing, given it represents one-third of Tasmania's connectivity for everything, for our phones, for our internet, for our community and for business?

Ms OGILVIE - That had a very long preamble and there were a series of questions. What was your actual question?

Ms FINLAY - The question is what are you doing to manage the risk of Basslink turning off -

Ms OGILVIE - About Basslink or generally?

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Ms FINLAY - No. What are you doing to manage the risk of Basslink turning off, given it represents one-third of Tassie's connectivity for our phones, for our internet, for our community and for business?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. I'm very happy to answer that question. Given the context you set, much of the premise of which I disagree with, I will set some context of my own, then I'll turn to the Basslink question.

I am hypervigilant and a strong advocate for better telecommunications to Tasmania. I've been working very hard on this, as has the department and everybody in the sector, plus industry has been at the table. We want to ensure telecommunications infrastructure is at a level of quality, reliability and performance required by our Tasmanian community, our businesses and government services. As the minister responsible for communications as part of the ICT part of Science and Technology, I sit at the Digital and Data Ministers' table at which I have these conversations. I can assure you -

Ms FINLAY - How many of those have been attended by government in the last three years?

Ms OGILVIE - I can assure you. I'm just answering the first.

Ms FINLAY - Well, don't make statements up at the table. How many of these meetings have been attended by ministers in the last three years?

CHAIR - Ms Finlay, as per the entire week so far, I'm letting members ask follow-up questions. There were interjections during your question and there's interjections now. I appreciate members are mindful of the time we have for this. We'll get through a lot more if we continue the hearing in an orderly fashion, as it has been so far. I'll give you the opportunity to follow up as well, Ms Finlay. Can the minister be heard in silence and then you'll get a chance to follow up.

Ms OGILVIE - As I was saying, it's a very important issue that goes to the very ability of our state to participate in a modern economy right across the nation. Those smaller states and territories do struggle with subsea cable and telecommunications provision. When I'm at those meetings with my colleague ministers and also federal ministers, it is the smaller states and territories that raise their voices in relation to making sure we get a fair go.

At the moment, Tasmania is not getting a fair go. The economic cost of a temporary shutdown of internet services and disruption to broadband connectivity to Tasmania is estimated at \$51 million per day or \$1.6 billion over 31 days. Knowing this, in response, we stepped in and worked with HyperOne, which is Australia's first national fibre backhaul network to explore an additional subsea cable link to Tasmania. The state, at my urging, made a commitment of \$11.5 million to support the project, subject to Australian Government co-investment.

The total project cost was \$177.5 million. The Tasmanian government made a commitment to contribute \$11.5 million, the Australian Government \$53.5 million and the project partner HyperOne was at the table for \$102.5 million. That commitment we've made from a state level stands. The project was rejected by the federal government, despite numerous entreaties by me as an ardent advocate for a new subsea cable. I'm very disappointed that the

federal government, which is responsible for telecommunications federally and in the Constitution, did not stump up.

You've asked a second question in relation to Basslink. I'm advised that APA is currently in negotiations to appoint a commercial operator to lease and operate Basslink. These negotiations are occurring on a commercial-in-confidence basis. I will ask Jenna Cairney if there's anything you would like to add to the subsea cable.

Ms FINLAY - I am satisfied with that answer, given the time we have before us.

CHAIR - It actually is over the three minutes, minister. Sorry. Ms Finlay?

Ms OGILVIE - That's fine, if you don't want more information.

Ms FINLAY - Well, I just think it's interesting with content included in the minister's response, there was no minister at the previous digital ministers' meeting. I'm not actually sure the feds rejected the offer. I would like to see that in writing if you've got something to confirm that and you could table that today.

Ms OGILVIE - I do. I have a letter from them.

Ms FINLAY - I'm wondering whether, as minister, you've heard that the company managing the telecommunications asset for Basslink has gone into administration. Are you across this? From the comments you just made, it sounds like you're not. And more importantly, if you are aware, what are you doing about it? If you're not aware, why?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, of course, I'm aware of what's going on. Comtel is the company to which you refer and I understand that it's in administration and it's on the market. They have the specialist resources and know-how in relation to Basslink's optical equipment, which I understand is Ericsson equipment.

On 5 September 2024, APA advised Comtel entered voluntary administration on 30 August 2024. It's understood that administrators have already received several expressions of interest for the sale of Comtel, but at this stage of process, it cannot be guaranteed that the business will remain a going concern that, itself, continues to provide services to Basslink. APA has advised that if Comtel is unable to provide services and a network failure did occur, commercial services on Basslink may not be able to be restored.

Consequently, the government is working closely with APA to determine a path forward while the administration process runs its course. There are currently three fibre-optic links connecting Tasmania to mainland Australia. Two owned and operated by Telstra, which you probably use yourself, and a third which forms part of the Basslink infrastructure owned by APA Group.

The Basslink fibre-optic cable currently supports Tasmanians through providing a tertiary fibre link to the state, hence mitigating the risk of Tasmania becoming isolated should the two Telstra cables fail - as occurred on 1 March 2022 - providing a commercially independent telecommunications link into the state which is not subject to Telstra pricing and other policies.

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As the Tasmanian government leverages the Basslink fibre-optic cable to support government service provision through its Networking Tasmania agreement with the Field Services Group Pty Ltd, Basslink fibre-optic cable also provides -

Ms FINLAY - Could you just please repeat that last statement?

Ms OGILVIE - The Tasmanian government leverages the Basslink fibre-optic cable to support government service provision through its Networking Tasmania agreement with Field Services Group Pty Ltd and the Basslink fibre-optic cable also provides redundant, for example, non-Telstra, capacity to telecommunication providers who deliver services to Tasmanian businesses and consumers.

Ms FINLAY - In that response, you just agreed that if that connection breaks with Basslink that it won't be repaired so what are you actually doing to ensure that there is a redundancy given that represents one-third of Tasmania's connectivity?

Ms OGILVIE - We have the Telstra cables which are fully in place and if the Basslink cable -

Ms FINLAY - There have been occasions where all of those links have been disrupted at the same time.

CHAIR - Ms Finlay, I'll let you ask a final follow-up. Can you please let the minister answer the question?

Ms OGILVIE - I'll just wait. What's your question?

Ms FINLAY - I'm aware that there's three cables. From old data, with information before, you said that you're investing heavily in health transformation as an example. We're going to be more reliant on these cables. It's already been recommended that you improve the redundancy and invest further in the cables, but this is actually a representation of the risks and the weaknesses in the current assets that we've got.

My question is, other than having conversations, what are you specifically doing to protect us against Basslink going down and not having that third cable, specifically?

Ms OGILVIE - So, there are three cables. Telstra cables are fully managed and that A-grade service that people know and expect from telecommunications providers. The Basslink cable is important and it is Basslink, owned by APH -

Ms FINLAY - APA.

Ms OGILVIE - Sorry, as a separate legal entity to government which is managing that cable.

We know that the service provider that manages, monitors, and provides the spares and management of that cable is now on the market. That is a conversation that is happening between APA and that service provider and perhaps their purchasers, if and when that happens. If it goes down, it will be a problem. I think there's no sugar coating that. We don't want that to happen and, consequently, that is why understanding our telecommunications subsea

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network as I do, I have put a lot of effort - and the department has put a lot of effort - into trying to provide another subsea cable, particularly the HyperOne option with the link and that was rejected by the federal government.

Ms FINLAY - Could you please share with the committee where the \$11.5 million that was previously allocated to the SMAP cable has been reallocated to?

Ms OGILVIE - That's not been reallocated. It's a commitment that's been made and is maintained as a commitment.

Ms BADGER - Minister, the federal government was running matched funding for all states for land-based fibre-optic cables specifically through the NBN. I suspect this is going to be something we'll need to table because it's very specific data. How much funding did Tasmania request through that matched funding scheme in the last decade?

Ms OGILVIE - Match funding for terrestrial fibre?

Ms BADGER - Yes, through the federal government.

Ms OGILVIE - To get the actual figure we'd have to seek that information, so how many years?

Ms BADGER - The last decade, so 10.

Ms OGILVIE - The last 10 years? We will take that on notice.

Ms BADGER - Great. Thank you. Back to the cables, this is the second private cable that has been rejected by either the state or federal government in the last 10 years.

Ms OGILVIE - Federal government.

Ms BADGER - Yes, I'm really looking forward to that letter being tabled because some claims have been made publicly that it was Tasmania that did it, not the federal government, so we'd like to clarify that.

Ms OGILVIE - I can clarify that.

CHAIR - Sorry, minister. Can interjections both ways stop?

Ms BADGER - The \$11.5 million remains as a commitment moving forward, but what other contingency plans do you have in place? For example, the old technology of the cables that we have means that there's not a circuit breaker in between, as you might see in more contemporary cables, so if a section of it does break, a boat has to go out and then it's going to take some time to try to fix it. Is that on hand? What's the Tasmanian government doing to ensure that if that goes down - bearing in mind we're only two failures away from the stone age in this state - what is in place?

Ms OGILVIE - Right, well, I don't think we're two failures away from the stone age.

Ms BADGER - I hate to break it to you, we are.

Ms OGILVIE - If I may respond, I think we have a matrixed level of services that are provided to the state, including satellite, Starlink, subsea cable, terrestrial cable; it's a complex network that we have in Tasmania.

In relation to the cables that are owned, at the heart of this problem is the fact that small states and territories that don't have deep commercial environments into which private sector telecommunications providers can come and get a commercial return on that investment, we are stuck with what we've got. It's not just us, it's the NT, SA, and rural and regional Australia is suffering from this problem. We're entering a zone where we've got a two-speed telecommunications economy in Australia and we know that to lift Tasmania up right across science and technology, education, environment, research, ICT, everything that we do in government, we need to be able to participate in that digital economy 2.0.

I'm going to say again, the federal government, which is responsible for telecommunications, we are urging them - and I will continue to urge them - to come to the table to help us find a solution to this challenge. Tasmania put \$11.5 million on the table. Our proposal was rejected. I haven't given up. We will keep going to find a solution.

Ms BADGER - That didn't really answer my question. What's on hand contingency-wise and mending the cables if one goes down?

Ms OGILVIE - I am in communication with them directly. They own the cable and they're responsible for managing the cable.

Ms BADGER - Okay.

CHAIR - Do you have another question, Ms Badger?

Ms FINLAY - Can I just ask exactly in the budget where the \$11.5 million is allocated to the cable? Can I ask a follow-up question, given that you've declared \$11.5 million publicly, we know that a moderate risk or a catastrophic risk would be between \$51 million and \$1.6 billion to the Tasmanian economy, do you think that \$11.5 million is reasonable?

Ms OGILVIE - Have you finished? I didn't want to jump in.

Ms FINLAY - Yes.

Ms OGILVIE - I just want to make sure we're not conflating the \$11.5 million, which is about a particular subsea cable project. That commitment remains. It's not in the Budget. It's a commitment.

Ms FINLAY - No, it's not in the Budget, so I asked that question previously and I will put on the record that the minister said that it was in the Budget.

Ms OGILVIE - Did I?

Ms FINLAY - Yes, you did.

Ms OGILVIE - I don't think I did.

Ms FINLAY - So, the \$11.5 million is not in the Budget? It is just words.

Ms OGILVIE - It's a commitment that has been made.

Ms FINLAY - How can it be a commitment if it is not in the Budget?

CHAIR - Ms Finlay, I allowed you to make that clarification. Can we stop with the interjections? You'll be able to ask follow-up questions.

Ms FINLAY - It's not a commitment if it's not in the Budget.

CHAIR - Every time I have to call people to order, that's less time that we have to take and answer questions. Minister.

Ms OGILVIE - We have an \$11.5 million commitment that the Tasmanian government has made towards a particular project that now cannot be progressed because the federal government refused to come to the party. I think that is unacceptable. It is absolutely within the federal government's remit on telecommunications for which they are responsible in the Australian Constitution to sort out this issue for small states that cannot afford to provide a commercial environment which attracts these projects. So, it is a challenge and it is a problem and I would really hope that a good opposition, a Labor opposition with a Labor federal government, would help.

Ms FINLAY - So, my question to you, minister, I have now confirmed that there is not \$11.5 million in the Budget, so, it cannot be a commitment. It might be an announcement, but as we know the announcements, if government, mean nothing without action or allocations in the budget, and I refer you again to the evidence that says that the risks to Tasmania are between \$51 million and \$1.6 billion. So, how is it that you believe that, as has been recommended in proving the redundancy and investing further in critical infrastructure, that that is reasonable given the risks and the quantum of the risk to Tasmania? You do not have one dollar in the budget for it.

CHAIR - Ms Finlay.

Ms OGILVIE - Minister, we have an \$11.5 million commitment -

Ms FINLAY - But not one dollar in the budget.

CHAIR - Order, look we have gotten to the second last session of the week and I have not had to read from the script about giving formal warnings to members. I know there is only a little bit of time left. The interjections are making it very difficult for Hansard and making it very difficult for us to get through with questions and answer. As I have been doing, I have been letting people ask follow-up questions if they are not satisfied with answers. It is at that point that I will either start to give proper warnings to members or I will take interjections towards people's question allocation. That is where we are at. Ms Finlay, ask your question and then can we have a question and an answer without any interjections, please?

PUBLIC

Ms FINLAY - Thank you, Chair. Could I please request that you table the document from the federal government rejecting the position of the cable? Could you please table that for the committee?

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister. I do not have it in my hot little hands, but we can definitely table that.

Ms FINLAY - Is that something we might be able to get before the end of the day?

Ms CAIRNEY - I would say so.

Ms OGILVIE - I think so.

Ms BADGER - Minister, as you would be aware, the federal government is currently being encouraged to review their connectivity guarantee, which is currently through Telstra, and based on landlines, for those who remember what they are. What are you doing to encourage that review, specifically for Tasmania? We know that we also currently have the Black Spot program and the independent investigation that went into that. It is a serious problem in Tasmania - so, what steps have you been taking with the federal government?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, we have a program around that. I will actually ask Dr Thurley - sorry, wrong way, Ms Cairney - to talk about the Black Spot program in particular and, sorry, the first piece of it was?

Ms BADGER - I after what are you doing working with the federal government. I understand Tasmania's program.

Ms CAIRNEY - Sorry, so specifically on the current federal program, I do not have any information on that to hand.

Ms BADGER - Are you working with them on the improvements? That is the question

Ms CAIRNEY - I would need to check that with the rest of the team.

Ms BADGER - So, we do not know if we are working with the federal government?

Ms OGILVIE - The answer is yes, we do work with the federal government. The question is at which layer. So, as a minister, of course, at the digital data minister's meeting -

Ms BADGER - I will just reiterate on the review of the connection guarantee.

Ms OGILVIE - We will be able to table something for you. Dr Thurley is looking at that now.

Ms BADGER - Thank you, I appreciate that, and my second question is: there have been quite a few local governments that are concerned with the lack of land-based fibre rollout that have been proposing to me, as a new member of parliament - so, I would hope also to you, as the new minister - to run conduit under new roads so that we are prepared. It is a very straightforward way to do it, we are seeing a lot of new works being done. What are you doing

to work with State Growth or the Infrastructure minister to see that that happens and that we have the infrastructure in place?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, thank you. That is a question for the Infrastructure minister about conduit and pit and pipe work.

Ms BADGER - Sorry, I am asking what are you doing to advocate for it as minister.

Ms OGILVIE - Fortunately, I have a close working relationship with the minister. It is not always as simple as saying we need to run more conduit, do more pit and pipe. Telstra owns the pit and pipe network basically in Tasmania. They licence that so you are able to access that, for good reasons. There is some complexity, I believe, around other cable networks that we own that are subterrestrial, but some of the most interesting and important work that we have been doing is around telecommunications fibre that is aerial. So, I guess, in taking that conversation up, I would be somewhat agnostic to the method by which the fibre connectivity is delivered, recognising that aerial fibre is probably a lot cheaper to deliver to households. Then we have NBN networks and others as well. I appreciate your question about new roads and putting conduit in, I just don't have the answer to what their current program of work is. If it makes sense to do it in a telco context, we're very happy to take that up.

Ms CAIRNEY - The team has just let us know - I just wanted to confirm and put on *Hansard* - that the department is engaged with the federal government in relation to the regional digital infrastructure programs and that's an officer level within the department.

Ms OGILVIE - And that feeds into the Regional Connectivity Ministers' Roundtable that I sit at at that ministerial level.

Ms FINLAY - Can you please confirm, minister, that there are no funds allocated to the Advanced Technology Industries Strategy in the Budget?

Ms OGILVIE - My recollection, and coming back in as minister, is that the funding for the program of work that sits under that is in other outputs in business areas already funded in other outputs. So, it doesn't have a headline figure.

Ms FINLAY - Can you indicate how much that is in the other outputs for me?

Ms OGILVIE - I would actually have to seek that information. I don't think I have it. Let me check if I might have it. I don't know that I have it detailed.

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

Ms OGILVIE - Well, let's just see if I can give it to you now. I don't think I have a detailed breakdown of what that is.

Ms FINLAY - The other question really is whether there's any funding in the Budget for the Technology Industry Skills Compact.

Ms OGILVIE - The Technology Industry Skills Compact is Mr Ellis.

Ms FINLAY - Are you aware if there's any funding in it?

Ms OGILVIE - I think you would have to ask Mr Ellis about that. Yes, we can talk to the projects for this year.

Ms FINLAY - Just before we do, just my final question, because we might run out of time, is: do you make a commitment to personally attending the next digital ministers meeting since we didn't have a minister at the last one?

Ms OGILVIE - I love attending those meetings and I have a lot of friends there, so, I'd be delighted to be there.

Ms FINLAY - Well, it's not a social order. I'm actually more interested if you will attend.

CHAIR - Order, Ms Finlay.

Ms OGILVIE - I've given you the answer.

Ms CAIRNEY - There is \$30,000 committed in the Budget for TasICT and that is earmarked as part of the industry compact. There also has been, as part of the election commitments in the Budget, \$200,000 over two years for the Telstra tower at St Helens. I'm just going to look at the man in finance to make sure I don't get this wrong, but I can just confirm the total funding for the science and technology team for this year is about \$4.5 million, which is up from \$3.9 million last year. Just, in terms of the advanced tech strategy, while that is under development, there will be elements of that strategy that we deliver upon in different areas. It's a strategy that needs to talk to our advanced manufacturing plan, our defence industries strategy. But, while that is under development this year, and we really hope to complete that work as soon as possible, we're engaged with stakeholders. Once that strategy is finalised, there'll be an action plan that accompanies that and that will be subject to future budget submissions and discussions.

CHAIR - So, just under or over a minute left.

Ms OGILVIE - May I just finish on that question please if I could. It's on the Regional Connectivity Ministers' Roundtable. I'll be there on 23 October and, of the four meetings during my time as Minister of Science and Technology at the digital data ministers meetings, I attended three of four and I'm looking forward to attending the next one.

CHAIR - Do you want to try?

Ms BADGER - Is our tech sector 2030 Strong?

Ms OGILVIE - Our policy is 2030 Strong. We have a strong plan to deliver and let me say that this this sector has the potential -

Members interjecting.

CHAIR - Order.

Ms OGILVIE - I'm glad you find it so funny but it actually is really serious. The economic thing -

Ms FINLAY - Of all the things we have discussed, it is clear that our plan is actually not that strong in terms of protecting our -

CHAIR - Order. The time being 2:30 p.m., the time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear is Arts.

The Committee suspended from 2.30 p.m. to 2.34 p.m.

Division 7
Output group 6
Heritage

CHAIR - I will start the broadcast. The scrutiny of the Arts portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard.

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you very much, Chair. I have at the table Brett Stewart, Deputy Secretary, Culture, Arts and Sport, and Dr David Sudmalis, Director of Arts Tasmania, previous acting director of secretary for culture, arts and sport, and then I have some others in the room whom I'll introduce if we need to bring them forward.

CHAIR - Okay, great, thank you, minister. The time scheduled for the Estimates of the Minister for Arts is one hour. Would the minister like to make a short opening statement?

Ms OGILVIE - Sure. This is a sector that I know we all love and it is a sector that expresses who we are as Tasmanians, who we want to be as Tasmanians, where we have come from. It unlocks creativity and imagination, brings people out, brings people together. And what a blessing that is after pandemic times, to see the fun of going to a concert and attending perhaps the TSO or going to a pub and listening to some music.

It's the simple things that matter. And, of course, the arts sector is also an industry and also an employer and it's achieving great things. Last year, Arts Tasmania supported paid employment for more than 3300 artists and arts and cultural workers across the state and almost 430,000 people attended arts and cultural events across the year.

On screen, a great sector, we're achieving major ongoing success. For the second year running, we have broken the record for screen industry expenditure in Tasmania and we have invested more than \$2.7 million in the 2024-25 Budget for the screen industry. We've also been focusing on extending our screen reach and, excitingly, this weekend we are hosting - I hope to see you there, Mr Fairs, I see you smiling - the first ever Tasmanian video game development expo, Level Up Tasmania, at Princes Wharf No. 1. The showcase opens tomorrow at midday and all events are free. Remember to register, though. All events are free. I encourage you to go online, register and stop by to see the amazing work of Tasmanian games developers.

TMAG has also has had a hugely successful year with a total visitor engagement exceeding 510,000, including almost a quarter of a million visiting in person. That's really quite remarkable and continuing to play an important role in telling the Tasmanian story.

Overall, the Tasmanian government is dedicated to supporting the arts, as seen by two major election commitments that are reflected in this new budget, \$1 million dedicated to a youth arts grant program and a \$1.5 million uplift for arts organisations.

I really look forward to seeing our Tasmanian artists, performers, musicians and writers create and grow. Digital artists are a great emerging piece of this puzzle and I'm really pleased to be here to speak about supporting that sector today, which I know you all also love.

Ms BROWN - Minister, I believe you met with the Theatre Council of Tasmania recently and they confessed to you that without government funding they would not be able to continue providing services to Tasmania and, as you know, the TCT provides our vibrant, dynamic and extensive theatre community support, including the coordination of the Tasmanian Theatre Awards, as well as facilitating the judging process for them. I'm just wondering, why has no funding been provided to them in this current Budget, considering that they came to you in such dire need?

Ms OGILVIE - Theatre is so important, I really get that and I would love to see the emerging works that are happening. It's the kind of art form that provides so many opportunities for creative people, not just in acting but around that as well - from hair and make-up to set design to digital to sound and music and light. I understand the great importance of this, and kids love it as well. So, that really sings to my heart. I will and I have met with the Tasmanian Theatre Council and we have put some moves into place. I'll ask the department to speak to this. I think there might be some positive feedback.

Mr SUDMALIS - Thank you for the question. The Theatre Council of Tasmania, whilst being eligible to receive support at any time through Arts Tasmania's competitive grant programs, has over many years not, in fact, applied to Arts Tasmania for support. However, we have engaged in a number of what I would characterise as highly productive conversations about what we might do in future.

In the government's election commitment that provides \$1.5 million uplift to arts organisations, whilst there isn't a direct line to the Theatre Council of Tasmania, there is an opportunity for the Theatre Council of Tasmania to apply for something we're calling a strategic initiative in theatre for a peak body to undertake a piece of research for us, to continue to deliver capacity and professional development opportunities for us, and to promote, acknowledge and reward the work of theatre practitioners in Tasmania. In order to qualify for that, any eligible peak theatre body representative of the Tasmanian sector will be eligible to apply. The Theatre Council of Tasmania is one of those organisations that might be able to do that. We look forward to releasing those guidelines once they are approved. They're in the system and awaiting final sign-off.

Ms BROWN - What's the time line for that sign-off?

Mr SUDMALIS - We would expect the final sign-off to be imminent, probably within the next week to 10 days. We will then have a program open for a short period of time, then under assessment, and we would look to enter into an agreement with the recipient organisation by the end of the year.

Ms BROWN - Okay. Minister, can you please advise how much funding is spent on the arts per capita?

Ms OGILVIE - We probably have that information.

Mr SUDMALIS - We were asked this question yesterday. I didn't have those numbers on me yesterday but I do have them now. There are two sets of numbers I would alert you to and a qualifying statement. The source of these figures is through the statistics working group of the cultural ministers' meeting, which is a representative body that meets once, perhaps twice per year of all arts and cultural ministers across Australia and New Zealand. They have funded, between all of the states and territories and New Zealand, a statistics working group that works through numbers such as this.

The last complete set of data is for the 2021-22 financial year. There are two sets of data here that might be of interest. Arts, including heritage and libraries, for Tasmania is \$166 per head and arts, excluding libraries and heritage, is \$48.67 per head.

Ms ROSOL - A few years ago, we saw a very welcome commitment from the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery (TMAG) and Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery (QVMAG) to return rock art stolen from the far north-west coast of the state. Early last year, they were finally returned to Country. After meticulous research and preparation, they were repatriated to the exact same place from which they were cut. This was a really profound moment for palawa, the institutions and the broader Tasmanian community, which took years of advocacy, appeal and action.

TMAG holds other cultural material of the palawa and the case is just as strong for that material to be returned. Has TMAG provided a complete list of palawa cultural material in its possession to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community? And if it hasn't, can that happen?

Ms OGILVIE - It's a really good question and it goes to the heart of why we're here, I think. TMAG has been working closely with communities across Tasmania to ensure strong representation of Tasmania's First Nations people's cultural material in all of its programs and also working closely on repatriation issues. I did speak about this yesterday but I don't think you were in the session. It's not just cultural heritage objects. There are also human remains. The human remains, in particular, may have come from elsewhere internationally. It's quite a complex process they're going through.

TMAG returned the Preminghana petroglyphs to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community team. TMAG wishes to return and help with those transitions and wants to work with Aboriginal Tasmanians to ensure that happens. The Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania has requested the return of the Greens Creek petroglyph. The exact process for the return of that petroglyph and a petroglyph from Sundown Point is still being investigated. That's one underway.

The return of the Preminghana petroglyphs followed successful consultations with the community and a permit process. The community collected the petroglyphs from TMAG and QVMAG on 23 November 2022 and they were taken to the car park at Preminghana. Then we understand they were put back into place.

As somebody who is a little bit obsessed with cultural heritage and the management thereof in museums, I've taken a deep dive into this question of how best to treat cultural heritage we hold that is not our own or perhaps should be returned to third parties. It is an issue

that is being worked on by museums globally, certainly across Australia. Dialogue between museums, between the federal government and museums, and also between nations, is occurring to make these things happen.

I have been advised that an audit was done on holdings. My understanding is that the museum is very warmly working with those who wish to have things returned so we can do this carefully and well. But it is no small task.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. Minister, I come from Bass. In my electorate, there's the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, which has an impressive collection which, I believe, is one of the largest in Australia. They're doing a lot of work on strategy and planning so they can be the best regional gallery in the country.

However, being in Launceston, they're not far from kanamaluka and they sit on a flood plain where there's a risk of floods. We know that with climate change and the increasing frequency of floods the risk of flooding at QVMAG is very high and increasing in terms of climate projections. That could potentially knock out some of the collections there and cause damage to them. Are you aware of that risk, does it concern you, and are you engaged in seeking to find a solution for that risk for the collections?

Ms OGILVIE - I recently had the great honour of visiting QVMAG and meeting the senior leadership team, and what a marvellous experience it was. The work that's going into the strategic, the thought leadership about what QVMAG can and should be going forward is phenomenal. There are lessons we could learn here from that work, which was presented with some beautiful documents that were very intelligently designed. I wasn't specifically aware about the floodplain issue. QVMAG is a joint venture with the council. We put some money into it as well. I am concerned if there is an issue around potential impacts to holdings. It would be something I expect the senior management of QVMAG to be across. I encourage them to reach out to me if there is something I can do. I was not aware that was a major problem, but it may well be.

Ms ROSOL - My understanding is that they've got some solid plans for shifting that solution. Would you support those solutions?

Ms OGILVIE - Storage solutions, are you suggesting?

Ms ROSOL - Yes, so would you support -

CHAIR - Sorry, I appreciate we need to go back and forth about getting clarification but, for Hansard, can we try to have one person speak at a time, please?

Ms OGILVIE - Certainly. I'm always happy to help any arts organisation think through what needs to be thought through as to what that would look like. I would lean on the department for that engagement. Maybe they're already aware of this issue. If not, we can engage.

Ms ROSOL - Great, thank you.

Mrs PENTLAND - I, too, want to raise some concern in and around the theatre council. I know they met with you on 4 July, outlining their financial challenges. I know they're going

to run out of funds this month. I understand you've got this strategic initiative arts grant program now going for \$1.5 million, but I think we all know that's going to have a huge turnaround time as far as people applying for that grant. Could you give us some more information around the grant. Given the fact that they, you said yourself, are a not-for-profit and they haven't ever had funding in the past, and after 14 years of operating as a not-for-profit organisation, is there something in the Budget that could help them out in this dire time?

Ms OGILVIE - Yeah, absolutely. I'm very aware of those issues, very supportive of theatre in Tasmania, and I just see it bursting with creativity everywhere, particularly I have to say our schools which are doing amazing productions and it's such a good tradition in Tasmania and seeing those kids go through and have those opportunities in professional and amateur theatre, so very keen to help.

I think we have heard a little bit from Mr Sudmalis around what we've been able to conceptualise in the budget and to allocate some funds towards a peak body piece of work that certainly the Theatre Council could apply for. But I hear from your question that there is urgency specifically; did you say the next month?

Mrs PENTLAND - Yeah, they're going to run out of funds this month.

Ms OGILVIE - I might just ask Dave Sudmalis, if you might, to speak to that. You're probably aware of the circumstances.

Mr SUDMALIS - Thank you, minister, and through you, thank you for raising this issue. The Arts Tasmania team is across the need for timely support of the Theatre Council of Tasmania.

There are a number of things that I would add to the context around this. The first is to, if you'll beg my indulgence, suggest that the Theatre Council hasn't received any funds from us before. They have received some funds, very small amounts of funding through an industry development program to support some of the work that they do in providing scholarships for young Tasmanians to undertake other professional development activities. They haven't come to us in the competitive grant sense, if I can make that distinction.

I think the other distinction to be made is that, and this may sound pedantic, Arts Tasmania is, of course, not able to provide funds that is not in receipt of itself and doesn't have. Now that budgets are coming to us, we will be able to do that it. It would not have been proper, or legal, I suspect, for us to do that before now.

The other thing, on the back of the intelligence that you've provided, we will quite possibly need to undertake a little bit of financial due diligence there to ensure that under the *Corporations Act* we are indeed able to enter into an agreement with the Theatre Council, that is, ensuring that they are not trading as an insolvent entity. Timeliness is important and the right data to hand is equally important and I will be sure to progress that.

Mrs PENTLAND - Just expand on the \$1.5 million opportunity that the strategic initiative arts program, your grant program that you were talking about before. What is the turnaround time for that? When will that be up and running, when will applications close, and when can people expect funds in their bank account for operations?

Mr SUDMALIS - Through you, minister, that's yet to be determined. It will be a quick turnaround. The guidelines have not yet been approved as they need to be approved by the minister under the terms of the *Cultural and Creative Industries Act 2017*. The reason the minister has not approved them is because I only finished writing them yesterday, minister, so I thought I should just make that clear. The minister will consider the proposals that the Arts Tasmania team has put forward with regards to eligibility around that and other measures that are to be undertaken under that election commitment. We are not going to sit on it. We want to get that money out into the sector as quickly as possible.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can you share with the committee how investment in the screen industry benefits Tasmania?

Ms OGILVIE - Certainly can, one of my favourite areas. Tasmanian Government support of the screen production industry has led to tremendous success in the 2023-24 year and it's positioned for further success in coming years. We have invested \$2.782 million in this 2024-25 Budget for the screen industry and Screen Tasmania will administer \$1 million to implement the Island Screen Incentive which will provide a 10 per cent rebate on Tasmanian expenditure on a scripted screen production of up to \$500,000. This program is designed to attract large budget shows to the state and is projected to attract a conservative estimate of \$10 million of expenditure on Tasmanian goods and services. This covers expenditure in the state on items directly related to the production such as accommodation, cast and crew, locations, technicians and goods providers all over the state, and this is all new money for Tasmania - money originating out of state but spent here.

We know that investment in the screen industry provides a significant return for our state through the creation of jobs and through the influx of spending on Tasmanian goods and services and one of the best examples which I know we're all familiar with is the TV series *Bay of Fires*. In 2023, the locally-produced first season of the comedy drama series was the most watched drama on the ABC - go Tassie - and the Tasmanian government has provided support over several years along the development journey of *Bay of Fires*, including project development support, training grants, and funds for an entry-level crew training attachment program which is great to bring the young ones through, adding up to \$1.7 million. In that time, it is estimated the production has spent more than \$7.5 million on Tasmanian goods and services and provided in excess of 120 jobs for local cast and crew. We note that a majority of this spend has been in regional areas of the west coast with filming taking place in the winter when tourism numbers and jobs typically fuelled by visitors are at a low and this means more and better-paying jobs, roofs overhead, food on the table for those working on these productions.

With the increasing popularity of Tasmania as a tourist destination and its growing reputation as a viable shooting location for blue-chip comedies, dramas and documentaries, it just makes good business sense to continue to provide support and we cannot underestimate the value of the Tasmania that we know and love of having our beautiful landscapes, rich stories and unique talent broadcast around the world. Great question, Mr Fairs.

Ms BROWN - I'm about to ask some heritage questions if you'd like to bring any Heritage people in.

Ms OGILVIE - Are we finished with Arts?

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Does anyone else have any pressing questions on Arts or are we happy to go to Heritage?

Ms OGILVIE - We can go to Heritage.

CHAIR - Great.

Ms OGILVIE - We'll do a swap over.

Ms BROWN - Am I right to ask my question?

CHAIR - Yes, because you might have to restate it so if you could just wait one second, we'll get organised.

CHAIR - Minister, please introduce the people on the table with you.

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, I'm happy to do that. Just before we do, I note that I have the correspondence regarding the rejection by the federal government of our proposed project.

We have with us Mr Jason Jacobi, thank you for attending. Melissa Ford, Heritage Tasmania, Director; Michael Giudici, Acting General Manager, Surveyor General. Thank you.

Ms BROWN - Minister, for the first time since the heritage act was proclaimed in Tasmania, Tasmania doesn't have a heritage minister. Why not?

Ms OGILVIE - I sit here as the Heritage minister to answer questions.

Ms BROWN - Not on your portfolio.

Ms OGILVIE - Well, I'll do my best to answer your questions.

Ms BROWN - Okay. Why isn't it on your titles?

Ms OGILVIE - Why isn't it on my business card? I'm just doing the work. I just want to work. I love heritage, I'm here to provide the answers and I'll do my best to assist.

CHAIR - Another question?

Ms BROWN - Great. I'm glad to hear that you love heritage, so why are you allowing savage cuts to the Heritage budget?

Ms OGILVIE - You might have to give me some more information about what you propose 'savage' cuts to be.

Ms BROWN - The forward Estimates are dreadful for Heritage Tasmania. Which positions at Heritage Tasmania will be cut?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. I will ask Mr Jacobi to speak to this.

PUBLIC

Mr JACOBI - If you'd like to indulge me. I can read through the budget efficiency dividend. Is that what you're specifically referring to?

Ms OGILVIE - Feels like it. Maybe start there.

Mr JACOBI - Alright.

Ms BROWN - We'll see what comes up from it.

Mr JACOBI - The 2023-24 Budget indicated the government will seek to achieve operating efficiencies while protecting frontline services, and in my department the efficiency dividend equates to a total of \$1.7 million in 2024-2025, increasing to \$3.4 million in 2025-26 and \$5.1 million in 2026-27. To give you an understanding of how that relates across the whole department, that represents approximately 0.53 per cent of the department's total budget in the first year, increasing to approximately 1.9 per cent in 2026-27.

Firstly, I'd like to say that I believe the savings are achievable and will not compromise the department's capability or the priority initiatives that we've been tasked with by this government, or the core and essential services that we currently provide to the Tasmanian community.

We've looked hard at where we can make savings, as we do every year to be more sustainable and efficient in our operations. We'll achieve these savings through a variety of measures, but those measures will be applied across the whole department. All areas of the department will contribute in some way to meeting these targets, but, most importantly, my executive team and I will be ensuring that these measures do not impact on the wellbeing of staff or compromise public good, or in any way compromise our long-term organisational capability.

Ms BROWN - What does that mean? You said frontline staff will be supported - there'll be no cuts to our frontline staff?

Mr JACOBI - To be very clear, frontline services will be preserved. We will capture our savings largely through vacancies in what I call natural attrition. Natural attrition are vacancies that occur each and every day across the agency. They're an important savings tool, and they occur when staff are transferred or are redeployed to other departments; they may be assigned alternative duties; they may leave or resign for other opportunities elsewhere.

Ms BROWN - Vacancy control.

Mr JACOBI - No, I wouldn't call it vacancy control.

Ms BROWN - I would.

Mr JACOBI - It's not a vacancy control process and it will not result in staff job loss. Nor will it impact on the delivery of government priorities. This really is simply capturing any savings that accrue when a position becomes vacant. It takes time to recruit a position and we're in a particularly competitive market. So, whether that recruitment takes a week or three months, the vacancy that arises will contribute to our savings target.

I think it's really important to take this opportunity to mention that we deliver a number of frontline services across the whole department, be that our biosecurity inspectors, our rangers at visitor centres, our laboratory testing scientists. I don't like to classify those as frontline positions, but they are frontline services, and my staff and I are very conscious of the importance of recruiting to those positions quickly, but we need to consider every position on its own merit and the importance at a particular point in time. We do that now and we'll continue to do that.

Ms OGILVIE - If I could just add, because I wasn't certain when you're asking the question, if you were also wanting to know about the funding for the heritage sector grants, which is built into the Budget and you'll see that ends. I think part of your question might have been around that, so I can provide you some information on that.

The 2023-24 State Budget allocated, happily, \$4.5 million of new funding over three years to support Tasmania's historic heritage sector and to revitalise our unique properties, which are key drivers of visitation to the state. This is known as the Built Heritage Grant Scheme, which you will see in the budget administered by Heritage Tasmania and it's a major component of this funding package.

The grant scheme comprises two programs: conservation and activation grants. Around \$1.5 million was allocated across both programs for successful applicants all over Tasmania, and the activation grant recipients were announced in May this year. It's run by a grants assessment panel, but the \$4.5 million is over the three years. At the conclusion of that, we would have to reassess whether we're able or would like to do another grant round in a similar vein or will we look at things from a different perspective? So, I think that also addresses that question.

Ms BROWN - Can you guarantee that not one staff member will lose their job at Heritage Tasmania?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, I'm advised. Mr Jacobi has advised me. We guarantee that.

Ms ROSOL - Minister, The goods shed is now heritage listed and Heritage Tasmania's works manual unequivocally states that relocating a significant structure will, in most circumstances, be unacceptable. Location and setting context are an important part of a cultural heritage listing and moving the goods shed to make way for a stadium is, according to its nominator, unacceptable. Minister, we've learnt that moving the goods shed is unfunded and an option is to pull it down, store it, re-erect it some time in the future, jammed in under the stadium and Cenotaph hill.

Minister, there are funds in the Budget for a variety of heritage-related outputs including supporting Tasmania's built heritage, but can you rule out using any heritage-related funding in the Budget to move the goods shed or will it be all funded by Macquarie Point Development Corporation?

Ms OGILVIE - I do think we have some updated information on this and - are you able to assist me?

Ms FORD - The Budget that funds Heritage Tasmania and the activities of the Tasmanian Heritage Council are not designed for anything to do with what would be happening

at Macquarie Point other than the funding of the work of the team in my works team to assess the submission and inform the Heritage Council's submission to the Tasmanian Planning Commission's integrated impact assessment of the proposal. So, I think your question seems to be saying: is some of the money going to be used? The answer is no.

Ms ROSOL - Thank you. What do you think of relocating the historic heritage-listed building to make way for a structure that's got no heritage values and will have further heritage impacts, including on the war memorial, the Cenotaph? What are your thoughts on that?

Ms OGILVIE - The protection of Tasmanian heritage is a very important thing and we balance that with the needs of a growing community and a growing sector.

The work I know that the Macquarie Point Development Corporation has been doing, particularly in relation to heritage assessments - and specifically I'm thinking about Aboriginal cultural heritage and other overlays - I think that has been quite well researched and well done. In relation, as we've said, to the costs of dealing with cultural heritage issues on site, that is one for the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and Department of State Growth.

I think Mel was also going to add a little bit more information about the process and then I will top and tail that on the way back.

Ms FORD - The process that we've been made aware of from the Tasmanian Planning Commission is:

The project of state significance process is outside of the *Historical Cultural Heritage Act* and the Tasmanian Heritage Council will not be making a statutory determination under that process. The Tasmanian Planning Commission has advised that the Macquarie Point stadium assessment process will be a 12-month process from the date of acceptance of the applicant's submission.

We've been advised that has happened as of today:

As an agency with a relevant interest, the Tasmanian Heritage Council will have the opportunity for input at several stages, the first of them being a high level response within 28 days of notification of acceptance of the applicant's submission.

Which is now, today.

The second stage will be where the planning commission's assessment panel will engage with technical experts in heritage matters to inform its draft integrated assessment report. And that, in my team, will be our Heritage Tasmania works team and they have that necessary technical expertise.

The third stage will be an invitation for public submissions in response to the Planning Commission assessment panel's draft integrated impact assessment report, and we have been advised that the planning commission will also conduct hearings as part of that process.

So, that's the process as we understand it.

Ms OGILVIE - You did ask what my personal view was and I'm happy to share some thoughts with you. As I move around the nation and look at this issue that every country has in relation to built heritage and how we protect it and how we maintain it - falling-in roofs, very expensive.

Tasmania being a heritage state, I'm more and more drawn to what I think is bit of a global movement around activation of heritage sites. We're doing a huge amount of work on this to provide opportunities for those who own heritage buildings or care about heritage buildings to do more to derive commercial revenue from them - for example, Woolmers - to be able to buy a ticket and go in and have a look at it, those sorts of things.

Many different good ideas are around. In relation to the goods shed, I think about activation and think about ways of preserving cultural heritage. Getting that balance right is very important and I know that the Tasmanian Heritage Council has not precluded it being moved as part of its perspective on appropriate secure stewardship of that building. I just want to be in the centre with this. Let's see what the proposal becomes. Let's see what the Macquarie Point corporation actually proposes to do. I certainly have a keen eye on it.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, are you concerned about governance arrangements at the Heritage Council?

Ms OGILVIE - The Heritage Council, yes. I have some issues that I think we have spoken about - now forgetting who was there - yesterday in the Legislative Council. I'm sorry. It's all blurring into one. Governance issues come up from time to time. We did have dialogue yesterday evening about particular issues relating to training, a review of particular decisions that were made by people.

I think we have - and I will ask the department to add some value to this - but we are currently rewriting and negotiating the statement of expectations. This is the document by which we agree how we're going to go forward together. Governance is important. Having said that, I think Jason Jacobi might be able to add some value on what we have done and are doing.

Mr JACOBI - Thank you, minister. I thank the member for the question. I wish to advise the committee of a correction to a statement that was made at the heritage Estimates hearing yesterday. The committee was advised by the minister the internal review of the department was underway. However, it has in fact been completed. I'll expand on that if you like.

Ms OGILVIE - My apologies.

Mr JACOBI - In undertaking a review of the governance arrangements, I appointed an independent expert in this field, Mr Frank Neasey, and he provided me with advice in relation to the particular review of the governance policies and practices of the Heritage Council.

Mr Neasey's report was provided to the department on 17 June 2024. In the course of his investigations and inquiries, it would be normal for us to provide any relevant information of any investigations that are undertaken to the Integrity Commission if we believe them to be relevant or if they were requested. But, in this case, the process that Mr Neasey undertook related to matters involving the Heritage Council processes, in particular on governance and the declaration of interests and the induction of new members.

I'm pleased to advise that those matters have been incorporated, as the minister outlined, into an updated statement of expectations, and that's now been forwarded to the chair of the Heritage Council for consideration at their October meeting.

Once the updated statement has been considered by the Heritage Council, it will prepare a statement of intent in response, and both documents will be published on the THC website.

I'm also advised that THC members undertook additional training on identifying and managing risks in April this year, and that included governance and disclosure of interests. I think that adequately satisfies the question.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, minister and Mr Jacobi for that answer. I'm particularly concerned about what appears to be a conflict of interest where the council refused to accept a property at a meeting on April 2023 and then it appears that the deputy chair of the council purchased the property and it was notified at the next council meeting of June 2023. You've just outlined that Mr Neasey has conducted a review of the governance arrangements, and I'm not sure whether you indicated that there's been an Integrity Commission referral as an outcome of that. You mentioned that it could have been an outcome. I'm not sure if there has been. Are you able to table Mr Neasey's report to the committee, and, minister, are you confident now that all conflicts of interest are managed appropriately with the Heritage Council.

Ms OGILVIE - I might just ask Mr Jacobi to speak to that.

Mr JACOBI - I'll be prepared to consider providing aspects of the report, but the report goes into some personal matters and circumstances and it would be inappropriate for that to be disclosed. I'm happy to go and look at the report and see what can be provided and take that as a question on notice.

Ms JOHNSTON - That would be appreciated. Do you want to put that as a question on notice?

Ms OGILVIE - How long do you think that would take? It might be worthwhile.

Mr JACOBI - It might take a little bit of time. We need to be careful about what we consider to be released.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, the last further question, are you confident now that conflicts of interest are appropriately managed at the Heritage Council at the moment?

Ms OGILVIE - Yes, I think so. The department, as you've heard, has done quite a lot of work in relation to that. So, I think we're in a good space. In the statement of expectations that we're working on, we'll lean on that question of governance as well. But we will always do what we need to do. There's training -

Ms JOHNSTON - That statement of expectations will be completed by?

Ms OGILVIE - That is a good question, I think it is sitting -

PUBLIC

Mr JACOBI - It has to be considered by the Heritage Council, so, it'll be a matter for the Heritage Council to table their response.

Ms OGILVIE - We want to get it right. Well, hopefully, soon.

CHAIR - Just noting the time, I will try to keep the answers from now on within the time limit.

Ms OGILVIE - Sorry. How much time do we have left, Chair?

CHAIR - Pretty much exactly 20 minutes.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, very quickly - and thank you, Chair - can you update us on the new Discovery Heritage website and how to help Tasmanians and visitors explore and engage our amazing and rich heritage?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. Yes, and I do have some information that I'd like to table and provide. I'm absolutely thrilled to announce - and I will provide those for handing around - the launch of Discover Heritage, a user friendly interactive web platform that provides easy access to the thousands of heritage places and sites listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register.

This innovative platform marks a major milestone in our ongoing efforts to promote and activate Tasmania's rich built heritage whilst ensuring it remains accessible to everyone. We know Tasmania is renowned for our remarkable heritage, from our historical villages to early convict agricultural industrial sites. Now built heritage is not only a point of pride but a defining feature of the Tasmanian lifestyle as well as a key attraction for visitors to our state. Much of our heritage remains intact, setting us apart from other regions in Australia and offering both Tasmanians and tourists an immersive experience in our past.

With the launch of Discover Heritage, exploring this rich history has never been easier. The website provides multiple ways to search for heritage-listed places by location, architectural style, chronological period, designer or even notable people associated with the site. So, I encourage everybody to get on board, have a look at it. It's really interesting. A lot of work's gone into it, with great thanks to the department for the work that's been done.

It's a mobile friendly platform - you can use it directly from your smartphone. So, if you're out and about walking through a heritage place, you would be able to look up and find stories of the buildings and the built heritage as you go - and detailed information on 16 distinct architectural styles. Trying to keep this short because you do not have too much time, but also we wish to ensure that we can educate the broader community about the stories that are embedded in each and every house and each and every street and all of our beautiful heritage places. We want public engagement; we want people to enjoy it.

That is in line with our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future. We are preserving and activating our built heritage and we want to save it, preserve it and ensure it's loved by future generations. So, I encourage everybody to have a look and enjoy a deep dive into heritage.

Ms BROWN - Minister, the online heritage database is very welcome and congratulations to all the staff who have put so much hard work into it. I can already see how

much hard work has been put into that. So, well done, Heritage Tasmania. But what of Tasmanac, the online website that has been funded? It's currently blank. So, what's?

Ms OGILVIE - I don't know what the answer to that is. Let's check. We're going to find somebody who can help with the answer. Mary Mulcahy, TMAG, has some information on this one.

Ms MULCAHY - It was a pilot that was funded and a pilot was released. We haven't done any further work on it. A lot of it's based on the Digital Cultural Experience work we've been doing with the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, with UTAS and with Libraries Tasmania. The whole of that project is dependent on a platform that will allow all the digitised elements of collections to be loaded and made available to the public.

The project is that we have a platform. All the organisations received it last year and have been customising it to their own collections. TMAG has prioritised this year working on the current database and making sure it's actually safe because it's potentially a cybersecurity risk at the moment, so, it's taking time. The Tasmanac element of it was a pilot. It had been put out as, I guess, a beta case, it wasn't a final product. We're looking at, in the longer term, creating the platform that those four partners are working on, enabling that platform to be one that every single museum and art gallery in Tasmania can potentially put their collections up on in a digital space. So, it's a long-term project. That Tasmanac is one of the outcomes of that. It's a project that's, I guess, on pause at the moment but there's a longer-term vision for it.

Ms BROWN - Can you advise how much funding was put into that trial?

Ms MULCAHY - It started a long time before I started in the job, so I'm not sure. We could let you know if you would like that.

Ms BROWN - Yes, great. Thank you for that. Minister, can you please advise how members of the Tasmanian Heritage Council are still members after a decade?

Ms OGILVIE - My understanding is there's no limit on the number of terms a member can serve for. I'll just make sure I've got that correct. Yes, there's no limit. The Tasmanian Heritage Council, as prescribed in the act - I don't have the section in front of me, but my understanding is there is no limit on the number of terms people can serve.

Ms BROWN - Can you advise why the start dates for the heritage councillors have been removed from the Heritage Tasmania website?

Ms OGILVIE - No, we'd have to ask that. I have them here.

Ms BROWN - I believe they're not on the website, though.

Ms OGILVIE - We can table this. I don't know why that would be. We'd have to ask a question, but if you want them, you can have them.

Ms BROWN - I would love them. Thank you.

Ms ROSOL - The Hobart Cenotaph is 100 years old next year and, quite rightly, it's revered as a sacred ground for RSL Tasmania and many in its sub-branches. Its reverential

ambience and sightlines are some of the values recognised and contributing to its heritage listing. Until now, that's been protected by provisions in the planning scheme and a 15-metre height limit at Macquarie Point. However, a 54-metre-high stadium, 25 per cent higher than assurances that were originally given, has now been shown to destroy three of those important sightlines at the Cenotaph. The Cenotaph and its values will be diminished by the stadium and the heritage report rates the impacts as very high.

Minister, have you sought advice as to whether the heritage listing of the Cenotaph is at risk? Should the protections for key values like sightlines not be enough to stop approval of the stadium and those values lost?

Ms OGILVIE - I have not personally sought advice, but the department has an update on this matter. The stadium doesn't sit under my ministerial purview but I have some information here in relation to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation and the Project of State Significance (POSS) process. My understanding is that process will include public consultation and engagement with relevant agencies, the Hobart City Council, key stakeholders, including the RSL, and all members of the public. The Heritage Council would probably wish to make a contribution at that stage as well. I understand that Mel may have some more information in relation to that specifically.

Ms FORD - The development of a stadium at Macquarie Point will be considered under the POSS process. Under this process, the Heritage Council is not a decision-maker. While it is a relevant regulator, it will be invited to contribute to the process but it has no statutory powers and provisions under its act.

I'm not sure how clearly this is understood, but the POSS process actually goes further than the *Historic Cultural Heritage Act* in terms of considering the impact of the stadium proposal on heritage places. This is through the inclusion of a 200-metre zone around the stadium area which will capture additional heritage-listed places, including the Cenotaph. Part of the POSS process is also to consider other factors that would be wider than what the Heritage Council would typically consider under a development application under its act. For example, the financial and economic impacts are not things the Heritage Council would consider. So, in terms of the process and what is being considered, it's much more rigorous than if the Heritage Council were looking at a matter just on its own, under its own act.

I guess that process needs to play out. At the moment, we're at the stage where the submission has only been formally provided to the Heritage Council today. There's now quite a bit of work to do to assess the thousands of pages in that submission.

Ms ROSOL - Are you confident you will have sufficient voice and opportunity? It sounds like you'll have several opportunities to feed into it. Are you confident that you'll be able to speak up strongly on behalf of the heritage values of the area?

Ms FORD - From the process that's been described to us, the Heritage Council will have that opportunity.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, the Tasmanian Transport Museum holds an incredibly important collection when it comes to -

Ms OGILVIE - It's fabulous.

Ms JOHNSTON - It's fabulous, absolutely, I'm glad you enjoy it, as do many Tasmanians. They are volunteer-based and, essentially, self-funded for their works. You can appreciate that the restoration of some of their exhibits is quite expensive. They have recently written to the Transport minister seeking funding for a range of projects, including reconstruction of the railway turntable, installation of 13 commercial-grade roller-doors to be able to protect those heritage assets, and asphaltting of the entry area forecourt, which is important to the tourism aspect of the business they conduct. They missed the 2024-25 budget cycle. Will you liaise with the Transport minister to try to ensure that in future budgets the Tasmanian Transport Museum's heritage collection is funded appropriately?

Ms OGILVIE - I sure will. I love their museum. I've been out there and had a deep-dive tour. It's fantastic, and the love and effort that goes into their exhibits is just incredible. It's beautifully positioned, too, for future tourism benefit as well. I think it would be great if the Transport minister would come on board, no pun intended but, of course, pun intended. Happy to speak with the minister to see what we can do. Yes, the Budget has landed, but there are future budgets and let's see what might be achieved.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, and further to that, with reference to your answer regarding the Goods Shed and the importance of using heritage properties and activation, the Transport Museum has put a significant amount of time into activating its rail collection in terms of its engines and trying to ensure that the public can get an appreciation through experiencing train rides. Critical to that is access to the main line, particularly from Glenorchy, that at the moment they are heading north, but they would like to head south. However, that is under jeopardy if there is a bus rapid transit corridor. What actions are you taking to ensure that the important heritage aspects of the rail corridor are protected so that we can use them in the future?

Ms OGILVIE - I understand where you're coming from with that question. I will be very open with you: I haven't looked at this. I understand what you're saying. I know you've been a very strong advocate for this for a long time and I applaud your efforts. That is something that I would need to have a look at. I'm just getting a little note here that the Transport Museum is not registered on the Heritage Register, so there may be some steps that could be taken. I'm happy to have a look at it, but I want to be really clear, I haven't done that to date.

Ms JOHNSTON - Just to be clear, it's not registered because the site itself is not heritage, but their collection is and they have engineering heritage status as well.

Ms OGILVIE - Yeah, it's fabulous. Agree with you. Heated agreement.

CHAIR - Anything further? Given there's probably three minutes left, I might go to Ms Brown.

Ms BROWN - Thank you. Just bear with me one second. I had my question up and I've lost it. Minister, I wanted to have a chat to you regarding the heritage forum earlier this year that you attended. There were calls from the participants for more funding, not less funding in this Budget. I'm curious about how you are planning to attend the next forum considering the outrage from the participants who did attend asking for more funding and that you will be attending having provided less funding. Has the budget for the forum been axed for future years?

Ms OGILVIE - Thank you. I just want to make sure we're talking about the same thing, which is the Heritage Summit?

Ms BROWN - Summit.

Ms OGILVIE – Yes, and isn't it fantastic? It's an innovation that we were able to get going in fairly recent years. I call it the 'Historic'. The second Historic Heritage Summit was held in Launceston, 17 May, following a successful inaugural event in 2023 which brought heritage stakeholders together to collaborate and discuss sector priorities for the coming year. It helps us to do that strategy piece of work, thought leadership right across the sector, bringing people together into one room. It's not only socially great, but it's great for thinking and collaboration as well. Many issues were raised at that summit and -

Ms BROWN - I assume funding was top of the list.

CHAIR - Ms Brown.

Ms OGILVIE - Well, we're saying the same thing, so that's fine. In particular, I think it's a great credit to everybody who worked so hard to get the \$4.5 million funding over three years, which I was really delighted to secure and announce and deploy. That is something I'd like to see continue, particularly on the activation side, as we've heard is so important. All of this work is based on work we've done and are continuing to do with Stenning & Associates - we call it the Stenning Report - around the value of our heritage and cultural heritage in Tasmania and what we need to do, how much investment we need to make to continue to love it and look after it properly, and that is something that the Heritage Summit is focused on.

I don't think there's a problem with actually funding a Heritage Summit gathering. We will absolutely be doing that. It's a highlight of my calendar and others', I assume. I think I speak on behalf of the department to say I don't think that's a problem. But I do agree with you that we need to all push hard for more funding for heritage and I will continue to raise my voice.

Ms BROWN - Great. I have one more question if there is time.

CHAIR - There's less than a minute, so go for it.

Ms BROWN - Great. I just wanted some clarification on the savings strategy, if it'll be shared equally between Heritage Tasmania and the Heritage Council.

Ms OGILVIE - I'll just ask Jason about that, no.

The Heritage Council is not subject to the efficiency dividend as an independent organisation.

CHAIR - Great, and on that, the time being, 3.34 p.m., the time for scrutiny has expired. Thank you, minister. Thank you for all members who have participated for their patience and cooperation.

The Committee adjourned at 3.34 p.m.

34,457 Total Offences were recorded in 2023:
- **3,827** had a youth (10 to 17 years old) offender
- and **1** out of every **2** offences (crime) was solved.

Because of **unsolved crime**, we don't know how much crime is committed by youth, we only know how many youths are charged for committing crime.

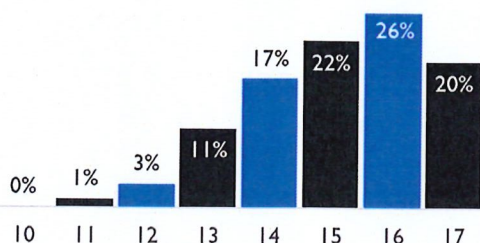


**TASMANIA POLICE
YOUTH CRIME
CHARGES IN 2023**

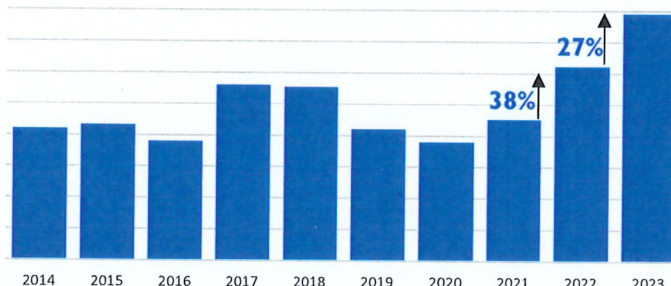
There were **4,939** youth crime charges in 2023, which was **12%** of total crime charges.



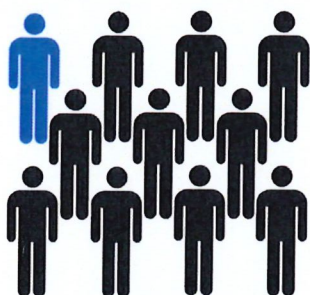
Youth crime charges by individual age:
16-year-olds had the most charges in 2023, while 15-year-olds were the highest in 2022.



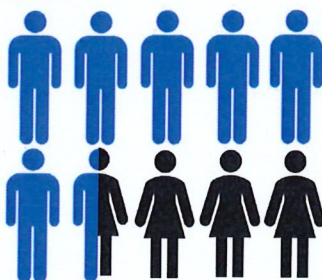
Youth crime charges increased by **38%** in 2022, **27%** in 2023



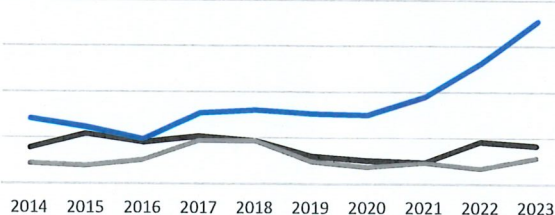
Youth made up **9%** of the population.



65% of youth crime charges had male offenders, down from **75%** in 2022.



Youth crime charges have primarily increased in the state's south.



Youth made up the following percentages of charges for selected crime types:

Serious Person



16%

Arson/Related



42%

Assault



13%

Property Damage



23%

Robbery



53%

Stealing



31%

Burglary



23%

Trespass

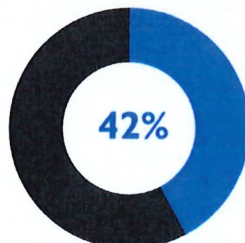


35%

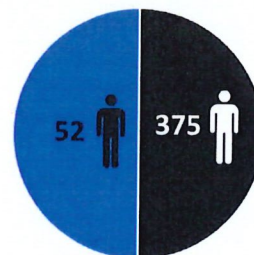
219 youths (**51%**) were charged with crime offences for the first time, a **16%** increase on 2022.



180 youths charged (**42%**) had also been charged with crime in 2022.



52 persons made up **50%** of youth crime charges.



Note: Crime for the purposes of charges includes offences such as bail and firearms regulations, which are not included in Total Offences statistics (crime reported to police).

2319 - Housing & Planning



Promoting a fair marketplace

CBOS

Consumer, Building & Occupational Services



Report on data collection Quarter 3 2023

Short Stay Accommodation Act 2019



Author: Consumer, Building and Occupational Services

Publisher: Department of Justice

May 2024

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Report on data collection for the *Short Stay Accommodation Act 2019*

Introduction

The *Short Stay Accommodation Act 2019* (the Act) establishes a data-sharing partnership with short stay accommodation platforms that achieves three main purposes:

- Ensures everyone plays by the same set of rules
- Captures a clear picture of short stay accommodation across Tasmania
- Informs future policy and planning at a state and local level.

The Act allows the Government to collect data on the number of properties listed on short stay accommodation sites in our residential zones. The data provides the Government with a better understanding of short stay accommodation and informs evidence-based policy and decision making.

The Act outlines how the data collected by the Director of Building Control may be used. It includes providing the data to councils for compliance with the *Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993* or the *Building Act 2016*.

What data is reported?

Under the Act, booking platform providers are required to provide the Director of Building Control with certain prescribed information about short stay premises listed in any of the applicable zones:

- General Residential Zone
- Inner Residential Zone
- Low Density Residential Zone
- Rural Living Zone
- Environmental Living Zone
- Village Zone
- Activity Area 1.0 Inner City Residential (Wapping)

The Act requires booking platforms to collect and provide the following information about premises listed on their sites:

- the address of each property listed within the residential zones
- the planning permit status as stated by the host, along with the relevant planning permit number (where applicable)
- the number of bedrooms used for short stay accommodation
- whether the property is the primary place of residence for the host
- the period during that financial quarter that the property was listed on the site.



The Act requires information to be reported to the Director of Building Control quarterly, within 30 days of the end of the quarter.

Data quality improvements

Since the Act was introduced, fourteen reports have been published:

- Report 1 – October to December 2019;
- Report 2 – January to March 2020;
- Report 3 – April to June 2020;
- Report 4 – July to September 2020;
- Report 5 – October to December 2020;
- Report 6 – January to March 2021;
- Report 7 – April to June 2021;
- Report 8 – July to September 2021;
- Report 9 – October to December 2021;
- Report 10 – January to March 2022;
- Report 11 – April to June 2022;
- Report 12 – July to September 2022;
- Report 13 – October to December 2022;
- Report 14 – January to March 2023; and
- Report 15 – April to June 2023.

This report covers the period July to September 2023.

Since the reporting requirements were introduced under the Act in 2019, the Department of Justice has identified issues with the accuracy of data provided by a number of the booking platforms. The Department continues to review and assess the data provided by booking platforms to ensure its accuracy. The Department will continue to work with booking platforms to ensure reports accurately reflect short stay listings within Tasmania.

Summary of results for this period

The submissions received by the Government provided valid data for 6845 individual properties listed during the reporting period (1 July – 30 September 2023). There has been an increase of 291 properties compared to the previous reporting period.

Of the 6845 properties:

- 3431 (50.1%) are reported as being a primary residence.
- 3414 (49.9%) are reported as not being a primary residence. Of these, 565 were reported as not requiring a planning permit. Many of these indicate that they have an existing use right which waives the need for a permit.

Observations



The data shows a clear distinction between the use of properties in the Greater Hobart area¹ and other parts of Tasmania. The majority of properties listed in Greater Hobart are those sharing their own home.

Out of the 2864 premises recorded, 1882 (65.7%) are listed as a primary residence.

Conversely, in regional areas of the State, more investment properties or shacks are used for short stay accommodation, leading to a far lower percentage of primary residence properties.

A summary of premises by council area, including their reported permit status, can be found in Appendix I.

Notes on data

From the data analysis undertaken:

- 1541 addresses could not be matched to a valid Tasmanian address due to insufficient address details, such as providing only a suburb and no street address. Some listings also contained data that does not exist in this State. Data from these listings is included in this report as these addresses cannot be confirmed to fall outside the Act.
- 3806 properties were listed more than once. These listings include platforms reporting multiple rooms within a single house as separate premises and premises listed on more than one booking platform. Where such premises were able to be identified, they were only counted once and the duplicate removed.

Trends

The Tasmanian Government has now collected data each quarter since October 2019. This allows the Government to map trends over time to gain further understanding as to the extent of short stay accommodation in Tasmania.

Figure I shows that the rate of premises listings has remained relatively stable, with an increase in short stay premises listings of 4.4% for Quarter 3 2023.

¹ As per the *Greater Hobart Act 2019*, the Greater Hobart area includes Hobart, Kingborough, Clarence and Glenorchy LGAs.



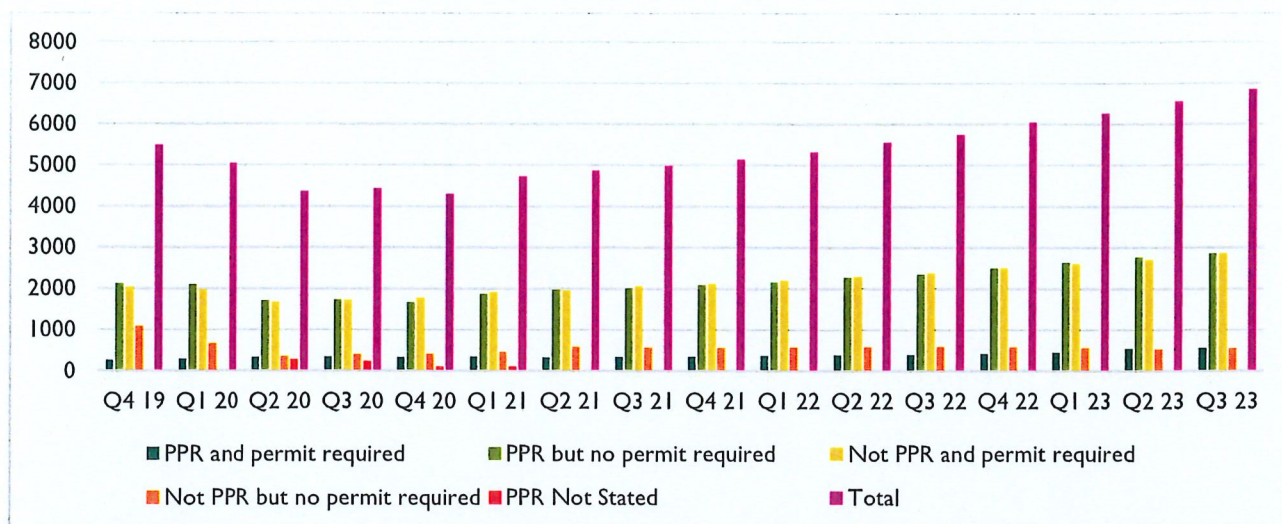


Figure 1: Trends, Quarter 4 2019 to Quarter 3 2023

PPR = place of primary residence

Future reporting

Consumer, Building and Occupational Services continues to work with booking platform providers to improve compliance with the Act's reporting requirements.

As highlighted above, reports have included data that is not required under the Act and issues regarding data quality remain.

Data quality will improve as reporting requirements and data collection processes become part of each platform's business practices, and reporting is refined over time.

Over time steps taken by local councils, sites delisting properties which do not comply with requirements and education and awareness-raising with property owners will help ensure greater consistency and compliance with data reporting requirements under the Act.

APPENDIX I: SUMMARY OF REPORTED PREMISES BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Note: Where a property has been reported more than once, and the detail is different for each (e.g. for one provider, the listing states that a planning permit is not required, but the listing provided for the same property by a different platform provider states that it was) an assessment has been made as to which data is used. The figures in this table will be subject to change as data quality is improved and the baseline data corrected in future reports.

Primary Residence?	Not Stated Total	No		Total	Yes, comprises all or part of premises		Total	Grand Total
Planning Permit Required?	Required	Not required	Required		Not required	Required		
Local Government Area								
Break O'Day (M)	0	59	272	331	78	31	109	440
Brighton (M)	0	1	2	3	14	2	16	19
Burnie (C)	0	12	29	41	33	3	36	77
Central Coast (M) (Tas.)	0	8	47	55	71	16	87	142
Central Highlands (M) (Tas.)	0	13	36	49	11	0	11	60
Circular Head (M)	0	13	29	42	24	5	29	71
Clarence (C)	0	26	149	175	369	53	422	597
Derwent Valley (M)	0	8	29	37	11	8	19	56
Devonport (C)	0	14	52	66	78	14	92	158
Dorset (M)	0	18	132	150	28	12	40	190
Flinders (M) (Tas.)	0	12	7	19	3	1	4	23
George Town (M)	0	5	36	41	16	7	23	64
Glamorgan/Spring Bay (M)	0	50	412	462	92	42	134	596
Glenorchy (C)	0	12	45	57	172	22	194	251
Hobart (C)	0	64	446	510	820	128	948	1458
Huon Valley (M)	0	28	65	93	77	19	96	189
Kentish (M)	0	2	25	27	20	4	24	51
King Island (M)	0	8	15	23	7	1	8	31

Primary Residence?	Not Stated	No		Total	Yes, comprises all or part of premises		Total	Grand Total
Planning Permit Required?	Required	Not required	Required		Not required	Required		
Local Government Area								
Kingborough (M)	0	51	189	240	273	45	318	558
Latrobe (M) (Tas.)	0	9	44	53	22	3	25	78
Launceston (C)	0	49	344	393	249	56	305	698
Meander Valley (M)	0	17	33	50	68	12	80	130
Northern Midlands (M)	0	10	28	38	29	7	36	74
Sorell (M)	0	13	65	78	104	17	121	199
Southern Midlands (M)	0	1	3	4	9	2	11	15
Tasman (M)	0	12	84	96	39	8	47	143
Waratah/Wynyard (M)	0	18	47	65	40	7	47	112
West Coast (M)	0	12	77	89	24	8	32	121
West Tamar (M)	0	18	107	125	87	31	118	243
No Match	0	1	2	3	1	1	2	5
Total	0	565	2849	3414	2869	562	3431	6845

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Progress Report 2023-2024

Implementation Plan 2023-2025
– Long-Term Plan for Healthcare
in Tasmania 2040

September 2024



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Image: Dove Lake, Cradle Mountain Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.
Photographer: Jillian Mundy.



Acknowledgements

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Health Tasmania respectfully acknowledges Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional custodians of the land on which we live, work and play and pays respect to Aboriginal Elders past and present.

Recognition Statement

Tasmanian Aboriginal people's traditional lifestyle promoted physical and emotional health and wellbeing, centred around Country, Kin, Community and Spirituality. Aboriginal people continue to value the importance of culture, community connection and being on Country as vital components of health and wellness.

Through colonisation, Aboriginal people experienced displacement and disconnection, which has significantly affected their health and wellbeing.

We recognise Aboriginal people are the knowledge holders and provide best practice in promoting health and wellbeing for Aboriginal people. We acknowledge and learn from the ongoing work of Aboriginal organisations in ensuring continued health and wellness.

We commit to working in partnership with Tasmanian Aboriginal communities and health leaders now and into the future to improve health and wellbeing.



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What we are doing

The Tasmanian Government has shared its vision to shape the future of healthcare in Tasmania through the release of the *Long-Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania 2040*.

The Long-Term Plan, released in June 2023, provides system-wide direction and strategy for the delivery of health services to achieve our goal of a sustainable, integrated and balanced health system delivering the right care, in the right place, at the right time for Tasmanians.

The Long-Term Plan sets out the six action areas to deliver on the strategic ambitions and vision set out in *Advancing Tasmania's Health*:

1. A single, integrated statewide system
2. Providing the right care, in the right place, at the right time
3. Governed with our partners to proactively meet demand
4. Investing in our future to deliver sustainable and environmentally responsible services
5. Enabled by digital technology and infrastructure and
6. Delivered by a valued and supported workforce.

It is a key milestone to progress Stage Two of the Tasmanian Government's long-term health reform agenda, *Our Healthcare Future*, to consult, design and build an integrated and sustainable health service.

The Long-Term Plan is supported by three regional Clinical Services Profiles, describing the clinical services we will deliver over the next five years in response to projected regional needs and our priorities to expand and enhance clinical services. This planning framework demonstrates the Department of Health's commitment to improving healthcare outcomes, delivering patient-centred and high-quality care, and building a resilient healthcare system.

Over the past year we have turned our attention to those actions that will have the greatest immediate effect on health outcomes that matter the most to Tasmanians.

The Implementation Plan 2023-2025: *Long-Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania*, released in June 2024 sets out the strategic priorities spanning 2023-2025.

During 2023-2024, we have focused on building foundations for the future. We know that we need a modern, integrated and sustainable Tasmanian health system to meet the demand challenges into the future. Digital technologies, and adaptable and scalable infrastructure, can support models of care, deliver additional healthcare capacity and facilitate the best use of our health workforce.

While we invest in building the foundations for a sustainable health service, we have prioritised key initiatives to improve our services now.

We continue to engage with key stakeholders, health professionals, healthcare providers, researchers, technology experts, and the community to implement the Long-Term Plan.

Future planning and implementation phases will continue to build on improvement and innovation established in this initial implementation phase. This approach will lay the foundation for a sustainable and patient-centred healthcare system, positioning Tasmania as a leader in delivering innovative and accessible healthcare services.

This Report shares achievements during 2023-2024 against the Implementation Plan 2023-2025: *Long-Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania*.

Tasmanians will continue to learn about the implementation through the Department's website, social media, and yearly reporting.

2023-2024 Highlights

There are many highlights in 2023-2024 to reflect on. Action and progress are reflected across the strategic priorities set out in the Implementation Plan 2023-2025: *Long-Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania 2040*. We recognise and acknowledge the tireless work of our staff and our partners in reaching these key milestones.



Released Round One of the General Practice Sustainability and Viability initiative to strengthen GP practices in regional, rural and outer-urban areas in Tasmania



Establishment of a Tasmanian Rural and Remote Clinical Network to understand rural health needs, make connections and provide advice to health leaders for decision making



Expansion of Hospital@Home in the South to significantly increase hospital-level care delivered in the community, by expanding its "virtual ward" from 12 to 22 beds and providing rapid response services



Completion of three new Ambulance Stations in Bridgewater, Beaconsfield and Queenstown



Commissioned and provided input into the *Independent Review of Tasmania's Major Hospital Emergency Departments* and commenced implementing recommended actions under five key areas



Implementation of the Victorian Stroke Telemedicine Services at the Mersey Community Hospital to enable 24/7 access to on-call support from stroke specialists in Victoria to optimise patient care



Developed a new GP NOW service model to provide support to local communities and commenced recruitment to the service



In partnership with the Australian Government, Medicare Urgent Care Clinics were established in Hobart, Launceston, and Devonport to provide urgent care for patients with a health issue that does not require presentation to a hospital emergency department



Strategic Priorities – 2023-2024 Achievement

In 2023-2024, the Department of Health (DoH) has focused on ten strategic priorities to build the foundations for the future and improve services now. Each strategic priority contains initiatives that support the implementation of the actions in the *Long-Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania 2040* (the Long-Term Plan).

Extensive Masterplanning and Capital Developments

The 2023–2024 Budget allocated \$682.9 million over the Budget and Forward Estimates for Capital Investment in Health infrastructure. The extensive masterplanning and capital developments that are underway will support the implementation of the Long-Term Plan by ensuring we have the right health facilities, that are future focused and enable high quality and safe care.

Status	Long-Term Plan: Masterplanning and Capital Development Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Commence the establishment of a Breast Care Centre in Hobart, to improve access to public diagnostic breast imaging and mammography services	Planning has commenced to deliver a new \$15 million Public Diagnostic Breast Care Centre by the end of 2025 to increase capacity and reduce wait times for public diagnostic breast imaging and mammography services. The Centre will provide a multi-disciplinary team approach to treatment, involving and supporting patients in decisions about their care. The new Centre will increase the availability of public services and ease the financial impact for Tasmanians requiring these services.
Completed	Develop a new Masterplan for the North West and local health facilities to guide future stages of the redevelopment	The North West Hospitals Masterplan was released in September 2024. The Masterplan provides a long-term vision to guide capital development at the North West Regional Hospital (NWRH) and Mersey Community Hospital (MCH) over the next 20 years. The Masterplan ensures we make the best of the land and buildings we have, maximising opportunities to support the delivery of safe, high-quality healthcare now and into the future.

Long-Term Plan: Masterplanning and Capital Development Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Deliver the new Bridgewater, Beaconsfield, Queenstown, Bicheno, Burnie, Glenorchy, Longford and Oatlands Rural Ambulance Stations to support regional areas	<p>Three new ambulance stations opened in 2023, to improve amenities, infection control measures and Tasmania's emergency response capability:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 2023: \$2.6 million two-bay station in Bridgewater. • October 2023: \$1.92 million, two-bay station in Beaconsfield. • November 2023: \$2.67 million, two-bay station in Queenstown. <p>Construction has commenced on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$12.66 million Glenorchy Ambulance Superstation expected to open by late 2024 to house the increasing paramedic workforce and up to 18 vehicles. • \$13 million Burnie Ambulance Station expected to open by late 2024 to house up to 18 vehicles to meet anticipated future needs. • \$2.75 million, two-bay, Oatlands Ambulance Station. <p>The Department is working to identify a new suitable site for the Bicheno Ambulance Station that balances Ambulance Tasmania's operational needs with the feedback heard during the community consultation, with site selection expected to be finalised shortly.</p> <p>Planning and design for the new Longford Ambulance Station is underway.</p>
In Progress	Begin planning to build four new ambulance stations at Legana, Snug, Cygnet and King Island to assist with community demand	<p>In March 2024, the Tasmanian Government committed to building four new ambulance stations at Legana, Cygnet, Snug and King Island to accommodate our extra paramedics and meet community demand.</p> <p>Planning has commenced for each of the four new stations, with the appointment of a Project Manager and engagement of a Lead Architect. Review of suitable Crown owned sites and site assessments are also underway. Stakeholder engagement consultants are expected to be appointed in late 2024.</p>
In Progress	Redevelop and expand the Intensive Care (ICU) Unit at the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH), providing space for an additional 12 beds	<p>The expansion of the state-of-the art ICU marks an important milestone in Stage Two of the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH) Masterplan. The ICU has been operational since August 2023 offering new and upgraded facilities and additional spaces for families and visitors.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Masterplanning and Capital Development Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Begin capital and infrastructure upgrades at the North West Regional Hospital (NWRH) including a new medical ward, clinical diagnostics, dialysis and lung function laboratory, new ambulance drop-off area and expanded Emergency Department entry, and the new Mental Health Precinct	<p>The Tasmanian Government has committed close to \$175 million towards delivering Stage One of the North West Hospitals Masterplan.</p> <p>Planning is under way to deliver a brand new Medical Inpatient building at the NWRH to include a medical ward, critical clinical diagnostics, dialysis and a lung function lab. A new car park to provide over 600 additional car parks for patients, family and staff will also be built.</p> <p>Planning is also underway for the redesign of a new Mental Health Precinct at the NWRH to meet service changes and replace the Spencer Clinic.</p>
In Progress	Develop a Health and Wellbeing Precinct Masterplan for St Johns Park to provide a 20-year blueprint for the heritage sensitive revitalisation of this historic precinct into a contemporary health care campus to meet the public health needs of Tasmanians	<p>A Draft Masterplan for St Johns Park was released for consultation in May 2023, proposing the establishment of a Health and Wellbeing Precinct to provide expanded mental health, sub-acute and community-based services. The Masterplan will guide future capital development in a heritage-sensitive manner to revitalise the historic precinct into a contemporary healthcare campus to meet the public health needs of Tasmanians. The St Johns Park precinct site offers benefits to patients and visitors with access to green spaces, parklands, and public transport and its redevelopment will deliver facilities that support the delivery of safe and efficient services.</p> <p>The Final Masterplan is expected to be released in 2025 once feedback from the community and stakeholders is considered and incorporated into the process.</p>
In Progress	Deliver capital and infrastructure upgrades at the Mersey Community Hospital (MCH), including additional endoscopy unit; expanded recovery and theatre spaces; expanded outpatient clinics; new and upgraded staff facilities; and new and upgraded building services and equipment	<p>The Tasmanian Government has committed close to \$175 million towards delivering Stage One of the North West Hospitals Masterplan.</p> <p>Planning is underway to deliver a new sub-acute building for medical oncology services, inpatient unit for geriatric evaluation and management.</p> <p>Delivery of the new MCH Outpatients Clinics and Operating Theatres project commenced in May 2022, with new clinical spaces, the first of two new operating theatres and two new Endoscopy procedure rooms now complete. Works continue on the delivery of new central sterilising department and staff facilities.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Masterplanning and Capital Development Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
Completed	Deliver a second Angiography Suite at the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH) to meet increasing patient demand and support improved patient care	The 2021-2022 Budget provided \$7 million to build, equip, and staff a new Angiography Suite at the RHH. Planning commenced in 2021-2022 and procurement of the new angiography equipment occurred in September 2023. Construction was completed in May 2024 with commissioning activities and staff training occurring in June 2024. The new Angiography Suite at the RHH has been operational since July 2024.
In Progress	Deliver a masterplan for District Hospitals and Community Health Centres in line with the place-based approach to rural health service planning outlined in the <i>Long-Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania 2040</i>	Initial work has commenced to develop a masterplan for the 13 District Hospitals and 23 Community Health Centres. These facilities are important health infrastructure assets that can provide a hub for delivering a range of local healthcare services to Tasmanian communities. Masterplanning will also consider the digital connection of District Hospitals and Community Health Centre assets with statewide specialist virtual care services to provide increased support for patients to remain, or return earlier to, rural and remote communities.
In Progress	Begin planning for a new Northern Heart Centre including new Cardiac Care Unit beds in the Cardiac Ward and Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and two new catheterisation (cath) labs	Planning has commenced for the Northern Heart Centre to provide a new coronary care unit with additional inpatient cardiac ward beds and coronary care unit beds which will remain co-located in the ICU, two Cardiac Catheterisation Labs with dedicated recovery and holding bays for direct access for patients requiring procedures, dedicated diagnostic testing for echocardiography and outpatient services, and direct access to the ICU, Emergency Department (ED) and medical imaging.
In Progress	Deliver the new multi-storey carpark at the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) to improve access for patients	The new Launceston General Hospital (LGH) multi-storey car park will provide over 470 parking spaces within the hospital precinct and improve access to the expanded health care services to be delivered through the LGH Masterplan. The Development Application was lodged in June 2024. It is anticipated construction will commence by mid-2025 and completed by early 2026. Planning for the temporary carpark at the vacant site of the former Anne O'Byrne building is underway. Work is expected to be completed early in 2025.

Long-Term Plan: Masterplanning and Capital Development Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	In partnership with the Australian Government, deliver a dedicated hospice and hospice respite care facility located in Launceston for people with life-limiting conditions and their families and carers	<p>The new \$20 million, 10-bed, 24/7 hospice and hospice respite care facility will be located in Howick Street within the LGH precinct to provide opportunity to leverage off existing arrangements for public transport, parking, services and staff.</p> <p>A Project Reference Group has been established to provide input into the development of the design. The Group includes key internal and external stakeholders including Palliative Care Tasmania, Friends of the Northern Hospice, and the Northern Consumer and Community Engagement Council.</p> <p>A Concept Design is expected to be delivered in September 2024, with construction expected to commence in mid 2025 and completion anticipated by late 2026.</p>
In Progress	Deliver the Kingston Health Centre (KCHC) expansion that will provide increased community health facilities for this growing region	<p>In 2023-2024, the Tasmanian Government committed \$30 million over four years to expand the size and service scope of the Kingston Community Health Centre (KCHC). Stage Two of the KCHC project will help to address gaps in local healthcare delivery by delivering a broader range of services, helping to reduce the pressure on the hospital system.</p> <p>Clinical services planning has been completed, with design of the facility to commence shortly. Construction is expected to commence late 2025.</p>
In Progress	Deliver an expanded and redesigned Emergency Department (ED) at the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH)	<p>Phase One of the RHH ED expansion opened to the public in January 2023, delivering 28 additional treatment points through the Lower Ground of H-Block.</p> <p>Planning is underway for Phase Two of the RHH ED expansion and will seek to deliver additional clinical treatment spaces to meet projected future needs. Construction is due to commence in mid-2025 and the new ED is expected to be operationalised by mid 2026.</p>
In Progress	In partnership with the Australian Government, progress the redevelopment of the Kings Meadows Community Health Centre	<p>The Australian Government has provided funding of \$10 million through the Community Health and Hospitals Program to improve the Kings Meadows Community Health Centre.</p> <p>This Project is underway. The Department's planning and design process is addressing the challenge of how best to apply the funding, to improve the facilities, while achieving the objective of expanding and modernising the facility.</p> <p>Construction is due to commence in mid to late 2025 and anticipated to be completed in mid to late 2026.</p>



Implementing the Digital Health Transformation Strategy

Over the five-year period from 2022-2023 to 2026-2027, \$210 million is being invested into the DoH Digital Health Transformation (DHT) Program, with an anticipated investment of \$475 million over a period of 10 years. This will position Tasmania to be the first Australian state to deliver a fully integrated digital healthcare system. Our system-wide digital health system will empower consumers and support healthcare professionals to deliver better patient outcomes.

Long-Term Plan: Digital Health Transformation Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Implement a secure two-way video conferencing capability to support the delivery of telehealth and virtual care services	<p>Telehealth Tasmania launched its upgraded video conferencing platform in July 2024.</p> <p>Microsoft Teams Virtual Appointments offer a user-friendly experience for consumers and healthcare professionals; with enhanced integration into their workflows and improved picture quality compared to the previous systems.</p> <p>Telehealth Tasmania continue to seek consumer feedback to make iterative improvements to the solution while exploring long-term technological advancements to further support a virtual care strategy and increase the use of virtual care modalities across public health services.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Digital Health Transformation Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
To Commence Shortly	Implement a Clinical Viewer to provide a secure online interface to view key medical records to balance sharing patient information and maintaining privacy; the initial focus will be for GP access	<p>The initial scope of the Clinical Viewer project will offer authorised post-discharge patient information to GPs, from in-patient admissions, emergency encounters and out-patient appointments.</p> <p>The requirements and conceptual solution design have been finalised. A pilot is planned for implementation in 2024-2025, subject to a feasibility assessment, as well as the completion of required procurement processes in accordance with the Treasurer's Instructions.</p> <p>The project will contribute to outcomes like improved visibility to clinical information, effective collaboration, capitalisation on early clinical information, improvement to first responder systems, data remediation, technology, and supporting patients and consumers to be proactive.</p>
To Commence Shortly	Implement an online application system for the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme (PTAS) to make it easier for people who need to travel to seek healthcare to apply for travel subsidies	<p>Tasmanians have benefited from improvements to the Patient Travel Assistance Scheme after the Tasmanian Government approved the 35 recommendations from a review by KP Health in 2022. The majority of these recommendations have been implemented.</p> <p>As part of this review, implementation of a smart online application system was recommended. Planning work is underway with IT expertise to support this project.</p>
In Progress	Upgrade telehealth infrastructure so that people in regional and remote areas of the state can access specialist services from the major hospitals without having to travel	<p>Work is ongoing to upgrade telehealth and virtual care infrastructure across the 13 District Hospitals over the next 12 months. These upgrades aim to provide an immediate and vital link for District Hospitals to access the specialist expertise of our major hospitals, allowing Tasmanians the option of seeing a hospital specialist without having to travel.</p> <p>This is supported by the development of an Outpatients virtual care framework that will help guide our approach to offering virtual care services and enable their successful implementation across outpatient, ambulatory and hospital setting statewide.</p> <p>A current example is the Child Health and Parenting Service which offers virtual care to families in rural and remote locations to maintain a connection throughout the crucial early years of child growth and development, where they might not otherwise have been able to attend appointments.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Digital Health Transformation Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Expand and enhance the Statewide Electronic Referral (eReferral) GP to Outpatients eReferral solution to include more referral services, internal referral capabilities and integration to support referrals from statewide emergency departments to outpatient services	<p>The Statewide Electronic Referral (eReferrals) has been expanded and enhanced with access now enabled for 256 public outpatient services, including mental health services. With over 247,743 secure eReferrals already received, the solution is now a centralised secure platform for Tasmanian GPs.</p> <p>The platform includes clinical decision support features, such as Statewide Referral Criteria which has improved accuracy of patient information, the quality of referrals, and has resulted in efficiencies across Outpatient Services.</p> <p>Internal outpatient referrals are also now digitised within the Referral Management System. This allows Emergency Department, Ward, as well as District Hospitals and Community facility clinicians, to seamlessly refer patients to Outpatient Services across the state.</p>
In Progress	Deliver digital enhancements and readiness through implementing Discharge Summary optimisation, Going Home, Obstetrics Integration and iPatient Manager (iPM) address validation	<p>Digital enhancements have been delivered by implementing the following initiatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discharge Summary Optimisation has been completed, to ensure essential clinical information is included to enhance communication, improve care coordination, and enable smoother transition for patients as they continue their recovery. • Going Home Plan for stroke patients has been delivered at the RHH to better support patients and reduce uncertainty by providing a tailored post-discharge plan of care. • Statewide Obstetrics System (Obstetrix) has been upgraded to electronically transfer maternity patient information, including birth and discharge summaries, to the Statewide Digital Medical Record (DMR) immediately after discharge, supporting better care for mothers and babies through improved, timely clinical handover. • Analysis is underway to determine if address validation can be implemented in the Statewide Patient Administration System (iPatient Manager (iPM)) and will be subject to a feasibility assessment of costs and timelines, as well as the completion of required procurement processes in accordance with the Treasurer's Instructions.
In Progress	Implement the Digital Medical Record (DMR) at rural hospitals across the State to allow clinicians real time access to patient information all in one place	<p>The DMR provides multiple users with real-time access to a centralised repository of patient clinical notes and diagnostic information in an intuitive and easy-to-use web-based interface. The Statewide DMR upgrade was completed in September 2023, delivering a stable digital environment, allowing for ongoing integration with internal and external systems and processes.</p> <p>Investigations continue for the implementation of DMR at District Hospitals across the State.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Digital Health Transformation Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Procure an Electronic Medical Record (EMR) and Ambulance Electronic Patient Care Record (AePCR) to establish a core system of records across clinical, administrative and operational domains to enable a fully integrated care platform	<p>The establishment of the Electronic Medical Record (EMR) and Ambulance Electronic Patient Care Record (AePCR) across clinical, administrative and operational domains will improve continuity of care across the healthcare system and increase access for treating clinicians to patient health information.</p> <p>The formal procurement process is underway for both EMR and AePCR. It is anticipated the successful tenderer/s will be known by late 2024.</p>
In Progress	Implement a new Electronic Meal Management System (EMMS) to support efficient ordering and provisioning of catering services in major hospitals	<p>Implementation of the Statewide Electronic Meal Management System (EMMS) is on track to be delivered across Tasmania's major hospitals by early 2025. The system will give patients more control over their hospital experience with benefits including improved health outcomes and reduced clinical risk for patients with specific needs. The EMMS will also provide efficiencies for the catering service in meal preparation and ability to reduce food and paper wastage.</p> <p>Change Champions across the State are working to assist with preparations and provide local support as the system is rolled out.</p>
In Progress	Provide free wi-fi for patients within District Hospitals	<p>Free Wi-Fi has been deployed across all of Tasmania's District Hospitals. Patients and visitors can now access full coverage of free Wi-Fi within the District Hospitals at Flinders Island, New Norfolk, George Town, Deloraine, and Beaconsfield. Limited coverage at the remaining District Hospitals is planned to be expanded across the entire hospitals' footprint this financial year.</p> <p>Data network upgrades were previously completed at Tasmania's main hospitals and at an additional 65 regional DoH sites across the State, including the Community Health Centres at Glenorchy, Kingston, Sorell, Clarence, St Marys, Kings Meadows, and Huonville.</p>
In Progress	Implement the Rapid Access single sign-on solution across hospitals to reduce manual processes and ensure timely access to digital systems	<p>After a successful trial of Rapid Access tap-on-tap-off technology at the RHH Pharmacy, which provided clinicians with seamless access to clinical applications, this solution has now been extended to the Pharmacy at MCH and NWRH. Further rollouts are planned for 2024-2025, including the Pharmacy at LGH and each major hospital Emergency Department.</p> <p>The implementation has led to an average productivity gain of 30 minutes per shift and a significant reduction in security risks, setting the stage for broader adoption of this technology in the future.</p>

Implementing the Health Workforce 2040 Strategy

The Tasmanian Government has invested significantly in initiatives to support our hardworking health workforce, including funding of \$15.7 million over four years to contribute to the implementation of *Health Workforce 2040*. The strategy outlines what we are doing to build, support and maintain a highly skilled, competent and flexible workforce of the right size and shape to deliver sustainable, high quality health services for all Tasmanians into the future.

Status	Long-Term Plan: Health Workforce Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Develop a North West health workforce plan that is responsive to health service demands and aligns with <i>Health Workforce 2040</i> focus areas	<p>Following a procurement process, a consultant has been appointed to complete the North West Workforce Plan alongside the Workforce Planning Unit.</p> <p>The Plan will align with and complement the <i>Long-Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania 2040</i> and the North West Hospitals Masterplan.</p>
In Progress	Develop local North West career pathways in nursing and midwifery to promote placements in District Hospitals	<p>Several initiatives have been developed to promote placements in District Hospitals to support nursing and midwifery career pathways in the North West:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students at the University of Tasmania (UTAS) Cradle Coast campus receive first priority for clinical placements, followed by North West residents studying through Central Queensland University, Charles Darwin University and Charles Sturt University. • In the North West, 57 graduates have been offered graduate nursing positions at the NWRH, MCH, District Hospitals and in Community Nursing. • Clinical Nurse Educators are now being employed at District Hospitals to support whole of community placements.
In Progress	Procure and implement a new, fully integrated Human Resources Information System (HRIS)	<p>The Tasmanian Government is committed to creating a single, integrated Human Resources Information System (HRIS) for the Department and foundation system for the Tasmanian State Service to significantly improve business systems and human resource functions.</p> <p>Over the life of the project, the business context has evolved, like responding to recommendations of the <i>Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings</i> in terms of the management of information about current or ex-employees.</p> <p>The first module of HRIS, the HR Confidential Case Management system, was released in August 2024 and will be implemented to other agencies later in the year. The release of further modules at DoH will occur after rigorous and extensive testing.</p>

Status	Long-Term Plan: Health Workforce Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Evaluate the expansion of the Rural Medical Workforce Centre to include other clinical disciplines and regions	<p>Opening in 2023 and located at the MCH, the Rural Medical Workforce Centre, is a collaboration between the Tasmanian Government and UTAS, designed to support the training, recruitment and retention of doctors and health professionals in the North West and beyond.</p> <p>The Centre coordinates attractive training posts for trainee rural doctors by providing opportunities to develop skills across a range of specialities including emergency medicine, rural general practice, anaesthetics, paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology. In late 2023, the scope of the Centre also expanded to include the Single Employer Model (SEM).</p>
In Progress	Develop a statewide mental health workforce strategy and action plan to reflect international and national trends and local needs	<p>In collaboration with key stakeholders, the DoH has commenced work to identify the current profile of the mental health workforce and priority strategies to strengthen the mental health workforce including public, private and community sectors.</p> <p>This work will inform the development of the Tasmanian Mental Health Workforce Strategy in 2025.</p>
In Progress	Work with the Australian Government on the National Scope of Practice Review of barriers and incentives for all health professionals to work to their full scope of practice at all levels of Government and across the health sector to recommend appropriate settings that support the health workforce to work to their full scopes of practice	<p>Tasmania is actively contributing to the National Scope of Practice Review commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. The key focus of the review is to optimise the use of the health workforce across key areas of demand including a stretched primary care sector by empowering coordinated multidisciplinary teams of healthcare professionals to work together to their full scope of practice.</p> <p>The Australian Government is expecting to receive the findings of this review in late 2024.</p>



Status	Long-Term Plan: Health Workforce Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Develop a statewide supervised practice framework for nurses and midwives returning to practice or seeking to change their context of practice	<p>A Supervised Practice Framework has been developed, with recent implementation activities focusing on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An expansion of the refresher program offerings to attract nurses and midwives to return to the profession with a focus on areas of workforce need. • An Enrolled Nurse strategy is being rolled out across the State including working with education providers on the establishment of an Advanced Diploma of Nursing. The Advanced Diploma provides a career pathway for enrolled nurses and increases their clinical capability. • Supporting midwives to re-skill and work safely, with 50 Australian College of Midwifery 'Refresher Package' scholarships offered. • A three-year Expanded Support Program for early career nurses and midwives is also being implemented across the State that provides additional wrap around support for early career nurses and midwives for their first three years of practice.
In Progress	Continue to develop the Tasmanian Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program providing financial support for post registration study nurses and midwives living and working in Tasmania, including nurses and midwives working in rural and remote locations	<p>The Nursing and Midwifery Scholarship Program, initially implemented in 2022, has seen 372 scholarships awarded. Rural and remote locations and identified workforce areas continue to be a focus of the scholarship offering to support capability development.</p> <p>Through the <i>Health Workforce 2040 Strategy</i> an additional seven Ida West Aboriginal Health Scholarships have been created, increasing the total number to ten scholarships per year. In 2024, 10 scholarships were awarded.</p>
In Progress	Contribute to Robyn Kruk's rapid review commissioned by the Australian Government, of the regulatory settings relating to health practitioner registration and qualification recognition for overseas trained health professionals and international students who have studied in Australia	<p>Tasmania contributed to the Australian Government's Independent Review of Health Practitioner Regulatory Settings (Kruk Review) to help ease health workforce shortages across Australia while maintaining high standards in health care quality and patient safety.</p> <p>The Review presented several recommendations to streamline and simplify health practitioner regulation, with an aim to ease skills shortages in critical health professions. Implementation of recommendations has commenced and Tasmania will continue to contribute through the National Health Workforce Taskforce.</p>
In Progress	Continue developing the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway to increase access to a highly skilled allied health workforce for rural and remote communities	<p>Building on the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pilot Project, the Department is continuing its collaboration with UTAS to establish the Allied Health Rural Generalist Pathway in Tasmania.</p> <p>A gap analysis of the Allied Health Rural Generalist Education Framework against UTAS units has been completed and will inform discussions on the collaboration.</p>

Status	Long-Term Plan: Health Workforce Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Develop a Nurse Practitioner Candidate Pathway Framework to assist managers in identifying and planning for Nurse Practitioner positions	The Nurse Practitioner Candidate Pathway Framework is under development to guide and support the introduction of new Nurse Practitioner candidate positions and investigate potential scholarships.
In Progress	Work with the Australian Government and other state and territory governments to ensure Tasmania is well placed to contribute to and benefit from national health workforce policy, planning and information sharing through the development of the National Nursing Workforce Strategy and Nurse Practitioner Workforce Plan	<p>The Department continues to work with the Australian Government, jurisdictions, and other stakeholders in the implementation of the <i>National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021-2031</i>.</p> <p>Tasmania is an active participant in the National Health Workforce Taskforce on workforce and employment reforms, including the National Maternity Workforce Review, and development of the National Nursing Workforce Strategy, and the National Allied Health Workforce Strategy.</p> <p>The DoH Tasmania is developing a Nurse Practitioner Workforce Strategy that aligns to the key principles of the national Nurse Practitioner Workforce Plan to enhance accessibility of services and grow and diversify models of care.</p>
In Progress	Introduce relocation allowances for nurses and midwives to encourage them to move to Tasmania or back to Tasmania and introduce scholarships for graduate nurses to encourage them to remain in their home state	<p>In March 2024, the Tasmanian Government committed to attract and retain more nurses across Tasmania's health system. A package of incentives has been delivered that will encourage more nurses and midwives to work in Tasmania.</p> <p>Applications for a \$15,000 incentive for nurses and midwives who move to Tasmania and remain employed full-time with the Tasmanian Health Service (THS) for three years or more, who commence employment with the DoH from 28 April 2024 and up to 30 June 2025 and who relocate to Tasmania from interstate.</p> <p>A \$10,000 scholarship is also being offered for new Tasmanian graduate nurses and midwives who start with the THS and remain employed for a period of three years or more. This scholarship closed in August 2024.</p>
In Progress	Develop the Tasmanian Midwifery Strategy which will include educational pathways to create a more flexible preparation model for midwives	A Tasmanian Midwifery Strategy is under development. The Strategy will include an evaluation of availability and accessibility of models of care and identify educational pathways which support recruitment to Midwifery led continuity of care models. Any considerations from reviews of maternity services will also be captured as part of the strategy.

Status	Long-Term Plan: Health Workforce Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Introduce new legislation to protect frontline health workers from assault with increased penalties	<p>In June 2024, the Tasmanian Government introduced legislation in Parliament to better protect Tasmania's frontline workers.</p> <p>Led by the Department of Justice, the Sentencing Amendment (Presumptive Sentencing for Assaults on Frontline Workers) Bill 2024 proposes amendments to the <i>Sentencing Act 1997</i> (Tas) to provide for a presumption of minimum sentencing in relation to offences causing serious bodily harm to specified frontline workers, including health and safety officers and child safety officers.</p>
In Progress	Support healthcare workers to study a Certificate in palliative care or a Specialist Certificate in palliative care to increase the availability of palliative and end of life care for Tasmanians	<p>The Department has contracted Flinders University to deliver DoH subsidised online palliative care education courses accessible to doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals across the THS to increase their knowledge and understanding of palliative care.</p> <p>In round one of the scholarship program 86 individuals, from a range of settings where palliative care is delivered were awarded a scholarship for either a certificate in palliative care or a specialist undergraduate certificate in palliative care.</p> <p>Following this, in round two, 92 THS and palliative care sector staff were awarded scholarships. 15 places in Flinders University's graduate palliative care program are also being offered to specialist palliative care staff from around the State.</p>



Photo: Rosie Hastie

Investing in Preventative Health and Health Promotion

The Tasmanian Government has committed \$10 million over five years to implement the *Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Strategic Plan 2022-2026* which guides preventive health initiatives and supports people to live healthier lives. An extra \$8 million over four years to 2024-2025 has been allocated for the Healthy Tasmania Fund. Building on the lessons and success of the *Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Strategic Plan 2022-2026*, the Tasmanian Government is developing the first 20-year strategy for preventive health, to drive transformative and sustainable change in the systems that shape health outcomes for Tasmanians, with a focus on healthy, active lives.

The Tasmanian Government is also progressing reform across the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment sector and delivering the priorities outlined in the *Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-2027* to build a compassionate and connected community working together to prevent suicide in Tasmania.

Long-Term Plan: Preventative Health and Health Promotion Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Develop and action the 2023-24 Alcohol and Drug Reform Agenda Implementation Plan to guide reform action for the next year to increase access to alcohol and drug treatment services across Tasmania	<p>The Tasmanian Government is progressing reforms across the Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment sector to ensure all Tasmanians have access to quality, timely and evidence-based treatment services, delivered by highly skilled staff.</p> <p>The Implementation Plan, released in December 2023, was prepared through an extensive consultation process to guide key actions.</p>
In Progress	Implement the <i>Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-27</i> , which sets out the Tasmanian Government's vision and priorities for preventing suicide over the next five years through actions to reduce suicide and suicide	<p>The Tasmanian Government has allocated \$3.75 million in ongoing funding for suicide prevention initiatives.</p> <p>Significant progress has been made, with 81 actions through the first implementation plan of the <i>Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-27</i>. A robust governance structure has been established to oversee the work, with representation from organisations, community members, and people with lived and living experience.</p> <p>The second implementation plan is being developed to oversee the implementation of actions through to December 2025.</p>
In Progress	Implement and evaluate the <i>Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Strategic Plan 2022-2026</i> for all Tasmanians to have the opportunity to live healthy, active lives in communities that support connections to people, place and culture	<p>Implementation of the <i>Healthy Tasmania Five-Year Strategic Plan 2022-2026</i> is well underway to help Tasmanians live healthier lives.</p> <p>The Healthy Tasmania Research and Evaluation Framework aims to monitor the performance, outcomes, effectiveness and sustainability of Healthy Tasmania. Over the past three years, the Plan has enabled many communities to deliver health and wellbeing actions. Their stories and success complement the research and evaluation reports.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Preventative Health and Health Promotion Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Implement and evaluate the Healthy Tasmania Fund grants program to support the work of local government and community organisations to take action on health and wellbeing	<p>A range of grants support preventive health projects to address the focus areas of the Healthy Tasmania strategy.</p> <p>Since its launch in September 2022, 179 organisations and communities delivering 217 initiatives have been awarded funding across all grant streams with a total of \$4.2 million allocated to support local health and wellbeing initiatives.</p>
In Progress	Implement the <i>Tobacco Action Plan 2022-2026</i> to improve the health and wellbeing of Tasmanians by reducing the prevalence of smoking and the harm it causes, including a smoking prevention package for young people, action	<p>The <i>Tasmanian Tobacco Action Plan 2022-2026</i> provides direction to reduce the use of tobacco and related products and its harms through partnerships and community action.</p> <p>A midway progress report is expected to be released later in 2024, providing an opportunity to review priorities.</p>
In Progress	Review the <i>Move Well Eat Well</i> Program in all early childhood education and care and primary school settings to understand how to streamline and strengthen the program working with educators, schools and services to reimagine Move Well Eat Well	<p>A review of the <i>Move Well, Eat Well</i> Program is being undertaken to improve and streamline the program by ensuring alignment with current evidence, increasing program flexibility, and supporting more schools to participate in the Program.</p> <p>Public consultation, through a survey, interviews and workshops, was open from February to June 2024, for Tasmanian schools and services to contribute to the review. The outcomes of the consultation will inform updates to the Program.</p>
To Commence Shortly	Develop a contemporary Tasmanian Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Framework for mental health and alcohol and other drugs	<p>The development of a contemporary Tasmanian Promotion, Prevention and Early Intervention Framework, is a key action in the <i>2023-24 Rethink 2020 Implementation Plan</i>. This work focuses on providing a greater emphasis on the promotion of positive mental health, prevention of mental health and alcohol and other drug problems and suicide prevention.</p> <p>Development of the Framework, in consultation with key partners and stakeholders, is underway.</p>

Initiatives to Improve Patient Access and Flow Through the System

The Department of Health is focused on improving healthcare service delivery, to provide better access to healthcare for all Tasmanians when they need it. The Statewide Access and Patient Flow Program has supported increased efficiency across the entire Tasmanian health system, improving patient flow and delivering better health outcomes for patients and staff. The success of the Program depends on all parts of the health system working better together no matter where they are located.

Status	Long-Term Plan: Improved Patient Access and Flow initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Progress the recommendations of the Major Tasmanian Hospital Emergency Department Review to improve patient access and flow	<p>In May 2024, the Major Tasmanian Hospital Emergency Department Review Final Report recommendations were provided to the Tasmanian Government and have been accepted.</p> <p>The final recommendations cover five main areas of focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand Management Strategies – Local Level • Capacity and Service Delivery Models – State Level • Community and Home-Based Care • Statewide Mental Health Services • Ambulance Tasmania Redesign <p>All recommendations are currently underway, with completion expected by mid-2025.</p>
In Progress	Develop enhanced cardiology services at the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) to provide principal referral cardiology services to the people living in Northern Tasmania	<p>The development of a Tasmanian Cardiac Strategy is being finalised to focus on meeting the future needs of Tasmanians from prevention and early diagnosis of heart disease in the community, through to end of life care.</p> <p>Planning has commenced for the Northern Heart Centre to provide a new coronary care unit with additional inpatient cardiac ward beds and coronary care unit beds which will remain co-located in the ICU, two Cardiac Catheterisation Labs with dedicated recovery and holding bays for direct access for patients requiring procedures, dedicated diagnostic testing for echocardiography and outpatient services, and direct access to the ICU, ED and medical imaging.</p>
In Progress	Commence the establishment of a Statewide Integrated Operations Centre to direct the flow of patients and resources across the whole health system	<p>The Tasmanian Government is committed to supporting the seamless transition of patients, from a GP visit, through to a hospital admission and back home with support.</p> <p>The Major Tasmanian Hospital Emergency Department Review Final Report recommended that the Statewide Integrated Operations Centre be established to better manage the flow of patients and resources across the health system.</p> <p>The Centre is expected to be launched in early 2025.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Improved Patient Access and Flow initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
Completed	Develop and implement the SAFEST Patient Journey Home Framework in Tasmania to improve patient outcomes	<p>Following consultation with Queensland Health, the Department has adopted and adapted the SAFEST Patient Journey Home Framework.</p> <p>SAFEST is targeted at ED and inpatient services. It is a suite of patient flow strategies and principles that when used in conjunction with one another facilitate effective, efficient, accessible, integrated, and safe healthcare through the patient journey back to their home.</p>
Completed	Develop and implement Criterion Led Discharge (CLD) into our hospitals to enable clinicians to initiate discharge in line with pre-determined criteria and enable patients returning home from hospital as safely and quickly as possible	<p>Implementing Criterion Led Discharge (CLD) is a priority for reforming the delivery of care in our community through improvements in admission and discharge practices. Recommended by the Major Tasmanian Hospital Emergency Department Review Final Report, its objective is to discharge eligible patients using generic (individual patient) or diagnostic specific pathways.</p> <p>Statewide implementation, supported by the Statewide Access and Patient Flow Program (SAPFP), was completed in June 2024. Broad uptake of generic CLD practice has been achieved across Hospitals South, with early adoption processes and planning completed across Hospitals North and Hospitals North West.</p> <p>The CLD statewide policy and protocol are endorsed and available to support generic CLD pathways with diagnostic specific CLD processes being developed across multiple specialties, including Acute Medical Units, Trauma, Stroke and Ophthalmology.</p>
In Progress	Optimise the use of transit lounges in our acute facilities to support the timely transfer of patients both incoming, outgoing and transferring through the hospital	<p>Transit lounge optimisation is a continued focus Statewide. Hospitals South collaborated with the SAPFP Transit Lounge Utilisation quality improvement project, finalised in June 2024, achieving the aim to improve occupancy to 40 per cent by April 2024. The NWRH is undergoing infrastructure development and expansion of its Transit Lounge and all regions are prioritising accessibility to support early discharge.</p> <p>Work is also being undertaken to improve Statewide bed utilisation reporting.</p>
Completed	Implement Hospital in the Home (HiTH) capability with HiTH beds in the North to provide hospital equivalent care to people who can be cared for at home	<p>Hospital in the Home – North provides acute treatment in the home providing care that is flexible, responsive and tailored to the individual's needs. Driven by consumer preference to receive care at home where clinically appropriate, the Northern service has 11 virtual beds.</p> <p>The service provides a single point of referral and contact for patients, carers, families and healthcare providers.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Improved Patient Access and Flow initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
Completed	Implement the expansion of Hospital in the Home (HiTH) beds in the South, including the establishment of the Care@home South service	<p>Hospital@Home in the South has been implemented to significantly increase the amount of hospital-level care delivered in the community, by expanding its virtual ward from 12 to 22 beds and providing rapid response services.</p> <p>COVID@homeplus became Care@home in March 2024 as the service now provides care regularly to Tasmanians with a range of respiratory illnesses.</p>
In Progress	Implement the expansion of Hospital in the Home (HiTH) beds in the North West	<p>Work has commenced to support the optimisation of Hospital in the Home – North West.</p> <p>A Statewide evaluation of the Hospital in the Home has been undertaken with the view to optimise these services across the State.</p>
Completed	Implement the new Ambulance offload protocol to support patients arriving to the Emergency Department (ED) by ambulance to be transferred to the care of ED staff as soon as possible so that ambulances can get back on the road sooner to respond to new call outs	<p>In April 2024, the Transfer of Care Procedure was implemented to support patients arriving at hospital by ambulance being transferred to the care of Emergency Department staff within 60 minutes.</p> <p>This enables paramedics to be released more quickly to attend cases in the community and reduce emergency response times.</p>



Enhancing Virtual Care in Tasmania and Developing More Care@Home Services

The Tasmanian Government has invested \$41 million over two years to enhance virtual care delivery in Tasmania. We will deliver more care in people's homes and the communities in which they live. This will be achieved through the implementation of more in-reach and home-based models of care, leveraging the success of programs such as COVID@homeplus to expand virtual care options.

Status	Long-Term Plan: Enhanced Virtual Care Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Implement the enhanced Rapid Access In-reach Services and progress implementation into the North West to provide advice to GPs and Rural Medical Practitioners (RMP) in the community and District Hospitals to support and improve patient health outcomes	<p>The Tasmanian Government has expanded its Rapid Access In-Reach Service (RAIS) to support the management of patients with complex chronic disease who are at risk of deterioration. RAIS also aims to prevent unnecessary ED presentations and provide a patient centred model of care, offering rapid advice and consultation if required from the service.</p> <p>This service provides appropriate, equitable, rapid advice and support to GPs and Rural Medical Practitioners (RMP) through a multidisciplinary team when caring for a complex care patient in GP practices, District Hospitals, Residential Aged Care Facilities and Community Health Centres.</p> <p>Following successful implementation in the North, the service is expanding into the North West as additional recruitment is completed.</p>
Completed	Implement an In-Reach Pilot into residential aged care facilities for older person mental health	<p>A Rapid Access Service (RAS) Pilot commenced in the North in January 2024. The service provides rapid, specialised in-reach psychiatric and nursing support to residents in 14 Residential Aged Care Facilities in the greater Launceston area. The service aims to ensure the patient can stay in their place of residence and reduce overall transfers to the ED and extended hospital stays.</p> <p>The Pilot has been actively managed and overwhelming positive feedback has demonstrated the success of the Pilot, as well as supporting the proposed continuation of the Pilot and its expansion into the other regions as a statewide Older Persons Mental Health Service.</p>
Completed	Establishment of the Victorian Stroke Telemedicine Services (VST) at the Mersey Community Hospital (MCH) to enable the access to 24/7 on-call support from stroke specialists at the VST to optimise the care provided to patients who present with stroke symptoms	<p>The Victorian Stroke Telemedicine Services (VST) expanded into the MCH in October 2023, providing improved access to life-saving stroke care. Through using virtual care technology, the telehealth service enables specialist assessment and diagnosis by VST neurologists.</p> <p>Through the enhanced partnership, clinical staff at the MCH can access 24/7 on-call support from VST stroke specialists to optimise the care provided to patients who present with stroke symptoms and enable clinicians in the North West to provide life-saving interventions sooner.</p>

Status	Long-Term Plan: Enhanced Virtual Care Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Develop a Virtual Care Strategy and Implementation Plan to deliver more care in the community	<p>A virtual care strategy is being developed to initiate and support the implementation and integration of virtual care across our health service.</p> <p>The strategy will focus on the delivery of more care in the community through establishing virtual care hubs, enhanced and integrated community and home-based services, increase virtual care bed capacity and investigating technology assisted access to specialised healthcare in Tasmania via Telehealth enabled Models of Care.</p>
In Progress	Establish a central virtual care hub/s in Tasmania, including exploring a "digital front door" and a single streamlined point of access for health information, referral and navigation	<p>The virtual care strategy will focus on creating a digital front door and establish virtual care hubs at District Hospitals to enable and enhance the delivery of more care in the community. This will make healthcare easier to access through improved navigation tools and understanding of healthcare services available in the local community alongside increasing our capacity to care for people outside of a hospital setting, in their own home or community.</p> <p>Care@home will expand to be the single-entry point/platform for which patients can receive care and access various health care solutions.</p>
In Progress	Develop a framework to support the establishment of Care@home service models, to strengthen and integrate services provided in the intermediate care space	<p>Care@home (formerly known as COVID@homeplus until April 2024) commenced in December 2021 as a virtual service designed to provide safe care to people in their home who have been diagnosed with acute respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19, influenza and RSV. Over 45,000 Tasmanians have enrolled in the service since its establishment.</p> <p>In late 2024, the Care@home framework will expand to provide a statewide chronic disease program, supporting people with conditions such as heart failure and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.</p>
In Progress	Provide infrastructure in District Hospitals to support Tasmanians to access specialist virtual care services without needing to travel	<p>Virtual care infrastructure is available statewide to all District Hospitals should a virtual appointment be desired.</p> <p>The Virtual Care Program is working closely with the Outpatient Transformation Project and begun planning the development of a Framework for the implementation of virtual care solutions in outpatient settings, which will include District Hospitals, Community Health Centres, and outpatient specialist appointments.</p> <p>This framework will ensure that infrastructure and service delivery models align effectively with clinical needs across the state.</p>

Status	Long-Term Plan: Enhanced Virtual Care Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Establish an after-hours palliative care pilot in the North and North West to provide enhanced care for patients when they need it	<p>Specialist Palliative Care Services in the North have commenced a 7-day a week service and deliver nursing services during business hours on weekends and public holidays. The service provides valuable support to front line service providers, including Community Nurses, GP's, Residential Aged Care Facilities, as well as direct care to patients where clinically required. Genysis, a telephony and data capturing platform introduced in January 2024, shows that 1,811 calls were handled in the period 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.</p> <p>The Genysis platform has also been introduced into the North West specialist palliative care service currently operating a five day per week service.</p> <p>In the South, implementation of a weekend service and the introduction of Genysis is also progressing.</p>
Completed	Expansion of Hospital@home services in Southern Tasmania to enable more patients in Southern Tasmania to be supported to return home from hospital sooner – or avoid presenting to a hospital altogether – with the expansion of the Royal Hobart Hospital's (RHH) Hospital@home program	<p>Hospital@home in the South has been implemented to significantly increase the amount of hospital-level care delivered in the community, by expanding its virtual ward from 12 to 22 beds and providing rapid response services.</p> <p>Eight new geriatric care beds have been established providing comprehensive assessment and management of older, frailer patients – a first-of-its kind service for the State to enable more elderly Tasmanians to maintain their independence in the community for longer.</p> <p>Two new beds for patients needing acute care have also been added to the virtual ward.</p>

Supporting Urgent and After-Hours Primary Care

The Tasmanian Government continues to support after-hours primary care and urgent care services through its \$8 million Primary Care Support Initiative, which supports primary care providers to deliver both after-hours and urgent care; through its \$2.6 million investment in Medicare Urgent Care Clinics to establish four Clinics located in Launceston, Devonport and two in Hobart.

Status	Long-Term Plan: Urgent and After-Hours Primary Care Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	In partnership with the Australian Government establish more Medicare Urgent Care Clinics in Tasmania to provide care for people who need to see a medical professional for a health issue that is urgent and requires treatment, but does not require presentation to a hospital emergency department	<p>The Tasmanian Government has worked in partnership with Primary Health Tasmania and the Australian Government to establish four Medicare Urgent Care Clinics in Tasmania.</p> <p>The Medicare Urgent Care Clinics located in Launceston, Devonport and two in Hobart are all open seven days a week for assessment and treatment for minor injuries and illnesses, at no out-of-pocket cost to the patient. The four Clinics have seen over 35,000 patients.</p> <p>As part of the 2024-2025 Federal Budget, a fifth Medicare Urgent Care Clinic was announced for Bridgewater. An open tender was advertised in July 2024 and it is expected the Bridgewater Medicare Urgent Care Clinic will begin operating by the end of 2024.</p>
In Progress	Continue to deliver the GP After-Hours Grants initiative to increase access to after-hours primary and urgent care services for Tasmanians regardless of where they live through different practice settings, including community pharmacies, general practice, and urgent care clinics	<p>The GP After Hours Support Initiative has delivered four Grant Rounds. The first four Grant Rounds have provided 24 grants.</p> <p>Grant Rounds One and Two helped to increase access to after-hours primary and urgent care, including community pharmacies, general practice, and other primary care services.</p> <p>Grant Round Three focused on after-hours and general business hours primary care access for vulnerable groups, including remote and rural communities, homeless Tasmanians, and members of the LGBTIQ+ community.</p> <p>Grant Round Four focussed on expanding and improving services to vulnerable groups, with emphasis on those experiencing homelessness or at immediate risk of becoming homeless.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Urgent and After-Hours Primary Care Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	In partnership with Primary Health Tasmania (PHT) develop an After Hours and Urgent Care Services Framework in Tasmania to ensure that service gaps are addressed whilst developing a structure that will provide the right care in the right place at the right time for all Tasmanians	<p>Tasmania is partnering with the Australian Government to deliver Urgent Care Clinics across Tasmania. Medicare Urgent Care Clinics deliver care for urgent, but not life-threatening conditions, including assessment and treatment for minor injuries and illnesses, at no out-of-pocket cost to the patient. Medicare Urgent Care Clinics operate in Devonport, Launceston and two in Hobart. As part of the 2024-2025 Federal Budget, a fifth Medicare Urgent Care Clinic was announced for Tasmania; to be located in Bridgewater.</p> <p>In partnership with Primary Health Tasmania, DoH is working to confirm a structure for after-hours primary healthcare and urgent care services in Tasmania.</p> <p>This work is considering how best to integrate the range of related primary healthcare and intermediate care initiatives already underway, including Medicare Urgent Care Clinics, the GP After-Hours Grants, Primary Health Support Initiative, Hospital Avoidance Co-Investment Fund and the utilisation of virtual care models of care, such as My Emergency Doctor.</p>
Completed	Develop alternate care pathways for lower acuity ambulance patients to improve the efficiency of the system and the experience for the patient, examples include mental health and palliative care pathways	<p>Alternate care pathways for lower acuity ambulance patients have been developed through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambulance Tasmania Secondary Triage to enable lower acuity patients who phone Triple Zero and are assessed as not requiring an emergency ambulance response, to be further assessed by a paramedic or registered nurse and referred to alternate medical care providers. • Community paramedics across all regions to provide a primary health care focus to treat lower acuity patients and keep them in the community. A further two community paramedic training programs have been undertaken in the first half of 2024. • Mental Health Emergency Response Service, to provide care and support to people affected by mental health conditions and enable them to remain in the community whenever appropriate. This service in the South has expanded to the North West with a two-year pilot and work is progressing to implement in the North.

Long-Term Plan: Urgent and After-Hours Primary Care Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
Completed	Establish extended care paramedics and community paramedics to enable a primary healthcare focus and extend the care options for patients closer to where they live	<p>Extended care and community paramedics operate as dedicated single responders for identified lower acuity patients who present through Triple Zero.</p> <p>In January 2024, the Tasking of Extended Care and Community Paramedics – Operational Work Instruction was released, detailing the dispatch of extended care and community paramedics.</p> <p>The Tasmanian Government initiative to employ 27 community paramedics across the 13 District Hospitals, will see the development of a new community paramedic service delivery model, with paramedics working closely with THS nursing, allied health and medical staff to better meet the medical care needs of rural communities.</p>
In Progress	Enable Tasmanians in regional and remote areas to access specialised virtual urgent care in Tasmania, such as My Emergency Doctor to provide urgent and emergency care to Tasmanians regardless of where they live	<p>Building on the success of Care@home, the Virtual Care Program is scoping high quality, effective and safe virtual care opportunities across to support service transformation and offers strategies to reduce unplanned hospital presentations, admission, re admission, and hospital lengths of stay.</p> <p>This will be further complemented by Care@home expansion that will look at chronic disease management pathways and expanded access to GP through the GP NOW program.</p>
In Progress	Begin recruitment of 10 GPs to establish a GP NOW Rapid Response Unit to be deployed into local communities where and when needed to support access to GP services	<p>Recruitment for the Tasmanian Government's new GP NOW service commenced recruitment in July 2024. GP NOW will provide crisis support and intervention to communities where private general practice is experiencing challenges, to help ensure Tasmanians can still see a doctor while a more viable, long-term solution is explored. It is anticipated the team will be up and running by the end of September 2024.</p> <p>GP NOW will be an extension of the successful Care@home program, with GPs to be based in Cambridge, Launceston and Latrobe.</p>
In Progress	Establish an after-hours palliative care pilot in the North and North West to provide enhanced care for patients when they need it	<p>Specialist Palliative Care Services in the North commenced a 7-day a week service and deliver nursing services during business hours on weekends and public holidays. The service provides valuable support to front line service providers, including Community Nurses, GP's, Residential Aged Care Facilities, as well as direct care to patients where clinically required. Genysis, a telephony and data capturing platform introduced in January 2024, shows that 1,811 calls were handled in the period 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.</p> <p>The Genysis platform has also been introduced into the North West specialist palliative care service currently operating a five day per week service.</p> <p>In the South, implementation of a weekend service and the introduction of Genysis is also progressing.</p>



Creating Sustainable Elective Surgery, Endoscopy and Outpatient Waiting Lists

The Tasmanian Government has invested an additional \$196.4 million over four years commencing in 2021-2022 to support the *Statewide Elective Surgery Four Year Plan 2021–2025*. Recurrent funding of approximately \$36.4 million for elective surgery was committed to in the 2022-2023 Budget, to support wait list sustainability in Tasmania and \$38 million over four years to implement the *Statewide Endoscopy Services Four-Year Plan 2023–27* to enhance access to endoscopy services and ensure Tasmanians receive their procedures within clinically recommended timeframes.

Status	Long-Term Plan: Elective Surgery, Endoscopy and Outpatient Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Develop a comprehensive service model to increase access to best practice models of care and pathways for people living with musculoskeletal conditions, including development of persistent pain and rheumatology services in the North and North West	<p>A Statewide Rheumatology Model of Care and Persistent Pain Model of Care have been developed in consultation with clinicians and stakeholders.</p> <p>Work is underway to provide expanded rheumatology and persistent pain services for the communities of North and North West Tasmania.</p> <p>The continuation of the Back Assessment Clinic at the RHH has occurred and has been expanded to the North of the State.</p> <p>Along with funding support from the Commonwealth, the important persistent pain service, facilitated through TAZREACH, has continued to be supported in the North West.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Elective Surgery, Endoscopy and Outpatient Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Implement the <i>Statewide Elective Surgery Plan 2021-2025</i> and develop the new <i>Statewide Elective Surgery Plan 2025-2029</i> , to be expanded to include surgical dental procedures	<p>Under the <i>Statewide Elective Surgery Four Year Plan 2021-2025</i>, the number of people waiting longer than clinically recommended for elective surgery has reduced, and importantly, waiting times have decreased.</p> <p>In 2023-2024, there were 22,025 elective surgery admissions delivered, which is a record level of activity for Tasmania with an increase of 3.1 per cent. Admissions increased by 45 per cent, compared to 2019-2020 before implementation of the Plan commenced.</p> <p>Initial work to develop a new <i>Statewide Elective Surgery Plan 2025-2029</i> is currently underway.</p>
In Progress	Implement the <i>Statewide Endoscopy Plan 2023-27</i> delivering more endoscopies and seeing more people within clinically appropriate times, and enhance services to meet future demand	<p>Through the first year of the <i>Statewide Endoscopy Services Four-Year Plan 2023-2027</i>, more people have received an endoscopy in Tasmania than any year on record.</p> <p>Key achievements include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2023-2024 Budget allocating \$1.2 million in additional funding for essential endoscopy equipment to all hospitals. • Strengthening our public-private partnership, to fully utilise available capacity across the State. • Continuing to build our workforce, through successful recruitment to fill vacant gastroenterology positions. • Partnering with consumers to explore opportunities to increase education to the community to raise awareness about bowel preparation and to help patients make informed decisions about their care and to improve service quality. • Implementing the gastroenterology Statewide Referral Criteria (SRC) platform, making it easier for GPs and referring specialists to submit a referral, and improving triage information. This includes formalising direct access to endoscopy services so that patients do not have to be referred to outpatient clinics first.
In Progress	Continue implementing the four-year <i>Outpatient Transformation Strategy 2022-2026</i> to better meet the needs of our community and ensure people have access to the services they need, when they need them	<p>The 2023 2024 Budget included an additional investment of \$20 million over two years to transform outpatient services. This is in addition to \$1.8 million per annum in ongoing funding which commenced in the 2022 2023 Budget to deliver on our comprehensive plan to transform outpatient care.</p> <p>By implementing the <i>Outpatient Transformation Strategy</i>, we are broadening community access to specialist services for those that need them; more Tasmanians are being seen within clinically recommended timeframes, which is delivering improved patient outcomes.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Elective Surgery, Endoscopy and Outpatient Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
Completed	Establish a Statewide Centralised Referral Hub for outpatient services in Tasmania, to ensure efficient and effective coordination of outpatient services	A new Outpatient Central Services team has been established as a hub to improve communication between Tasmanian patients and outpatient clinics statewide. This initiative has been highly successful and is helping to improve patient experience and health outcomes and is vital to ensuring an increased capacity to deliver health services to Tasmanians.
In Progress	Implement the Digital Outpatient Management Solution to improve the patient experience across their outpatient journey through delivering an enhanced user experience need, when they need them	Through the evaluation process involved in the procurement of the statewide Electronic Medical Record (EMR) solution, it has been determined that the EMR suite will incorporate the functionality that was to be provided by the Digital Outpatient Management solution.
In Progress	Implement Statewide Referral Criteria (SRC) into Outpatient clinics in Tasmania to provide GPs and other primary care providers with clinical decision support tools to help manage, refer and triage their patients	<p>The SRC has been introduced to the new eReferral system to simplify patients' specialist outpatient experience by ensuring that patient referrals are assessed against the same criteria in the assessment and triage of referrals in outpatient specialist clinics. This will improve the timeliness and quality of outpatient referrals and provide decision support tools for GPs to assist in appropriate management of their patients.</p> <p>SRC has been rolled out in cardiology, gastroenterology, respiratory and sleep medicine services across all regions, with additional SRCs to be introduced in the coming months.</p>
To Commence Shortly	Commence a clinician led trial of colon capsule endoscopy at the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH) to investigate the viability of this technology as a diagnostic tool within existing endoscopy services	In March 2024, the Tasmanian Government committed to investing in colon capsule endoscopy as an innovative diagnostic technology. This technology benefits patients because of its ability to quickly triage colonoscopy for those most in need. The capsule contains a tiny camera, transmitter and light, is easily swallowed and takes diagnostic images as it passes through the patient's body, transmitting images to a recorder outside of the body. Investigation for a clinical led trial will commence shortly.
In Progress	Plan for the delivery of a new surgical robot at the Launceston General Hospital (LGH) to improve clinical outcomes for patients undergoing urological, gynaecological and other precision procedures	<p>In March 2024, the Tasmanian Government committed to investing close to \$4.7 million to purchase a surgical robot for urological, gynaecological and other precision procedures. This contemporary technology is commonly used to perform radical prostatectomy for prostate cancer or kidney cancer surgery. It can greatly improve clinical outcomes for patients by reducing surgical complications, decreasing pain, blood loss and infection, which means a shorter recovery time and hospital stay.</p> <p>A pre-procurement process for the installation of the surgical robot at the LGH has commenced. The surgical robot is expected to be operational in late 2025 following installation and staff training.</p>

Long-Term Plan: Elective Surgery, Endoscopy and Outpatient Initiatives		
Status		2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Provide additional funding through the Medical Equipment Fund to provide critical equipment for elective surgery and endoscopy	<p>The Tasmanian Government has committed to a \$40 million hospital medical equipment fund for the purchase of critical hospital equipment such as endoscopes, ventilators, monitors and ultrasounds.</p> <p>Work is underway with clinical areas Statewide to collate information on equipment needs and priorities.</p>
In Progress	Expand services to diagnose and treat endometriosis, with increased outpatient appointments at the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH), Launceston General Hospital (LGH) and the North West Regional Hospital (NWRH)	<p>In March 2024, the Tasmanian Government committed to helping Tasmanian women suffering with endometriosis, including procuring a new near \$4.7 million surgical robot for the LGH.</p> <p>The Tasmanian Government is also committed to boosting awareness, diagnosis and treatment of endometriosis across the public health system with a \$1.2 million investment in targeted measures. Work has commenced on this program of work.</p>
In Progress	Establish a new outpatient service, employing two General Practitioners with a special interest in Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) to support diagnosis and treatment for children with ADHD	<p>The Department has commenced the necessary changes to make it easier for specialists and GPs with Specific Interest (GPSIs) in ADHD to prescribe ADHD medications. The change will enable them to be authorised to prescribe medications for up to three years, an increase from two years.</p> <p>There are four GPSIs already employed on a part-time basis in paediatric outpatient services across the State as part of the <i>Outpatient Transformation Strategy 2022-2026</i>. These GPSIs are working across a range of paediatric conditions, including in some cases behavioural and neurodevelopmental conditions, in partnership with the paediatric specialist teams.</p> <p>The new GP specialist service for children with ADHD will build on the evidence and learnings gained from this work and will help ensure that Tasmanian children with behavioural or neurodevelopmental concerns are able to access the care they need in a timely manner.</p>
In Progress	Expand the use of Nurse Practitioners to deliver contemporary Models of Care, prioritising cardiology, paediatrics, persistent pain management, neurology and respiratory medicine	<p>The Nurse Practitioner service has expanded in Tasmania to ensure that patients have better access to specialised healthcare.</p> <p>Recruitment to the Clinical Nurse Consultant candidature pathway to Nurse Practitioner was introduced to provide nurse-led Models of Care through outpatient clinics in speciality areas; cardiology, paediatrics and neurology services. Recruitment has been led through local areas and monitoring of performance is through the Outpatient Transformation Program.</p>



Enhancing Rural and Regional Health and Optimise the Utilisation of Our District Hospitals and Community Health Centres

Under the *Long-Term Plan for Healthcare in Tasmania 2040*, the Tasmanian Government has made a commitment to optimise health services in rural and remote communities and is already strengthening health services in rural areas through place-based approaches and innovative rural health workforce models. The Tasmanian Government has allocated \$500,000 to deliver the District Hospitals and Community Health Centres Masterplan to guide the Government's capital investment into our 13 rural and regional hospitals and 23 Community Health Centres in line with the communities' needs.

Status	Long-Term Plan: Rural and Regional Health Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Develop Primary Healthcare Strategy and Action Plan for Tasmania in response to Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan to strengthen the primary healthcare workforce, relationships between collaborating partners and community-based service delivery	<p>The Department is partnering with Primary Health Tasmania to develop a Tasmanian Primary Healthcare Strategy and Action Plan.</p> <p>A framework for engagement with internal and external stakeholders and a desktop analysis is underway, and a working group is being established to guide the development of the Strategy and Action Plan.</p>

Status	Long-Term Plan: Rural and Regional Health Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Continue implementing the Single Employer Model (SEM) for Tasmania, an innovative new employment model for General Practitioners in training aimed at boosting the number of doctors in rural and remote areas	<p>The Tasmanian and Australian governments have partnered to deliver the SEM pilot. The pilot allows participating GP trainees to remain THS employees for the duration of their training to become Specialist General Practitioners, which overcomes the challenges of traditional employment arrangements. The model ensures GP Trainees retain the related benefits and entitlements of THS employment and therefore supports the attraction and retention of doctors within rural and remote areas of Tasmania.</p> <p>The SEM program has 20 GP registrars enrolled in this program. So far, one participant has graduated from the program and gained their Fellowship and is now working in Tasmania as a Rural Generalist.</p>
Completed	Establish a model for GPs with Specific Interest (GPSIs) in Tasmania to extend their skills and work in hospitals and other health settings and optimise the use of GPSIs in areas of need	<p>The GPSIs model has been embedded in hospitals and other health settings. This program has enabled GPs to extend their skills in areas of specialty medicine, has increased access to specialist outpatient services for the community, and supported integration between primary and acute care.</p> <p>Statewide, 10 GPSIs are employed on a fractional basis in antenatal, paediatric, youth and mental health services, surgical, gastroenterology and cardiology.</p>
In Progress	Deliver the Access to Health Service Project (A2HS) to increase and improve access to health services in regional, rural and remote areas of North and North West Tasmania	<p>Access to Health Services (A2HS) is working with healthcare providers and community members in 11 Local Government Areas (LGAs) across the North and North West to identify the barriers to accessing healthcare, and to trial local solutions. Nine communities have lead organisations in place, and six communities have engaged project workers that are working on plans to improve health service access.</p> <p>Webinars will support the communities to develop their Local Action Plan that will include priority actions identified by the community to respond to its needs. Once approved, lead organisations will receive additional grant funding to implement these actions. The A2HS project runs until October 2026.</p>
Completed	Establish a Tasmanian Rural and Remote Clinical Network (TRRCN) to understand rural healthcare needs, make connections and provide advice to health leaders for decision making	<p>Established in November 2023, the Tasmanian Rural and Remote Clinical Network (TRRCN) provides high-level leadership, expertise and specialist clinical advice to the Department and other stakeholders to promote excellence in service delivery and health outcomes in Tasmania's rural and remote areas.</p> <p>The TRRCN is helping to identify clinical pathways to support clinicians, drive quality and safety initiatives, provide advice and recommendations to ensure service gaps are addressed, and develop structures to support the right care in the right place at the right time for Tasmanians living outside regional cities.</p>

Status	Long-Term Plan: Rural and Regional Health Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Develop Local Government Area (LGA) based health service optimisation plans to ensure robust service planning for rural and regional Tasmania, incorporating workforce and infrastructure considerations	<p>Through a staged approach, work is underway to develop rural health service optimisation plans in 20 rural and regional LGAs in Tasmania, through a place-based approach, in collaboration with local communities and partner organisations.</p> <p>The rural health service optimisation plans will inform the development of the District Hospitals and Community Health Centre Masterplan for which initial work has commenced.</p>
In Progress	Develop a multi-year grant funding program to strengthen and sustain GP practices, with funding to support GP practices to implement changes such as extended hours of service, to embed nurse practitioners into their model, or to deliver capital upgrades	<p>In March 2024, the Tasmanian Government committed to providing support to strengthen and sustain the viability of eligible GP practices in regional, rural and outer-urban areas in Tasmania.</p> <p>Grants of up to \$250,000 will assist general practices to offer innovative models of patient care, particularly those that improve ongoing access to services for Tasmanians living in rural and remote communities</p> <p>Applications for Round One of the General Practice Sustainability and Viability Initiative closed in early September 2024.</p>
In Progress	Deliver more dental healthcare for children and concession card holders in regional areas including East Coast, West Coast, Central Tasmania and the Huon Valley through a partnership with Royal Flying Doctor Service Tasmania (RFDS)	<p>The Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS) has been providing dental services to the West Coast community in partnership with the Tasmanian Government since August 2021, providing approximately 1,230 visits and delivering 12,749 treatments to patients in need.</p> <p>The expansion of the RFDS East Coast dental service has been brought forward through the acquisition of a second dental truck to expand the dental service for concession card holders and children from St Helens to Nubeena. It is expected to commence in late 2024 as staff recruitment is finalised. Planning is also underway to establish new services in Central Tasmania and the Huon Valley.</p>
In Progress	In partnership with the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) implement and evaluate the Local Government Health and Wellbeing Network	<p>All 29 Tasmanian Councils have been awarded Lift Local Grants and have engaged in the Health and Wellbeing Network, online and at regional face to face workshops.</p> <p>Councils are working on a range of initiatives, such as consulting with their community on specific issues, gathering data, delivering youth engagement activities, food security research, Aboriginal Cultural Awareness and celebration, inclusivity and climate resilience.</p> <p>Evaluation of the Lift Local grants by UTAS has so far shown that the non-competitive nature of grants and support through the Network has enabled Tasmanian Councils to share, learn, and support each other to improve health and wellbeing. Evaluation of the Network will continue to assess the effectiveness of this collaboration.</p>

Status	Long-Term Plan: Rural and Regional Health Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Work with the Australian Government to provide more aged care beds on the West Coast and work with the West Coast Council on their plan to adapt the Rosebery Health Centre to deliver more outreach home and community-based health services in the area	<p>The Tasmanian Government is committed to working with the West Coast Council on its plan to adapt the Rosebery Health Centre to deliver more outreach home and community-based health services across the area. Work will commence shortly to implement recommendations of a review undertaken of the model of service at the Rosebery Health Centre to support the process.</p> <p>The Australian Government provided \$1 million through the Community Health and Hospitals Program for improvements to the West Coast District Hospital, with the Tasmanian Government contributing an additional \$650,000 to support additional aged care capacity at the hospital. This project is complete.</p>
In Progress	Establish a HECS debt repayment scheme to support General Practitioners who work in rural and regional areas of Tasmania for a minimum of five years	<p>In March 2024, the Tasmanian Government committed to an incentive package to attract up to 40 new GPs to rural and regional Tasmania for five years. Work is underway to progress the application process for these incentives.</p> <p>The GP Incentive Package includes a \$100,000 settlement allowance for GPs to settle and practice in rural and regional areas and HECS debt relief by the Tasmanian Government of up to \$100,000 to attract and retain GPs who are not assisted through the Commonwealth's HELP scheme to participate in the Government's prioritised primary care initiatives in Hobart and Launceston.</p>



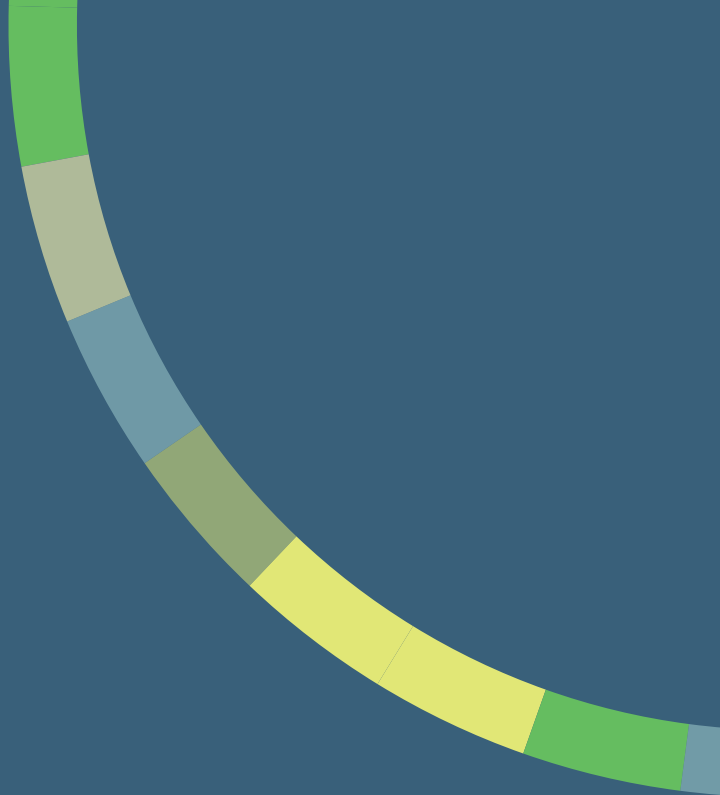
Enhancing Our Mental Health Services

Mental health reforms commenced in 2015 as part of the *One State, One Health System, Better Outcomes* reforms and continued through the refocused *Rethink 2020* update in consultation with sector partners. The significant strategies and reforms progressing concurrently are seeing the transformation and alignment of work to better support Tasmanians overall health and well-being across the lifespan, through: *Rethink 2020*, Tasmanian Mental Health Reform Program, Agenda for the Alcohol and Other Drugs Sector in Tasmania and the *Tasmanian Drug Strategy 2024-2029*.

Status	Long-Term Plan: Mental Health Service Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
Completed	In partnership with Primary Health Tasmania, establish a Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Central Intake and Referral Service (CIRS) to streamline mental health and alcohol and other drug support service access in Tasmania	<p>Since December 2023, the Central Intake and Referral Service (CIRS) has delivered telephone navigation to consumers as the provider of the national Head to Health phone service in Tasmania.</p> <p>In February 2024, the Service implemented an e-referral pathway to receive mental health and alcohol and drug referrals from GPs. CIRS has received over 300 referrals to date. The CIRS team review each referral, complete the Initial Assessment and Referral Decision Support Tool as appropriate, and consider service options including Statewide Mental Health Services, community sector organisations and private providers that best meet the individual's need.</p>
In Progress	Develop and action the <i>2023-24 Rethink 2020 Implementation Plan</i> to improve mental health outcomes for all Tasmanians	<p>The <i>2023-24 Rethink 2020 Implementation Plan</i> released in November 2023, was jointly developed by the Department, Primary Health Tasmania and the Mental Health Council of Tasmania and guided by input from key stakeholders. The Plan represents a shared approach to improving mental health outcomes for all Tasmanians.</p> <p>Work is underway to prepare a 2023-24 Annual Report and to develop the 2024-25 <i>Rethink 2020 Implementation Plan</i>. It is expected these documents will be released in late 2024.</p>
In Progress	In partnership with the Australian Government, establish three new Head to Health Kids Hubs integrated within existing Child and Family Learning Centres at Burnie, East Tamar and Bridgewater to provide an integrated early intervention multidisciplinary service for infants and children from birth to 12 years age and their families experiencing emerging complexity	<p>Work is underway to establish the three new Head to Health Kids Hubs at Burnie, East Tamar and Bridgewater.</p> <p>The appointment of Child and Youth Mental Health Services – Head to Health Kids Service Leads in the South and North West is complete and recruitment is underway for their clinical teams. Recruitment for the Service Lead in the North is continuing.</p>

Status	Long-Term Plan: Mental Health Service Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Establish the Tasmanian Eating Disorder Service, with a statewide community-based treatment program for eating disorders, including group and day programs, and 12-bed residential facility at St John's Park to provide integrated, specialist care and assist Tasmanians to recover from eating disorders	<p>The Tasmanian Government has committed \$24 million over four years from 2023-2024 as part of an ongoing commitment to the Tasmanian Eating Disorder Service. The Australian Government is also contributing to the establishment of this service through the Community Health and Hospitals Program and the Bilateral Schedule on Mental Health and Suicide Prevention.</p> <p>The Service currently provides specialist Statewide eating disorder secondary consultation, including specialist in-reach to hospitals. Expansion from these transitional Multidisciplinary Community Clinics to the full suite of Community Based Intensive Treatment services is underway to be fully delivered by the end of 2024.</p> <p>A detailed design for the residential treatment centre at St John's Park is complete. The Development Application is expected to be completed in late 2024.</p> <p>An Implementation Plan commenced in June 2023 to guide the staged rollout of the Tasmanian Eating Disorder Service, which is expected to be operational by 2026.</p>
Completed	Develop the <i>Tasmanian Drug Strategy 2024-2029</i> to provide a high-level strategic framework to guide collaborative action to support and improve Tasmanians' health and wellbeing, and prevent and reduce the health, economic, and social costs of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use	<p>The <i>Tasmanian Drug Strategy 2024-2029</i> was released in May 2024. Its vision is for a Tasmania that is inclusive and safe for all people, where people are treated equitably and make informed health decisions when it comes to use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.</p> <p>The Strategy encourages collaboration across agencies, organisations, and the community in response to alcohol, tobacco and other drug use in Tasmania.</p> <p>A first-year implementation plan is being developed to outline specific activities and planning.</p>
In Progress	Deliver more mental health services for youth, including the Mental Health Hospital in the Home service in the North West	<p>A new Devonport Child and Youth Mental Health Services site has been secured and is accommodating Youth Hospital in the Home. The North West pilot commenced phased operations in July 2024, operating four beds Monday to Friday.</p> <p>Recruitment to secure the full staffing establishment continues and operations will expand as appropriate staffing is secured.</p>
Completed	Begin service planning for a new four-bed Mother and Baby Unit in the new Launceston Health Hub	<p>Service planning for the new four-bed Mother and Baby Unit in Launceston has commenced. The Tasmanian Government has partnered with Tresillian Family Care Centre whose residential and day services will be established in the Launceston Health Hub in late 2025.</p> <p>The centre will include a co-located Gidget House to provide psychology services to parents experiencing perinatal depression and anxiety.</p>

Status	Long-Term Plan: Mental Health Service Initiatives	2023-2024 Achievement
In Progress	Implement the <i>Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-27</i> , which sets out the Tasmanian Government's vision and priorities for preventing suicide over the next five years through actions to reduce suicide and suicide attempts and improve the wellbeing of Tasmanians	<p>The Tasmanian Government has allocated \$3.75 million in ongoing funding for suicide prevention.</p> <p>The first implementation plan of the <i>Tasmanian Suicide Prevention Strategy 2023-27</i> has seen significant progress with 81 actions underway. A robust governance structure with almost 100 representatives including organisations, community members, and people with lived and living experience has been implemented to oversee the work.</p> <p>The second implementation plan is being prepared to direct the delivery of actions through to December 2025.</p>
In Progress	Develop more Child and Youth outreach clinics in Kingston, Brighton and the North West	<p>To reflect the expanded and evolving services delivered by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), the service will be renamed Child and Youth Mental Health Services (CYMHS).</p> <p>To provide further support and specialist treatment to Tasmanian infants, children and young people up to 18 years, CYMHS is increasing access to services closer to home through new premises in Devonport and Hobart. Planning is also underway to expand services in Brighton and Launceston.</p> <p>Outreach services are being delivered in all regions and will be further supported through increasing services to Kingston, Huonville, Scottsdale, St Helens, and Georgetown, and plans to establish clinics in Circular Health and Queenstown.</p>
In Progress	Begin planning for a new Mental Health Hub in Devonport, which will offer a Safe Haven, Recovery College, and Integration Hub to support improved services in the North West	<p>In March 2024, the Tasmanian Government committed \$7.6 million to deliver a new Mental Health Hub in Devonport which will offer Safe Haven, Recovery College and an Integration Hub.</p> <p>Planning for the Mental Health Hub has commenced. The Department is investigating suitable locations for the facility as part of a broader North West Accommodation Strategy. Clinical services planning will also commence to support the capital planning.</p>



Update of Table data | Abattoirs and Processors

Product Integrity Branch | Primary Produce Safety Program
 Biosecurity Operations Branch
 Biosecurity Tasmania




Year (highlight COVID years)	PPSA Audits – accredited meat processors	DAFF Audits – accredited meat processors	Saleyard visits	Restricted animal material / Swill inspections	Intensive animal production inspections	Animal welfare reports / cases managed/Responding to non- compliance (including follow-up of abattoir reports of noncompliance)	Animal Welfare Audits	Unannounced Abattoir visits	Third Party Food Safety Audits
2024	11	4 (4 TQM)	27	52 RFBC – 26 PPFC – 26	7 (Poultry – 5) and (Pigs – 2)	215		17 unannounced 1 announced visit	90 (2023/24)



Code	2021-22 Actual	2022-23 Actual	2023-24 Actual	2023-24 Target	2024-25 Target
Thoroughbred	1 182	1 176	1 092	N/A	N/A
Harness	1 881	1 760	1 748	N/A	N/A
Greyhound	975	776	612	N/A	N/A
Human	39	117	67	N/A	N/A
Total	4 078	3 829	3 519	3 500	3 500
% Positive	0.34	0.23	0.74	0.3	0.3





SURVIVORS AT THE CENTRE



RESPONDING AND REPORTING 2023

Achievements in the delivery of
*Survivors at the Centre: Tasmania's
Third Family and Sexual Violence
Action Plan 2022-2027*

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Foreword

The Tasmanian Government remains committed to eliminating all forms of family and sexual violence.



Violence against anyone, in any form, is unacceptable. Family and sexual violence in Tasmania emerges within a complex set of economic, social and community circumstances. Overall, reported family violence incidents continue to increase and there is still a long way to go to eliminate all forms of family and sexual violence in Tasmania.

Since the launch of Tasmania's first action plan to respond to family violence in 2015, the Tasmanian Government has continued to build upon its commitment, investment, and scope in responding to family and sexual violence in Tasmania.

Survivors at the Centre: Tasmania's Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan (Survivors at the Centre), reaffirms the long-term commitment to eliminating family and sexual violence in our community. *Survivors at the Centre* builds on what works and includes new actions to refine and target efforts towards preventing and responding to family and sexual violence, while putting the voices of victim-survivors at the centre. The Tasmanian Government has committed \$100 million over the life of *Survivors at the Centre* to deliver actions.

During the reporting period, the Tasmanian Government prepared for the release of the Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings (Commission of Inquiry). Although falling outside the reporting period, the Tasmanian Government has now responded to the Commission of Inquiry's report and accepted all 191 recommendations.

The Tasmanian Government is deeply committed to a Tasmania where victim-survivors of family violence, sexual violence and child sexual abuse are believed, listened to, and are safe to speak up and speak out.

Improving systems and processes for victim-survivors of child sexual abuse will also result in positive outcomes for victim-survivors of family and sexual violence. The Tasmanian Government is committed to the cultural change required to have a safer Tasmania for all and most importantly for children and young people.

Responding and Reporting 2022-23 continues the Tasmanian Government's commitment to publicly report implementation progress and outcomes for *Survivors at the Centre*.

Key achievements during 2022-23 include:

- strengthened systems and justice-focused responses to family violence;
- new partnerships and transformations, for example, opening two multi-disciplinary centres;
- a suite of investments into prevention and early interventions;
- progress in recovery and healing initiatives; and
- responding to survivors' suggestions in relation to voice and diversity actions.

The Tasmanian Government will continue to work diligently across both national and state levels to achieve our commitment of eliminating all forms of family and sexual violence. It is serious and difficult work that requires deep reflection, listening and understanding.

Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP
Minister for Women and the
Prevention of Family Violence

Over the eight-year period to 2022-23, medium-risk incidents increased by seven per cent and low risk incidents increased by 12 per cent. The increase in low-risk incidents – together with an increase in reported family violence arguments – has driven an overall increase of 10 per cent in total family violence arguments and incidents from the previous 2022-23 year (6,756). Overall, there has been a sustained reduction in the number of high-risk family violence incidents over this eight-year period.

This sustained level of reporting suggests a reduced level of tolerance for family violence in the community and by persons affected by family violence. It also shows an increased awareness and confidence in family violence response, intervention and support services.

Sexual violence

The number of sexual assaults recorded can vary significantly from year to year due to the proportion of victim-survivors who report the offence to police, and the reporting of historical sexual assaults. In 2022-23, 586 sexual assaults were reported to Tasmania Police which is a four per cent reduction from 2021-22. Overall, there was a 144 per cent increase over the eight-year average (357).

Table 2: Sexual Assaults recorded

2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
240	249	220	240	227	483	613	586

Source: Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management Reporting Services, August 2023.

38 per cent of sexual assaults reported in 2022-23 were committed a year or more before they were reported, some occurring several decades ago⁶. Females accounted for 87 per cent of victim-survivors. Most sexual assaults reported occurred at residential locations (76 per cent).

⁶ Source: Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management Reporting Services, August 2023

Legislative amendments to strengthen legal responses to family and sexual violence

Since 2015 the Tasmanian Government, through the Attorney-General, has delivered a significant program of legislative changes in the family and sexual violence area.

Under *Survivors at the Centre*, implementing legislative reforms to strengthen legal responses to family and sexual violence continues to be a key priority, with several reforms commencing in the 2022-23 financial year.

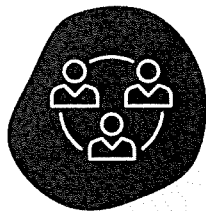
On 22 August 2022, the *Criminal Code Amendment Act 2022* commenced and has made amendments to:

- Create a new standalone offence of strangulation, which occurs where a person intentionally and unlawfully chokes, suffocates or strangles another person; and
- Reflect that there is no free agreement to sexual intercourse in the event of certain conduct regarding condoms (that is, a person does not freely agree to an act of sexual intercourse if the person says or does anything to communicate to the other person that a condom must be used for sexual intercourse and the other person intentionally, before or during sexual intercourse, does not use a condom or tampers with or removes the condom).

Survivors at the Centre

The Third Family and Sexual Violence Action Plan 2022-27

Survivors at the Centre includes 38 actions to prevent and respond to family and sexual violence in Tasmania.



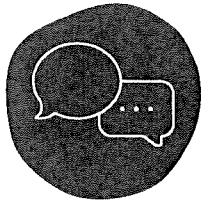
Partnership and Transformation

New and Enhanced Actions

1. Pilot the establishment of two Multi-Disciplinary Centres in the North and South to provide survivor-centred, holistic and integrated responses to family and sexual violence (Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management, DPFEM).
2. Expand the scope of the Safe Families Coordination Unit to undertake whole-of-Government data coordination and integration for family and sexual violence (DPFEM).
3. Investigate the Safe and Together Model, including providing professional learning on the model for the legal profession, community sector workers, and Government officers (DPAC).
4. Provide next-generation technology and instruments for forensic scientists to ensure higher-quality evidence for court proceedings, and increase capacity for storage of evidence, including sexual evidence kits (DPFEM).
5. Establishment of a family and sexual violence liaison service within the Tasmanian Health Service, which will provide Family Violence Liaison Officers state-wide to support clients who identify as experiencing family and sexual violence to access services (Department of Health, DOH).
6. Provide an additional appointment for parents and children who identify as experiencing family violence through the Child Health and Parenting Service (DOH).

Continuing Actions

7. Continue electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence offenders (Department of Justice, DOJ).
8. Continue to implement legislative reform to strengthen legal responses to family and sexual violence (DOJ).
9. Continue to roll out mobile phone data extraction devices to collect evidence of technology facilitated abuse (DPFEM.)
10. Continue to develop standardised risk assessment processes across Government and non-Government family and sexual violence services (DPAC).
11. Continue the Family Violence Liaison Officer in the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line (DOH).



Voice and Diversity

New and Enhanced Actions

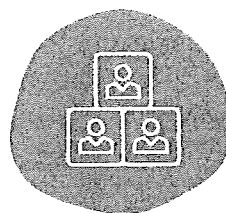
31. Establish Tasmania's first Victim-Survivor Advisory Council (DPAC).
32. Deliver funding for community-based projects to support inclusion, access and equity for diverse Tasmanians who experience barriers for accessing support for family and sexual violence (DPAC).
33. Expand the Mothers Circle Pilot Program for culturally and linguistically diverse women of Tasmania, strengthening individual capacity to identify and respond to family and sexual violence (DPAC).
34. Continue the Safe Choices Local Support Coordinator role in the North and North-West of Tasmania, to ensure a state-wide service for women with disability experiencing family violence (DPAC).
35. Continue the Hearing Lived Experience 2022 Survey of Victim-Survivors of Family and Sexual Violence to inform implementation of this action plan, and provide comprehensive data of victim-survivor experiences (DPAC).

Continuing Actions

36. Continue to support children and families through the Safe Homes, Safe Families Support Team (DECYP).
37. Continue to support Aboriginal Families through the Aboriginal family safety workers in Child and Family Learning Centres (DECYP).
38. Continue to provide increased counselling services for children and young people experiencing family violence through the Australian Childhood Foundation and the Family Violence Counselling Support Service Children and Young Persons Program (DOH).

Continuing Actions

- *Action 7* - High risk family violence offenders continued to be electronically monitored. Across the financial year, each month an average of 33.6 high-risk family violence perpetrators were subject to electronic monitoring under a condition of a Family Violence Order. Additionally, an average of 39.8 high-risk family violence victim-survivors carried an electronically monitored duress alarm that helps support an immediate police response when victim-survivors experience heightened risk. Key successes were achieved through a broad focus on community safety outcomes by targeting both perpetrator risks and victim-survivor needs through independent, but related strategies. The program has now formally transitioned to a joint operational framework between DPFEM and DOJ.
- *Action 8* - A total of 10 legislative amendments were introduced and implemented to strengthen legal responses to family and sexual violence.
- *Action 9* - Mobile phone data extraction devices to collect evidence of technology-facilitated abuse have been superseded by technology. Digital Examination Kiosks have been installed in Arch Centres. The kiosks extract data from mobile phones to enable collection of evidence of technology-facilitated abuse.
- *Action 10* - The Tasmanian Government continued to develop standardised risk assessment processes across Government and non-Government family and sexual violence services. A formal pilot of the Tasmanian and Rural Risk Assessment (TARRA) tool, following training for the specialist family violence services, will be undertaken during 2023-24. This pilot will include developing pathways to provide the de-identified data captured through this process, to better inform the understanding of risk and safety for victim-survivors.
- *Action 11* - The Family Violence Liaison Officer continued their role in the Strong Families, Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line. During 2022-2023, staff training was undertaken in the areas of family violence and assessing risk and safety.



Capacity Building

New and Enhanced Actions

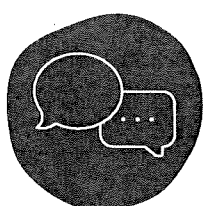
- *Action 12* - Increased core funding of \$1.044 million was delivered to Tasmania's nine specialist family and sexual violence services. A key commitment was the implementation of five-year contracts to provide greater certainty and increased capacity to respond to demand in the longer term.
- *Action 13* - A total of 37 people with 62 pets accessed the RSPCA's Safe Beds for Pets program. The program provides emergency boarding arrangements through a network of pet hosts for pets of Tasmanians in at-risk situations due to family and sexual violence.
- *Action 14* - The Tasmanian Government has entered an agreement with the Tasmanian Council of Social Services (TasCOSS) to investigate a new Tasmanian Family and Sexual Violence Peak organisation, which will improve coordination of family and sexual violence services and advice on policy development and service design.

Continuing Actions

- *Action 15* - A total of 50 properties were available through the Family Violence Rapid Rehousing Program as of 30 June 2023. From July 2019 to June 2023, there were 91 additional units of crisis and transitional accommodation completed. This included 35 additional units for women in the North and South, 25 units for men in the South and 31 units for young people in the North and North West. As of 30 June 2023, there were 195 applicants for Family Violence Rapid Rehousing.
- *Action 16* - In 2022-23, the Safe at Home Coordination Unit administered flexible support package⁸ funding to 128 victim-survivors of family violence who had fled or were planning to flee an abusive relationship. Flexible support packages are designed to contribute to a holistic response to people experiencing family violence by providing practical supports to enhance safety and wellbeing when leaving an abusive relationship.

⁸ This includes cases where funding was finalised to provide support.

- *Action 28* - The Sexual Assault Support Service continued to deliver Harmful Sexual Behaviours programs for children and young people. Primary, secondary and tertiary therapeutic programs and training courses were conducted for 422 participants and clients across Tasmania.
- *Action 29* - In 2022-23, the Defendant Health Liaison Service which provides early intervention assessment and management services to respondents was strengthened. A minimum of 168 new clients accessed the Defendant Health Liaison Service. The Defendant Health Liaison Service recruited one of two vacant positions. Recruitment for the third position is continuing. The recruitment of the North-West Defendant Health Liaison Officer has provided an opportunity to follow up northern referrals and increase service provision.
- *Action 30* - In 2022-23, there was a total of 220 perpetrators of family violence who accessed information and referral to the Men's Referral Service.
- *Action 33* - The Mothers Circle Pilot Program aims to strengthen the capacity of culturally and linguistically diverse women to identify and respond to family and sexual violence. The Program Officer was recruited in early 2023 and group work is being conducted.
- *Action 34* - 194 Safe Choices clients with a disability were supported through the Local Support Coordinator, an increase from 179 in the previous year. An additional case worker, in the North and North-West, was recruited to support women with disability who experienced family violence by providing information, advice, and practical support.
- *Action 35* - The results from the Hearing Lived Experience 2022 have been used to inform other actions in *Survivors at the Centre* including helping to establish the work of the Victim-Survivor Advisory Council.
- *Action 36* - 4943 individual children and young people¹¹ who were affected by family violence were supported¹² by the Safe Homes, Safe Families professional support team at Tasmanian Government schools or Child and Family Learning Centres.
- *Action 37* - 198¹³ Aboriginal families supported by Aboriginal Family Safety Workers in Child and Family Learning Centres (minimum number based on families that have identified as Aboriginal).
- *Action 38* - Increased counselling services for children and young people experiencing family violence was provided through the Australian Childhood Foundation and the Family Violence Counselling Support Service Children and Young Persons Program. 319 children and young people received counselling services provided by the Australian Childhood Foundation (comprising 3838 hours of service provided¹⁴).



Voice and Diversity

New and Enhanced Actions

- *Action 31* - The Tasmanian Government is in the process of establishing Tasmania's first Victim-Survivor Advisory Council. The council will be established in a way that is trauma-informed, respectful, and reflective of diversity. A workplan will be developed in consultation with advisory council members.
- *Action 32* - The *Family and Sexual Violence: Supporting Diverse Communities Grants Program 2023-24* was launched during the reporting period and was open until 1 August 2023. The grants program focuses on the delivery of community-based projects and/or enhanced service capability to support inclusion, access and equity for diverse people and groups who experience barriers to support for family and sexual violence.

¹¹ The annual figure includes all the children listed across all the notifications (meaning an individual child can be listed more than once).

¹² Either directly or through secondary consultation.

¹³ AFSWs may work with families on numerous times across each reporting quarter. The annual figure of 198 for the 2022-2023 period is not comparable to the 2021-2022 figure due to a change in Child and Family Learning Centres amended data collection and reporting processes to more accurately reflect support provided to Aboriginal families.

¹⁴ This includes 2,099 hours of direct service provided.

Case Study

Arch Centres

The Tasmanian Government has partnered with the following services and organisations to support people affected by sexual harm:

- Laurel House
- Sexual Assault Support Service
- Tasmania Police
- Family Violence Counselling and Support Service
- Child Safety Services, and
- Strong Families Safe Kids Advice and Referral Line.

The organisations work together to provide coordinated, collaborative, trauma-informed and victim-centred support. The organisations are housed in Arch centres and the first two Arch Centres opened mid-2023, in Launceston and Hobart.

In total the Government has allocated \$20.1 million for the pilot over two years, which includes an additional \$5 million to establish a third Arch Centre in North-West Tasmania.

The establishment of Arch centres are one of the central initiatives of *Survivors at the Centre* which aim to deliver support for victim-survivors and avoid re-traumatisation.

Arch Centres provide:

- A safe and welcoming space where people are supported to be themselves.
- Access to information, support and specialist police investigators at one location in an immediate, clear and connected way.
- Opportunities for Arch service providers to build stronger relationships and enhance service delivery.
- A supportive environment to report sexual violence which may prevent further offences from occurring (including if a person chooses not to make a formal complaint).
- A supportive environment for evidence to be preserved which ensures that options are available to a victim-survivor in the future.

Arch Centres will put people affected by sexual violence at the centre of service delivery. The centres address some of the barriers and challenges people have faced previously when attempting to navigate different services and systems.

Next steps

In 2023-24, implementation of actions in *Survivors at the Centre* will continue. *Survivors at the Centre* is a living plan and it will continue to evolve in line with the emerging evidence base and victim-survivor centred advice as well as recommendations made by the Commission of Inquiry.

Key milestones and actions for the 2023-24 financial year include but are not limited to:

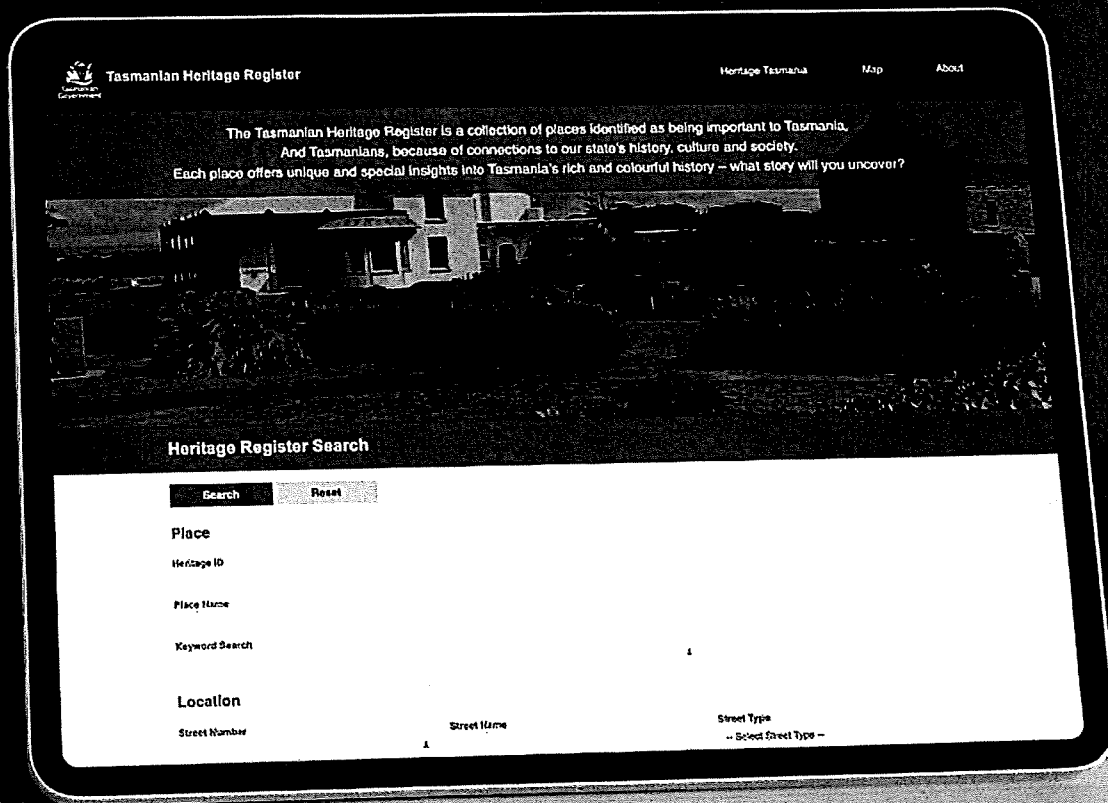
- Increasing collaboration between the Women's portfolio and Family and Sexual Violence portfolio within DPAC to deliver *Survivors at the Centre* and *Equal means Equal: Tasmanian Women's Strategy 2022-2027*.
- Working together will enable an integrated approach to preventing and responding to family and sexual violence through addressing the social drivers of violence. This includes the development of:
 - A Gender Impact Assessment Toolkit, which will support Tasmanian Government agencies and the wider community to analyse the gendered impact of policies, programs, services, and decision-making.
 - An Outcomes Framework to help form indicators and datasets to help drive outcomes in gender equality.
- Establishing the Victim-Survivor Advisory Council, including the development of a workplan in collaboration with advisory council members.

- Encouraging cross-sector collaboration through working with TasCOSS to form a project and workplan for a Tasmanian family and sexual violence peak organisation. The work will consider recommendations made in the Commission of Inquiry report.
- Continuing to investigate the applicability of the Safe and Together Model for use across Government.
- Launch of projects under the *Supporting Diverse Communities Grants Program 2023-24*.
- Expand the scope of the Safe Families Coordination Unit to undertake whole-of-Government data coordination and integration for family and sexual violence and employing three more analysts.
- Enhancing preventative program approaches, including embedding the Respectful Relationships and Consent Education suite of resources.

During the 2023-24 financial year, the Tasmanian Government will be focused on the initial stages of implementing the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry. This work will have an impact on service delivery of family and sexual violence services.

The Tasmanian Government is dedicated to ensuring victim-survivors of family violence, sexual violence and child sexual abuse is central to the work of all agencies.

A GUIDE TO EXPLORING DISCOVER HERITAGE



You can find the Discover Heritage Portal at:
onlineregister.heritage.tas.gov.au



The Discover Heritage Search Portal is a user-friendly web-based platform that allows you to easily explore the thousands of heritage places and sites listed on the Tasmanian Heritage Register (THR).

Each place offers unique and special insights into Tasmania's rich and colourful history — **what story will you uncover?**



Tasmanian Heritage Council



Tasmanian
Government

A GUIDE TO EXPLORING DISCOVER HERITAGE

You can find Discover Heritage at:
onlineregister.heritage.tas.gov.au

A. STARTING YOUR SEARCH

Discover Heritage provides multiple ways to search the THR. If you are searching for a specific property that is listed in the THR and you know the property details, you can start with the **Place (1)** section.

The **Location (2)** section allows you to search for a specific street address, or for registered properties in a specific suburb or local government area.

Other sections allow you to search broader categories relating to the historic use and significance of places entered in the THR.

The **Heritage Listing (3)** section allows you to search for Site Group and Site Types, Architectural Style and by Chronological Period.

The **Designer or Builder (4)** section allows you to search for architects and builders, the list also contains stonemasons, carpenters and other craftspeople who have made notable contributions to our built heritage.

You can search for a person, a group or an organisation that has made a notable contribution to Tasmania's history in the **Notable People or Organisations (5)** section.

SEARCH TIP:

You can combine multiple search options to refine a search. More information and tips on using each search option is presented in the **Advanced Guide**.

1 Place

Heritage ID

Place Name

Keyword Search

2 Location

Street Number

Street Name

Street Type

-- Select Street Type --

Suburb

Municipality

-- Select Municipality --

3 Heritage Listing

Heritage Site Group

-- Select Heritage Site Group --

Heritage Site Type

-- Select Heritage Site Type --

Architectural Style

-- Select Architectural Style --

Chronological Period

-- Select Chronological Period --

4 Designer or Builder

Surname

-- Select Surname --

Given Name/s

-- Select Given Name/s --

Organisation

-- Select Organisation --

5 Notable People & Organisations

Surname

-- Select Surname --

Given Name/s

-- Select Given Name/s --

Organisation

-- Select Organisation --

Search

Reset



Tasmanian Heritage Council



Tasmanian
Government

A GUIDE TO EXPLORING DISCOVER HERITAGE

You can find Discover Heritage at:
onlineregister.heritage.tas.gov.au

B. SEARCH RESULTS

The 'Search Results' page will display a list of heritage listed places that are identified as being linked with the search criteria entered. These places are listed in the numerical order of the unique **Tasmanian Heritage Register Identifier (THR Number)** assigned to each place (6), which means that heritage places listed or revised more recently will appear at the bottom of the list. A brief summary of each place is provided to assist you to narrow your search.

THR entries have been classified to reflect the historic use and significance of the place however, this may not always be obvious in relation to present day use. In the search example to the right, the Tasmania Club is identified as a bank, as this was the location of the Derwent Bank from 1828 until 1849.

You can quickly see the physical location of all places identified in your search by clicking the View Map Results (7) button at the top of this page.

Search Result

Return to Heritage Register Search

Searched for: (Heritage Site Group: Finance, Heritage Site Type: Bank/Building Society)

Filter Conditions

View map results


7

Page Size: 20

Page 1 of 3 (Total: 58 items)

THR13. Bothwell Post Office

10 ALEXANDER ST, BOTHWELL




This is a timber building that has been extended several times. The original bank section has a played corner with interlocking gables.

Download Datasheet

6

THR85. Tasmanian Club

132 MACQUARIE ST, HOBART




Formerly the Dement Bank this early commercial building is now used as the Tasmanian Club. It is a Victorian Regency building featuring a break front portico with paired tuscan columns either side. It has extensions at the rear containing a billiard room and other club facilities.

Download Datasheet

THR93. ANZ Bank

22-26 ELIZABETH ST, HOBART



A classical sandstone building of two storeys. It is a Palladian styled classical facade with Doric columns on the ground floor and Ionic on the upper floor.

Download Datasheet

Search results for Site Group = Finance and Site Type = Bank/Building Society.

Map Results

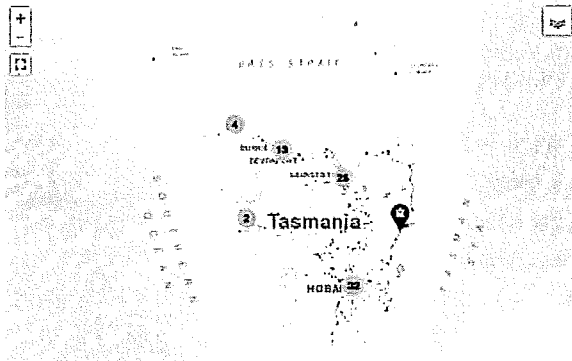
Return to Search Results

Filter Conditions

+

-

Full Screen



20 km

10 km

Show Map Markers

THR Legend

Tasmanian Heritage Register


Confirmed Boundary


Unconfirmed Boundary

Heritage boundaries are indicative only. For those who would like an official record of whether a place is or is not on the Heritage Register, the Tasmanian Heritage Council can issue a Certificate for Affected Place. For more information, please refer to the Heritage Tasmania website.

Map results for places on the Tasmanian Heritage Register where Site Type = Banks/Building Societies.

PAGE 3 OF 4

 Tasmanian Heritage Council

 Tasmanian Government

A GUIDE TO EXPLORING DISCOVER HERITAGE

You can find Discover Heritage at:
onlineregister.heritage.tas.gov.au

C. FIND MORE INFORMATION

There are two options to find more information on a listed place.

You can download the datasheet directly from the Search Results page by clicking on the **Download Datasheet (8)** link.

This will download a PDF document that can be viewed in a separate tab or window.

Tasmanian Heritage Register Datasheet



134 Macquarie Street (GPO Box 615)
Hobart Tasmania 7001
Phone: 1300 633 333 (toll call costs)
Email: enquiries@heritage.tas.gov.au
Web: www.heritage.tas.gov.au

Name: Commercial Bank and Manager's Residence
Status: Permanently Registered
Type: State
Location Address:
17 LYALL ST, WESTBURY 7253 TAS

THR ID Number: 11259
Municipality: Meander Valley Council
Boundary: CP93307
This Reference: 82201
Possession: 7014318



Original timber mantelpiece
DTAC Dec 08



General view
DTAC Dec 08



Street view showing western verandah
DTAC Dec 08



Street view
Dover 2007

Report Date: Tuesday, 30 November 10, 2024

Page 1 of 4

Example - Page 1 of the datasheet for THR11259,
Commercial Bank and Manager's Residence.

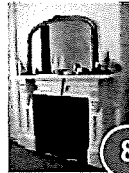
Alternatively, from the 'Search Results' page you can click on the THR Number and Name (9) of the place, this will take you a Place Details (10) page, where you can find additional information about the Heritage Register entry and see a map of the physical location (11) of the place.

Further explanation of the search options and tips to enhance your searches is presented in the Advanced Guide.

THR11259. Commercial Bank and Manager's Residence

9

17 LYALL ST, WESTBURY



The former bank is a fine single-storey Victorian Italianate commercial and residential building. The street frontage is finely decorated rendered brick facade with vertically proportioned rounded arch windows and entrance (with a fine double timber doors), pilasters, and a parapet with dentils and central parapet gable. The rear of the building is a single storey brick structure with corbelled brick chimney, corrugated iron roof and nineteenth century porch to the side door. On the western si...

Download Datasheet

Example of an Individual listing summary.

10

Place Details

[Return to Search Results](#)

THR11259. Commercial Bank and Manager's Residence

Download Datasheet

Status
Permanently Registered

Location
17 LYALL ST, WESTBURY

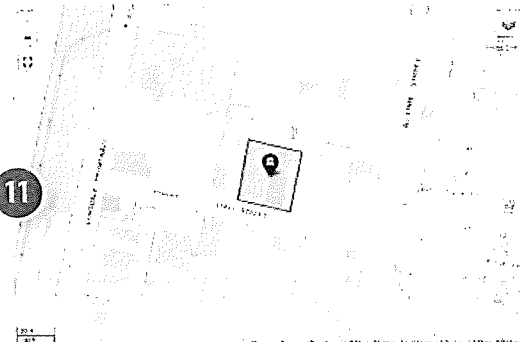
Description

The former bank is a fine single-storey Victorian Italianate commercial and residential building. The street frontage is finely decorated rendered brick facade with vertically proportioned rounded arch windows and entrance (with a fine double timber doors), pilasters, and a parapet with dentils and central parapet gable.

[Show More](#)

Boundary reference
DTAC Dec 08

Map



[Show Map Markers](#)

THR Legend

Tasmanian Heritage Register
[C] Confirmed Boundary
[U] Unconfirmed Boundary

Heritage boundaries are indicative only. For those who would like an official record of whether a place is or is not on the Heritage Register, the Tasmanian Heritage Council can issue a Certificate for Listed Place. For more information, please refer to the Tasmanian Heritage Council website.

Place Details for THR11259, Commercial Bank and Manager's Residence.



Tasmanian Heritage Council



Tasmanian
Government

1850

1900

1950

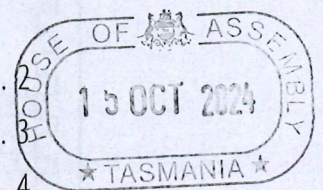
2000

A GUIDE TO SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL STYLES IN TASMANIA

Use Discover Heritage to find examples in the Heritage Register.

CONTENTS

GEORGIAN (1803 to 1945)	2
REGENCY (1825 to 1870s)	3
EGYPTIANATE (1840 to 1930s)	4
CLASSICAL (1830s to 1930s)	5
ITALIANATE (1840s to 1900s)	6
ROMANESQUE (1840s to 1940s)	7
GOTHIC (1803 to 1960)	8
FEDERATION (1880s to 1920s)	9
ENGLISH DOMESTIC REVIVAL (1890s to 1940s)	10
ARTS & CRAFTS (1890 to 1920s)	11
VERNACULAR (1803 to TODAY)	12
FREE STYLE (1856 to 1945)	12
MODERNE (1919 to 1960)	13
MODERNIST (1930s to 2000)	14
POSTMODERNIST (1960 to TODAY)	15
CONTEMPORARY (2000 to TODAY)	15



The information presented here is provided as a guide only. A building may not contain all of the suggested attributes to be classified as that style and many buildings contain attributes from more than one style.

You can find the Discover Heritage Portal at:
onlineregister.heritage.tas.gov.au



PAGE 1 OF 15

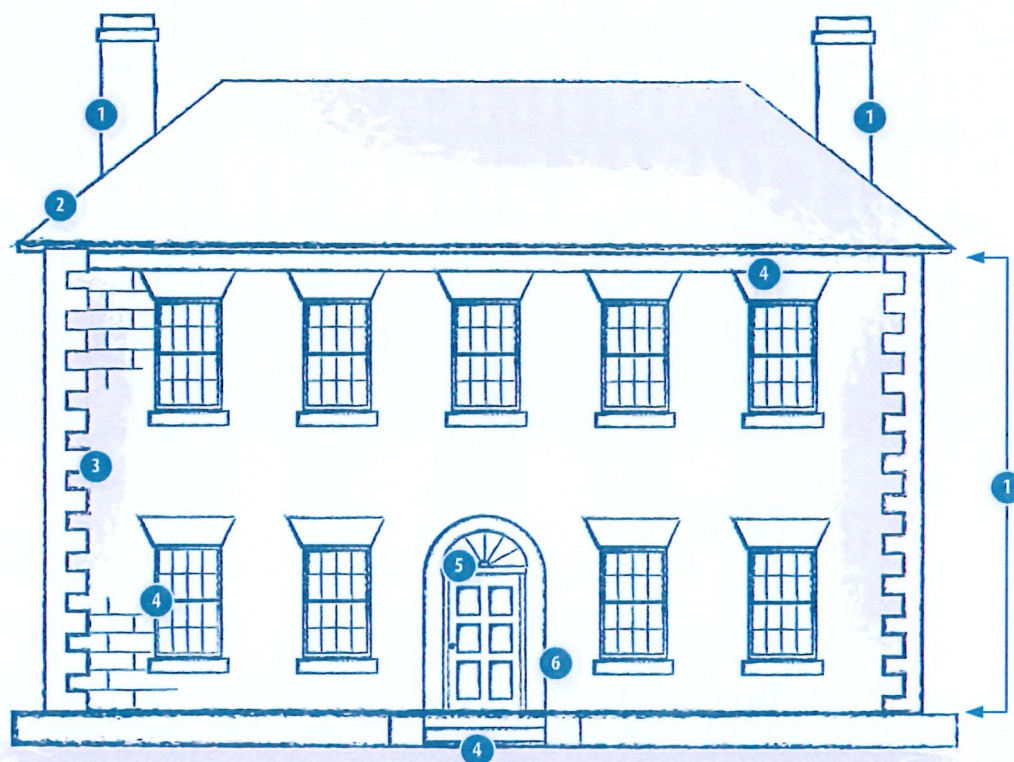


Tasmanian Heritage Council



Tasmanian
Government

GEORGIAN 1803 to 1945



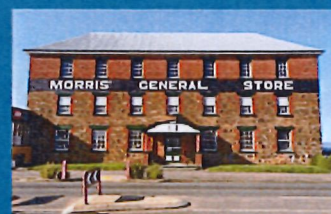
Originating in the early 18th century, this style became widely popular throughout the 1800s, gracing the façades of buildings with its balanced aesthetics and harmonious proportions. After falling out of favour in the early 20th century, Georgian architecture experienced a notable resurgence in popularity following World War I, driven by a renewed appreciation for the style's dignified and orderly appearance.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

- ① Design: simple symmetrical design with service areas to the rear.
- ② Roofs: (mostly) hipped roofs.
- ③ Walls: good quality stone or brickwork.
- ④ Windows: double-hung sash windows with flat lintels above.
- ⑤ Doors: six-panel front door with fanlight above.
- ⑥ Detailing: absence of additional external decoration, when present it is restricted to porches or main entrance. Internally, timber floors, with ornate skirting and architraves and plaster or timber lining boards are most commonly seen.
- ⑦ Verandahs: wrap around verandah when present.



Red House, Kingston. THR 3622



Morris General Store, Swansea. THR 1545



Macquarie House, Launceston. THR 3937



Ingle Hall, Hobart. THR 12126



Cottage, Hobart. THR 2236



Former Cable Station, Stanley. THR 893

REGENCY ¹⁸²⁵_{to}^{1870s}



The Regency style is a refined interpretation of Georgian architecture, for which it shares many characteristics, but with finer details. Tasmania has some of Australia's finest Regency architecture, with many fine houses built during the economic boom of the 1830s.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

- ① Form: symmetrical form.
- ② Walls: exterior walls of stucco or fine stone.
- ③ Form: shallow recesses or breakfronts for articulation.
- ④ Detailing: pilasters for articulation.
- ⑤ Eaves: parapeted eaves to conceal a usually hipped roof.

VARIATIONS:

- ⑥ Verandahs: light iron or timber treillage, often with a concave profile.
- ⑦ Detailing: decorated porticos and architraves, often of Grecian character.
- ⑧ Windows: French (doors) as ground floor windows.
- ⑨ Detailing: curved surfaces or bays.



Clarendon, Evandale. THR 10347



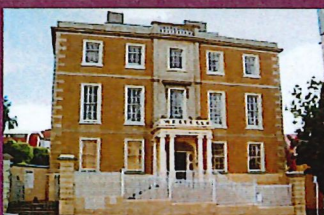
Highfield, Stanley. THR 892



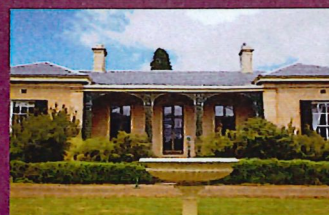
Bennell Town Houses, Launceston. THR 3940



Hagley House, Hagley. THR 4830

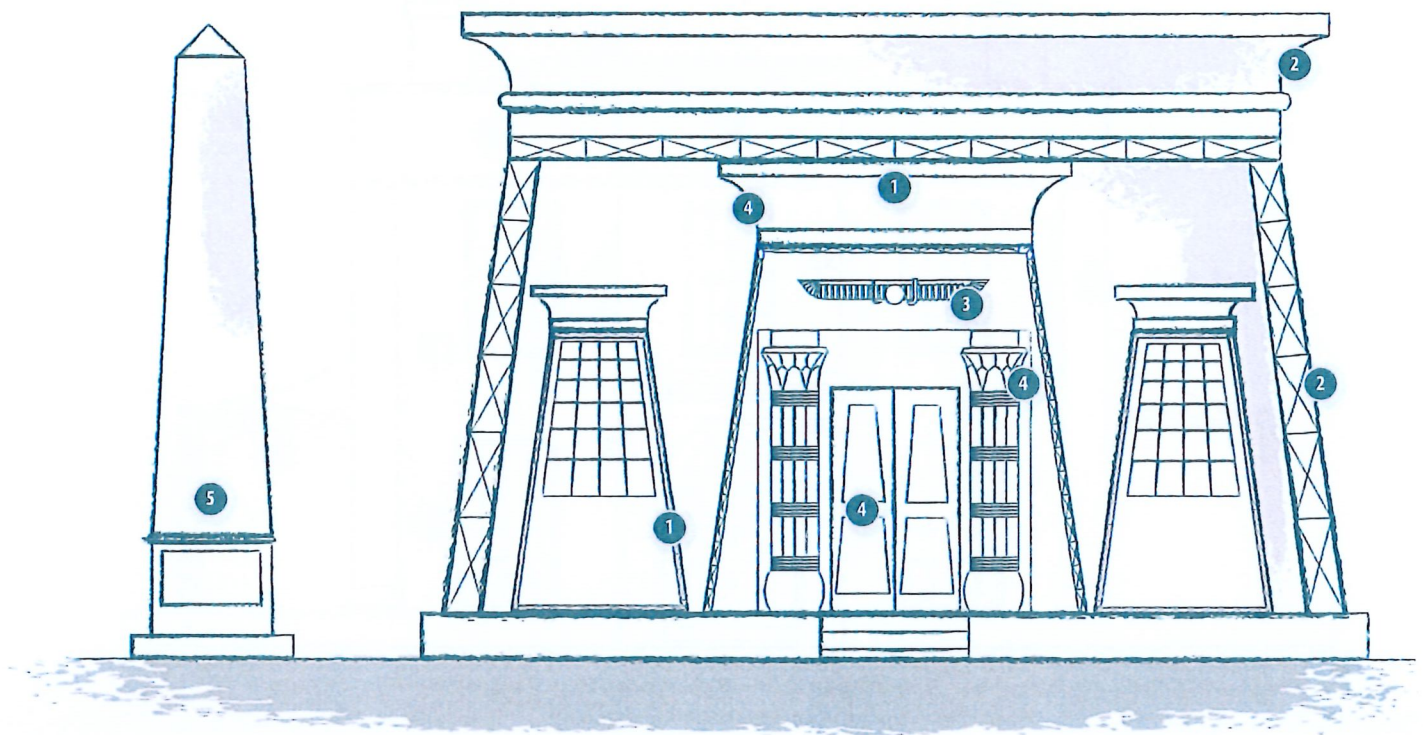


Westella, Hobart. THR 109



Runnymede, New Town. THR 12100

EGYPTIANATE 1840-1930s



Tasmania hosts some of Australia's finest examples of this small but notable style. The Jewish community adopted this style for the construction of synagogues in colonial NSW and Van Diemen's Land. The style was revived for commercial and engineering use in the early 20th century. Obelisks were used to mark the graves of individuals, this practice was extended to public memorials following World War I.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

- ① **Forms:** symmetrical design with a tapered shape. Matching tapered apertures around doors and windows.
- ② **Detailing:** deep-coved cornices and roll mouldings.
- ③ **Detailing:** often adorned with decorative stylised motifs of Egyptian or Hebrew origin.
- ④ **Openings:** recessed entrance often framed by Egyptian style pylons.
- ⑤ **Detailing:** obelisks used a form of memorialisation.



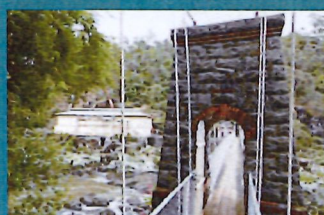
Synagogue, Hobart. THR 2150



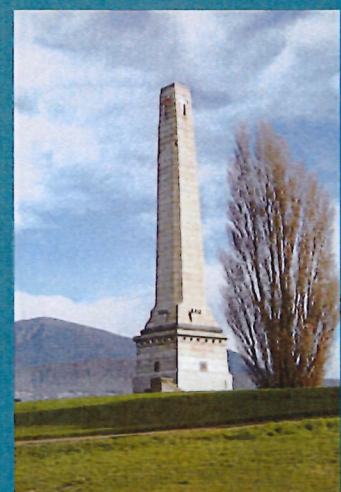
Synagogue, Launceston. THR 4567



Knopwoods Monument, Rokeby. THR 1148

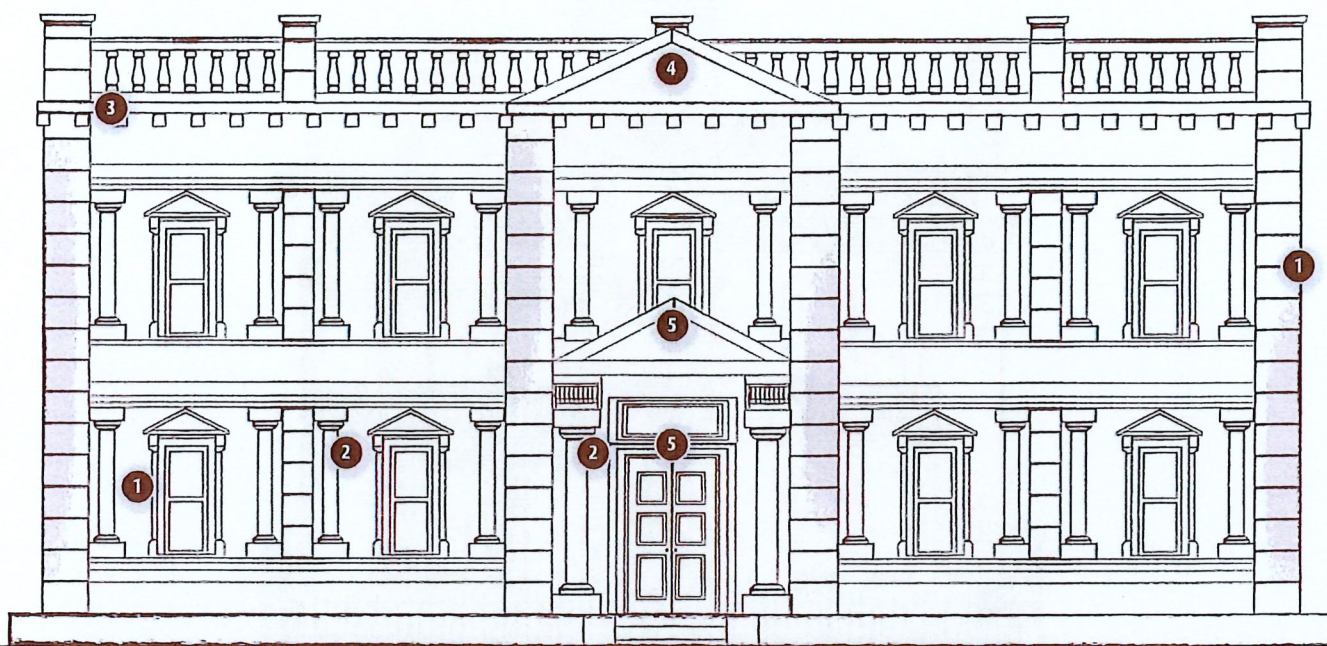


Duck Reach Power Scheme, Launceston. THR 11976



Cenotaph, Hobart. THR 7137

CLASSICAL ^{1830s}_{-to-}^{1930s}



Classicism incorporates a revival of the principles of Greek and Roman architecture. Early Tasmania examples were most frequently of 'Greek Revival' style. From the 1850s architects used a wider range of sources, influenced by ancient Roman and later Renaissance examples. The 20th century saw the adoption of 'Edwardian Baroque' buildings, illustrating elegantly distorted or exaggerated form. After World War 1, classical buildings exhibited a more abstracted or stripped-back manner.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

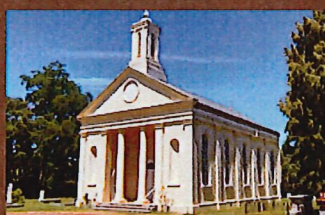
- ① Walls: stone, or rendered in imitation of stone, often with rustication and/or quoining around doors and windows.
- ② Columns: decorated and proportioned in accordance with one of the classical 'orders' i.e. Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, Corinthian or Composite. Used on façades, and in porches, colonnades and arcades.
- ③ Façade: parapets often incorporate elaborate cornices and balusters to conceal the roof(s) behind.
- ④ Roof: pediments (formal, low-pitched gables) particularly above porticoes and entrances.
- ⑤ Openings: door and window openings sometimes framed by 'aedicules' – a gable, lintel, or plaque, or an entablature and pediment, which may be supported by columns or piers.



Former Commercial Bank, Hobart. THR 93



Hobart Town Hall, Hobart. THR 12039



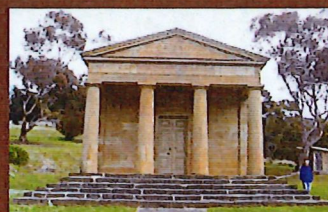
St Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Evandale. THR 5019



ANZ Bank, Launceston. THR 4615



Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, Launceston. THR 4659



Lady Franklin Museum (Ancanthe), Lenah Valley. THR 2610

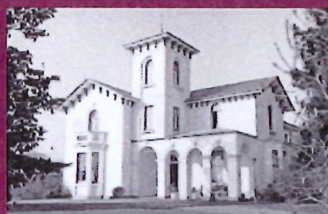
ITALIANATE 1840s -to- 1900s



A significant 19th century design style that initially aimed to establish a picturesque Italian ambience. Free-standing houses in extensive gardens became the models for smaller, more numerous examples. As the style achieved status, it was applied to grand buildings and simple buildings alike, including conjoined and terrace houses. The grandest and largest houses often featured a prominent tower capped with a low-pitched pyramid roof or a masonry balustrade.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

- ① **Form:** sometimes built of local stone, or of timber. Most commonly the walls are of brick, usually rendered with stucco, although polychrome brick examples exist too. Plain walls are often incised with motifs, or lined-out to resemble stone blocks.
- ② **Decoration:** cast cement decorations – such as plaques, pilasters, balustrades, urns, and details such as column capitals and keystones – are liberally applied to the stuccoed surfaces.
- ③ **Roofs:** usually hipped, are of slate – sometimes multicoloured and geometrically-patterned – or of corrugated iron. Eaves are often supported with many small brackets, and decorated with patera or other motifs.
- ④ **Windows:** often grouped in pairs or in bays. Outlined with classical architraves, their heads are often semi-circular or segmental arches.
- ⑤ **Materials:** buildings incorporate cast-iron elements, including columns that support lacey friezes, brackets and verandah balustrade panels.



Northbury, Longford. THR 5177



Woomers, Longford. THR 5077



Eskleigh, Perth. THR 5242



Conjoined Houses, Sandy Bay. THR 2933 & 2934



Strathroy, Breadingbale. THR 5050



Former Brisbane Hotel, Launceston. THR3890

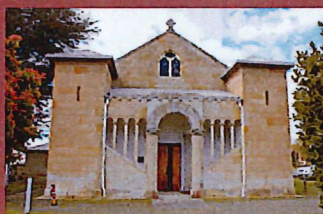
ROMANESQUE 1840s to 1940s



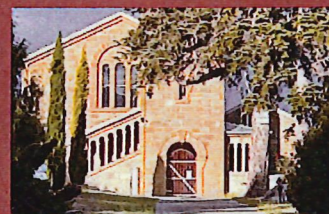
Because its round-arched styling was reminiscent of Roman buildings, the term Romanesque came to be used to describe early medieval (11–12th century) architecture in western Europe. The Romanesque revival was initially seen in churches and other ecclesiastical buildings, but was also used in public and commercial structures in the 1880s, sometimes using the bold forms and heavy rustication popularised as Richardsonian Romanesque.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

- ① **Forms:** simple massing, often symmetrical, but can reflect functions, especially in churches. Occasional use of external buttresses.
- ② **Walls:** solid load bearing stone or sometimes brick with structural arches.
- ③ **Roofs:** mostly gables with a variety of pitches, sometimes behind parapets.
- ④ **Windows:** small openings with semicircular-headed (or round arched) openings. Leadlight windows in churches.
- ⑤ **Doors:** round arched openings and surrounds.
- ⑥ **Features:** use of towers or belfries; arcades with columns.
- ⑦ **Detailing:** can include early medieval motifs and heavy rustication of stonework.



St Mark's Anglican Church, Pontville. THR 658



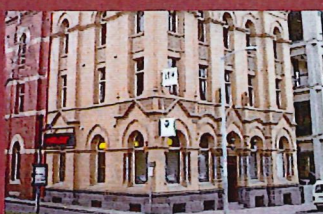
Uniting Church, New Town. THR 2702



Rechabite Hall, Oatlands. THR 5516



AMP Building, Launceston. THR 3932



National Mutual Life Building, Hobart. THR 95



St Brigid's Church, Wynyard. THR 7426

GOTHIC 1803 -to- 1960



The term 'Gothic' refers to stylistic traditions with origins in medieval Europe which use pointed-arch structural systems. Distinct 19th century phases include 'Gothick', using medieval elements in a picturesque manner for romantic effect; Gothic Revival, incorporating a more academically informed use of historically correct elements; and Modern or High Victorian Gothic, which reinterpreted French and Italian precedents with new materials and technologies. In Tasmania, Gothic styles were used mostly for churches, but also occasionally for schools, houses, and civic buildings.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

- ① **Setting:** usually set back from roads with gardens behind low fences.
- ② **Walls:** solid stone masonry and brick preferred; or timber, sometimes detailed to imitate stone.
- ③ **Windows:** frequent use of pointed arches and stained glass.
- ④ **Features:** use of towers or belfries and steeples.
- ⑤ **Roofs:** Gothic feature steeply pitched roofs with decorative bargeboards, or castellated parapets. Gothic revival would be steeply pitched.
- ⑥ **Forms:** Gothic forms would often be asymmetrical and feature irregular massing. In Gothic Revival, massing reflected functions; features such as buttresses and arches reflect structural requirements.
- ⑦ **Detailing:** Gothic includes late medieval or Tudor motifs. Gothic Revival includes complex window tracery; drawn from 12th–15th century English Gothic.



St Matthew's Church, New Norfolk. THR 1212



Coach House, Killymoon, St Marys. THR 604



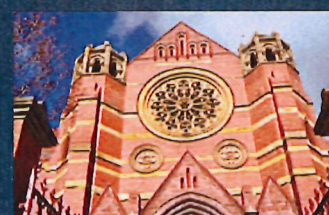
Domain House, Hobart. THR 2077



Shene, Pontville. THR 2926

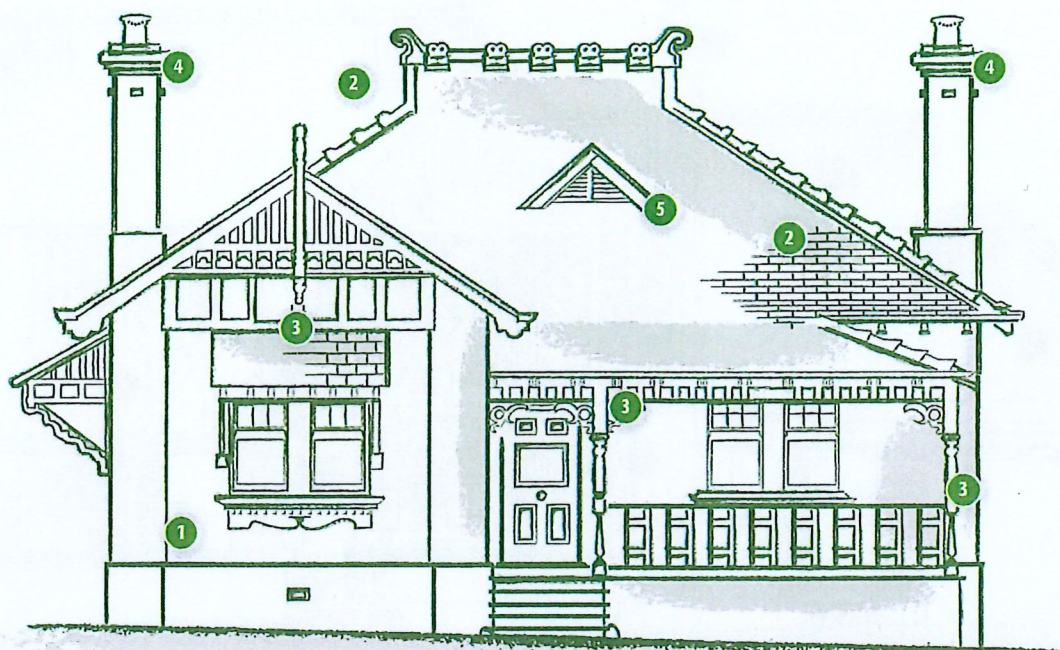


Government House, Hobart. THR 2926



St John's Church, Launceston. THR 4612

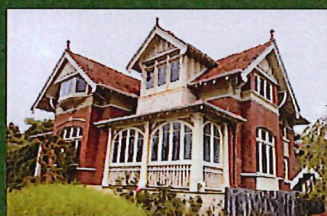
FEDERATION 1880s -to- 1920s



Used for houses, commercial and institutional buildings, Federation architecture emerged in the 1880s and remained a dominant style in Tasmania until c1920. Buildings often had asymmetrical plans, with protruding rooms, bays, and possibly turrets or towers. Roofs were picturesque, dominating and protective, and the chimneys were often exuberant.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

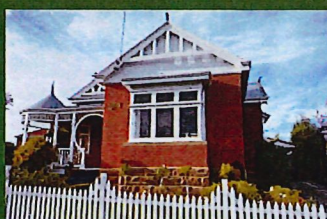
- ① Walls: often unpainted red brickwork, sometimes with bands of painted stucco, sandstone or cream-coloured brick. Alternatively, external walls may be of painted timber weatherboards, or of concrete or sandstone.
- ② Roofs: usually terracotta tiles or galvanised iron; with gable ends half-timbered, roughcast, shingled, or a mixture of these.
- ③ Verandahs & Balconies: carved, turned or fretted timber veranda posts, brackets, valances, barge-boards, balustrades and screens.
- ④ Chimneys: face brick or stuccoed, sometimes a combination. Often with one or more terracotta pots.
- ⑤ Detailing: may feature full and half-gables, hips, gambrels, spires, or domes.



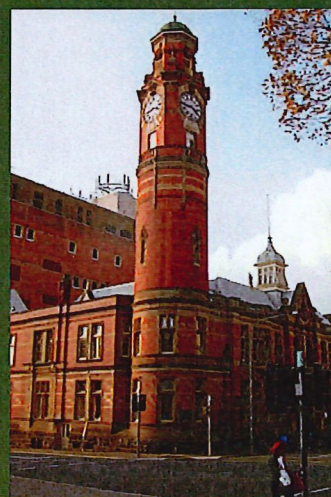
Westerhall, Newstead. THR 4432



Arcoona, Deloraine. THR 4779



House, West Hobart. THR 3074

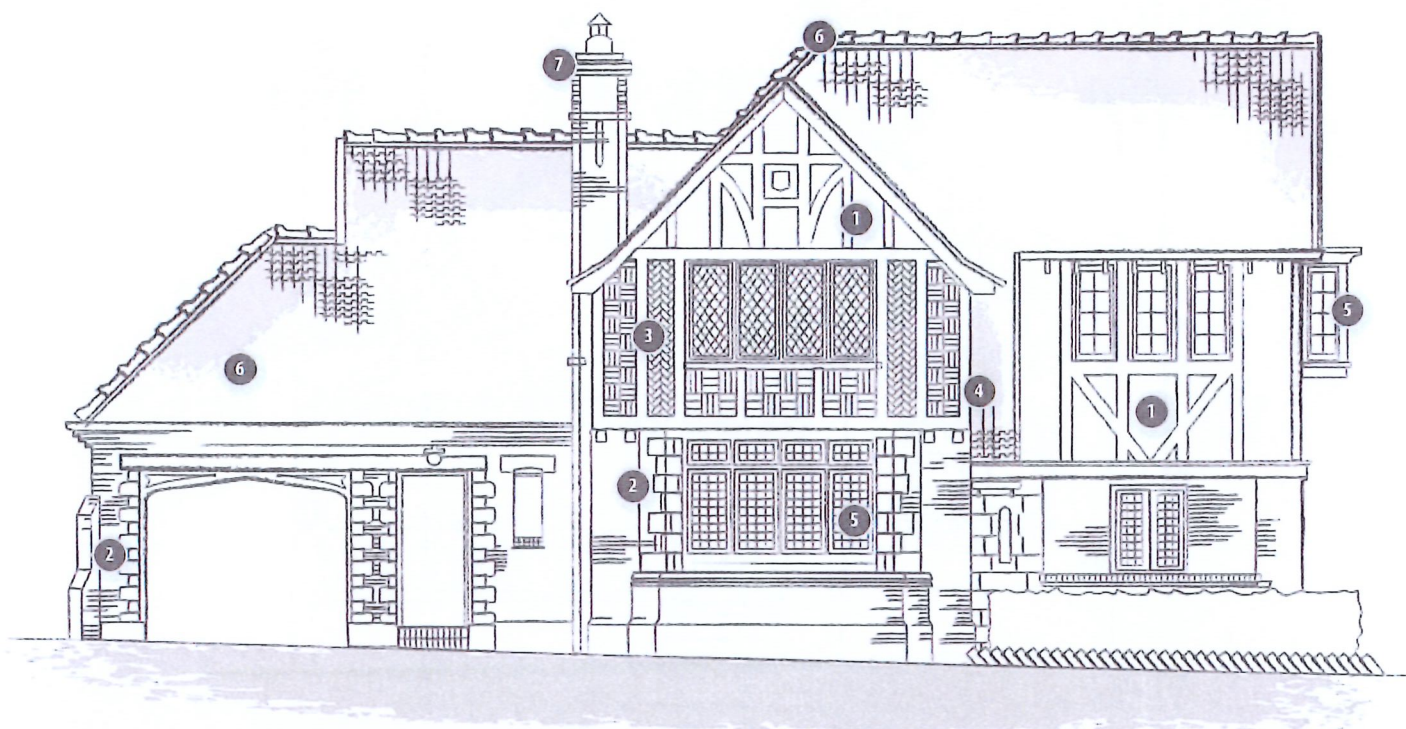


Launceston Post Office, Launceston. THR 7085



Esk Farm, Longford. THR5061

ENGLISH DOMESTIC REVIVAL 1890s -to- 1940s



An offshoot of the Gothic Revival, this style incorporates a sometimes eclectic mix of forms, elements and materials found in English, Dutch and Flemish vernacular or rural building traditions. Initially appearing in late 19th century houses, often with a Tudor feeling, the style was again popular in the 1930s and 40s. During these later decades it was also used widely for smaller houses often using patterned brickwork.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

- 1 **Facade:** many have half-timbered facades, with rough-plastered or 'brick-nogged' surfaces between the blackened timbers.
- 2 **Masonry:** lower-storey walls may feature rough-cut stone, or dressings of stone around window, door and porch openings.
- 3 **Detailing:** in the upper storey, panels of zig-zagged, herringbone or chequerboard brickwork may be divided by dark timber elements.
- 4 **Form:** sometimes portions of the upper storey cantilever outward.
- 5 **Windows:** variety of styles and shapes, including small-paned and leaded casements. May incorporate amber glass.
- 6 **Roofs:** steeply-sloping roofs of tile or slate.
- 7 **Chimneys:** tall chimney stacks can be of a Tudor appearance, incorporating carved or moulded brick, or with decorative strapwork.



Lonah, East Launceston. THR 3866



Parattah Hotel, Parattah. THR 5550



House, South Hobart. THR 3115



House, Sandy Bay. THR 2992

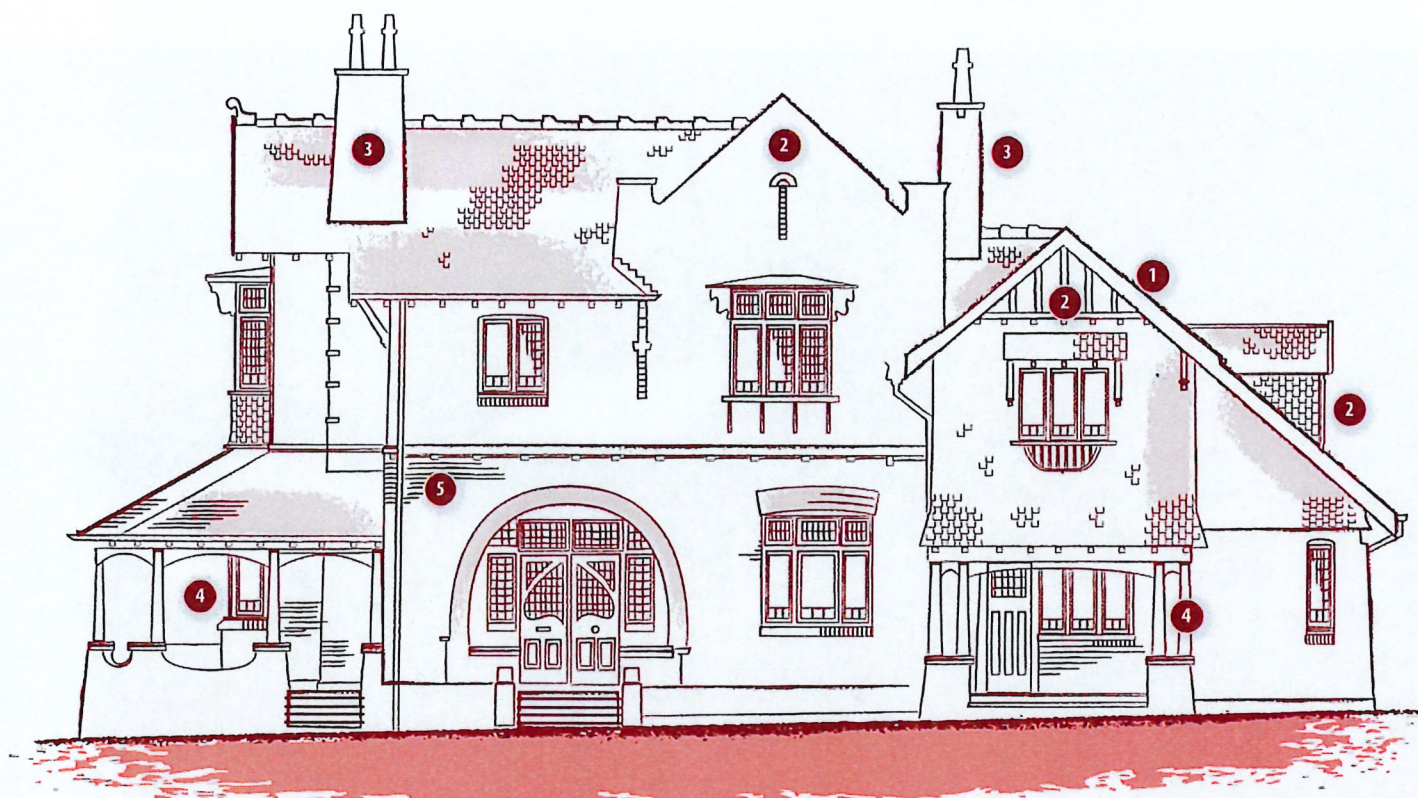


High Peak, Neika. THR 3630



House, East Launceston. THR 3865

ARTS & CRAFTS 1890s -to- 1920s



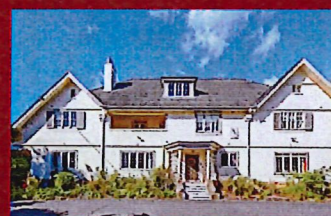
Emerging during the 1890s as an urban response to the challenges of modernity and urbanisation, in Australia the Arts and Crafts movement flourished until World War 1. Architects designed houses that were often rambling and asymmetrical, usually built in brick with walls and gables crusted in thick pebbledash painted a light colour to emulate whitewash. Interiors are richly textured, and characterised by a high degree of detail.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

- 1 Roofs: steeply pitched and multi-gabled, clad in grey slates or terracotta shingles, often with exposed rafter ends at eaves, sometimes falling away in a 'cat slide'.
- 2 Gables: if not masonry, finished instead with timber or terracotta shingles.
- 3 Chimneys: tall and often tapered, coated in pebbledash, topped by elongated pots.
- 4 Verandahs: instead of encircling verandahs, smaller and/or shallower ones. Porches are often semi-enclosed by the walls of the house. Timber posts are square and tapered, resting upon battered masonry piers or low walls.
- 5 Finishes: details in stone or dark-brown brick contrast with the painted pebbledash.



Waimea House, Sandy Bay. THR 8592



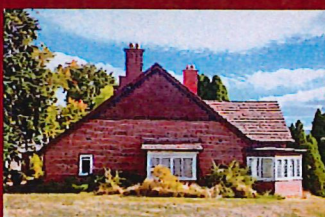
Greystanes, Sandy Bay. THR 2619



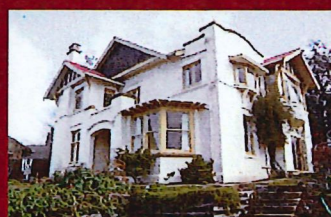
House, New Town. THR 2745



House, Sandy Bay. THR 8733



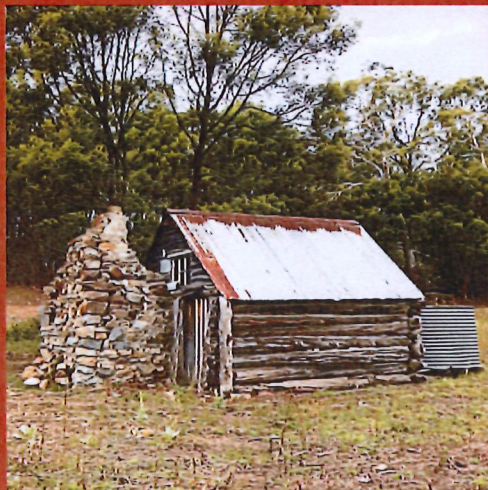
House, New Town. THR 2656



Craignish, Sandy Bay. THR3042

VERNACULAR ¹⁸⁰³_{to} TODAY

Structures described as vernacular have evolved as a direct response to local environmental conditions; available building materials and methods; and the cultural context in which they were created. Sometimes also described as utilitarian, there is usually an emphasis on functionality rather than aesthetics. However, the use of local and historical construction traditions often result in a rustic appearance that can be valued for its beauty, or nostalgia. Due to the nature of available materials and construction techniques few early vernacular structures have survived.



Muirlands Log Barn and Log Cabin, Little Swanport. THR #1523



Langtoft (Blacksmith's Shop), Tea Tree. THR 5567



Lettes Bay, Strahan. THR 7793

FREE STYLE ¹⁸⁵⁶_{to} 1945

The term Free Style is used here to describe the free and abstracted use of historicist styles and architectural elements, mostly evident in front façades.

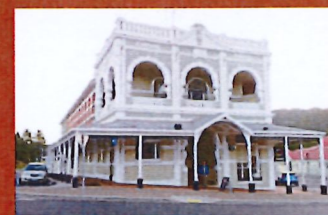
Usually visually eclectic, the term is often used in Tasmania to describe buildings from the Australian Statehood to First World War period. But it also includes the earlier use of Gothic elements in the Colonial Consolidation era of the late nineteenth century.



North Hobart Post Office, North Hobart. THR #137

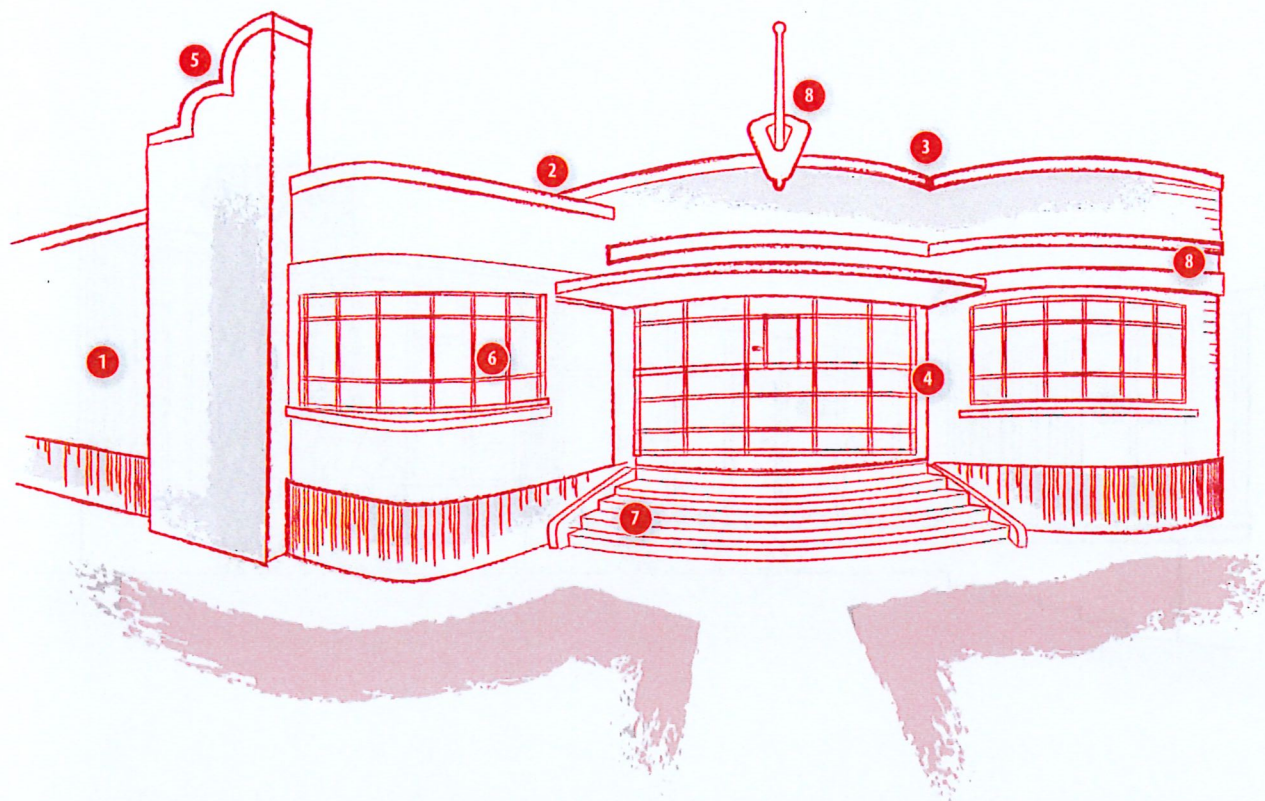


St Finn Barr's Catholic Church, Invermay. THR 7753



Empire Hotel, Queenstown. THR 5645

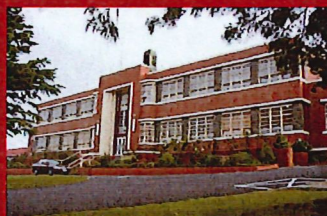
MODERNE 1919 -to- 1930s



Modern architecture emerged in Tasmania in the 1930s and remained fashionable until 1960. Here the term incorporates the styles of Art Deco, Streamlined Moderne, and Jazz Moderne. Houses were often single storey, detached, and set back from streets with front gardens. There was some use of applied decoration, but the relative simplicity of the styles reflects the austerity of the period and the move towards modernism.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

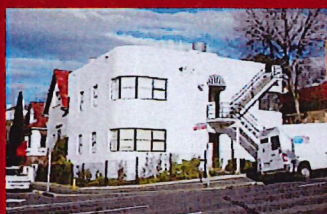
- ① Walls: most often painted or rendered masonry, or face brick; with horizontal banding, projecting or in relief, and/or in contrasting colours. In Jazz Moderne, there is often a vertical emphasis.
- ② Roofs: often appear flat; use of tiles or galvanised iron hidden behind parapets.
- ③ Parapets: sometimes stepped and may feature towers or spires in place of finials.
- ④ Balconies: streamlined horizontal emphasis; usually planar with minimal detail.
- ⑤ Chimneys: brick; may be painted, rendered, and/or face brick; often stepped, but with minimal detailing.
- ⑥ Windows: steel or timber framed.
- ⑦ Stairs: often curved, dynamic forms.
- ⑧ Detailing: largely simple, geometry based in brick, rendered or plaster mouldings. Art Deco will feature more elaborate details.



New Town Commercial High School,
New Town. THR 12034



Commercial, Devonport. THR 7086



Sunray Flats, Hobart. THR 3441

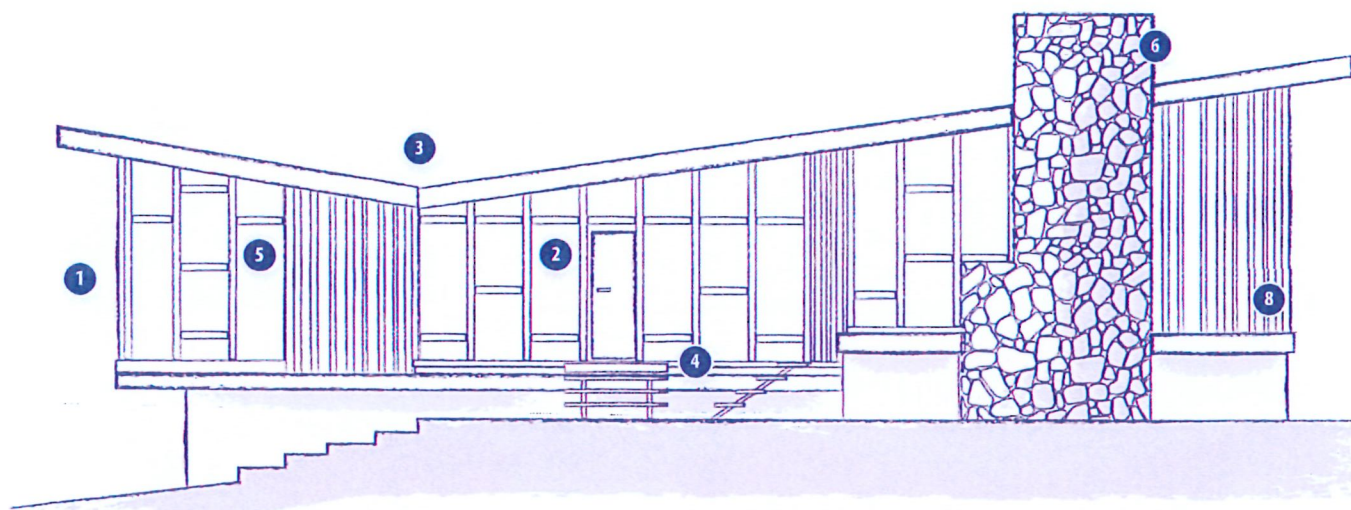


Holyman House, Launceston. THR 12097



Paragon Theatre, Queenstown. THR 7838

MODERNIST 1930s -to- 2000



Modern, or Modernist, architecture emerged in Europe in the 1910s. The style was popular in Tasmania from the 1930s to the turn of the century. The term incorporates styles from European/international style modernism, to postwar styles such as Brutalism, and regionalist modernism. Modernist forms typically follow function with little or no added ornamentation, aesthetics often rely on the innovative use of materials and structure.

KEY ATTRIBUTES:

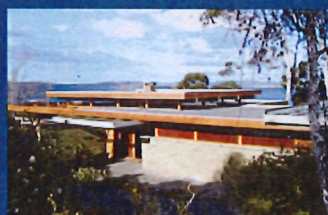
- ① **Form:** often rectilinear; other geometric shapes also used, often with curved features. Houses are often detached and set back from streets.
- ② **Walls:** can be free of structure - 'curtain walls' - using a variety of materials in light colours. Alternatively, sculptural forms with 'off-form' concrete finishes may be seen, especially in Brutalist designs. With advances in technology, buildings could be taller, and walls open to the light and views.
- ③ **Roofs:** usually flat; low-pitched gables and mono-pitch or 'skillion' forms are also used, or alternatively, a variety of geometric curved or angle forms.
- ④ **Balconies:** focus on transparency, often appearing as open decks.
- ⑤ **Windows:** can stretch from floor to ceiling; originally in steel or timber frames.
- ⑥ **Chimneys:** brick or stone features; often oversized rectilinear forms and may be rendered or painted.
- ⑦ **Plans:** open-plan living; with generally flexible internal space.
- ⑧ **Detailing:** clean lines; decoration limited to the natural character of materials and functional elements.



Teacher's Federation Building,
Hobart. THR 10057



Snows Dry Cleaners, Glenorchy. THR 7106



House, Taroona. THR 4432



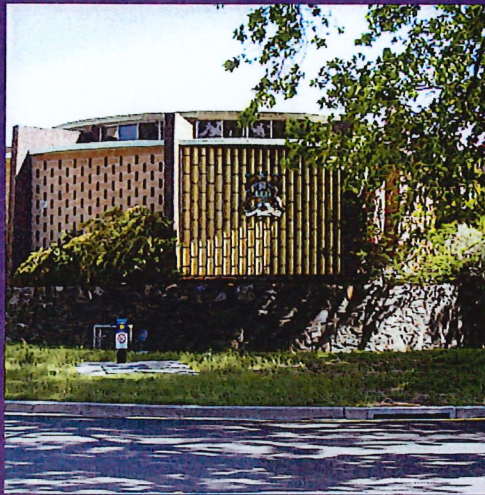
Wrest Point Casino, Sandy Bay. THR 7496



Young House, Sandy Bay. THR 3431

POSTMODERNIST 1960-1980 TODAY

In architecture the term 'postmodernism' is associated with attempts to redress the lack of traditional building forms, materials and elements seen in Modernist buildings, and the apparent failure of these buildings to connect with people and the environment. Some postmodernist buildings use historicism and display cartoon-like collections of classical columns and pediments. In Tasmania the state's colonial period Georgian and Regency architectural heritage was often referenced. Other later postmodern cultural developments such as chaos theory, fractal geometry, magic realism and deconstruction also strongly influenced architects' approaches to design.



St John Pumping Station, Launceston. THR #11302



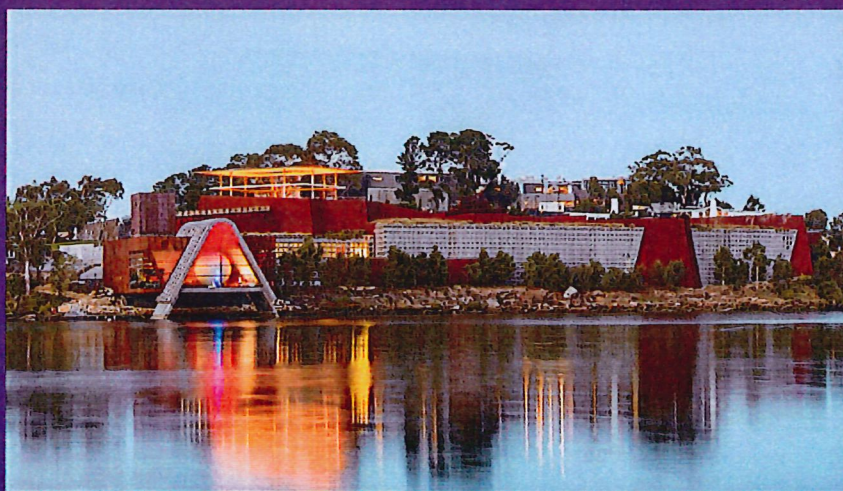
Kelly Street Offices, Battery Point. THR 10064



Rokeby Fire Station, Rokeby. THR 7105

CONTEMPORARY 2000-2010 TODAY

Contemporary architecture refers to buildings produced from the beginning of the 21st century, through to the present day. Rather than describing a uniform style, contemporary architecture covers a range of movements which have been supported by innovations in building materials and construction techniques. Changes have often been inspired or necessitated by changing cultural and environmental factors. Structures may look radically different from one another and sometimes from anything that has come before, with some characteristic features including complex organic and parametric forms.



Moorilla Estate/Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Berriedale. THR 11971



The Hon Michelle Rowland MP

Minister for Communications
Federal Member for Greenway

MC24-004783

The Hon Eric Abetz MP
Minister for Business, Industry and Resources
Parliament of Tasmania
GPO Box 123
HOBART TAS 7001

minister.abetz@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Minister

Thank you for your letter of 3 May 2024 regarding Tasmanian telecommunications connectivity. I apologise for the delay in responding.

The Australian Government recognises Tasmania's interest in increased telecommunications connectivity, and in particular the Tasmanian Subsea Cable Project (the project). Following correspondence from the former Tasmanian Minister for Science and Technology, the Hon Madeleine Ogilvie, and from Craig Limkin, Secretary of the Tasmanian Department of State Growth (DSG), the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development, Communications and the Arts (DITRDCA), made efforts to identify potential government funding sources, but advise that the project does not meet the criteria for existing infrastructure funding programs. I have asked my department to continue engagement with DSG counterparts and notify them if they become aware of any new initiatives that may provide an opportunity for Tasmania to seek funding for the project.

The Government continues to support connectivity in regional Tasmania. Most recently, I announced the outcomes of Round 2 of the Mobile Network Hardening Program. Nearly \$850,000 is being provided for 47 projects which will improve resilience across Tasmania. This builds on \$23.5 million provided for projects from Round 1. The most recent round of the Mobile Black Spot Program (Round 7) awarded \$55 million to deliver 62 new mobile solutions providing new and improved mobile coverage to communities and improved highway coverage across Australia.

The Government is committed to increasing connectivity, bridging the digital divide, improving mobile coverage and protecting communities against natural disaster. To this end, the Government is investing \$2.2 billion in regional communications.

The Hon Michelle Rowland MP
PO Box 6022, Parliament House Canberra
Suite 101C, 130 Main Street, Blacktown NSW 2148 | (02) 9671 4780

This investment includes the Government's \$1.1 billion Better Connectivity Plan for Regional and Rural Australia, which commits \$656 million to improve mobile and broadband connectivity and resilience in rural and regional Australia. Regular updates on programs under the Plan are posted on the department's website at www.infrastructure.gov.au/bcp.

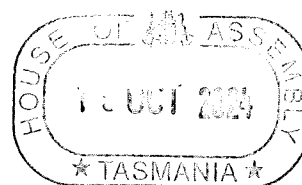
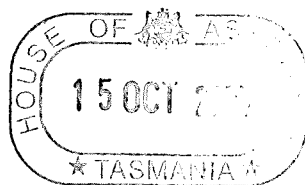
Thank you for taking the time to write to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Rowland', written in a cursive style.

Michelle Rowland MP

27 / 6 / 2024



ANSWERS:

- (1) The current length of service of each member of the Tasmanian Heritage Council is detailed in the table below:

Member name	Position	Expiry of Term
Brett Torossi	Chair Section 6(1)(a)	Apt: 16/01/2015 Exp: 30/06/2025
Caroline Evans	History Section 6(1)(c)(i)	Apt: 15/02/2020 Exp: 31/12/2024
Elizabeth Frankham	Tourism Industry Council Section 6(1)(k)	Apt: 01/02/2022 Exp: 31/01/2025
Judith Lyne	Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association Section 6(1)(j)	Apt: 01/01/2024 Exp: 31/12/2026
Roger Hesketh	Council of Churches Section 6(1)(l)	Apt: 31/12/2013 Exp: 31/12/2024
Jennifer Jones-Travers	Archaeology Section 6(1)(c)(i)	Apt: 21/07/2020 Exp: 31/12/2025
Stuart King	Conservation Interests Section 6(1)(d)	Apt: 01/01/2012 Exp: 31/12/2026
VACANT	Architect Section 6(1)(c)(i)	
Alexandra Lintner	Mining Industry Section 6(1)(i)	Apt: 01/02/2023 Exp: 31/12/2025
Philip Mussared	The National Trust of Tasmania Section 6(1)(f)	Apt: 26/01/2018 Exp: 31/12/2025
Peter Scott	Building Development Industry Section 6(1)(h)	Apt: 28/09/2020 Exp: 31/12/2025
Richard Warner	Community Interests Section 6(1)(e)	Apt: 01/05/2023 Exp: 31/12/2025
Deidre Wilson	Alternate for Director, National Parks and Wildlife Section 6(1) (1C)	Apt: 27/06/2019 Exp: 31/01/2025
John Beswick	Local Government Association Section 6(g)	Apt: 01/06/2023 Exp: 31/12/2024
James Dryburgh	Planning (nominated by LGAT) Section 6(1)(c)(i)(ii)	Apt: 16/04/2024 Exp: 31/12/2026

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management
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Mr Simon Behrakis MP
Chair
Budget Estimates Committee B
House of Assembly

Dear Chair

Thank you for your letter of 25 September 2024 requesting additional information in relation to the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management on behalf of Budget Estimates Committee B.

Please see the requested additional information below:

1. What is the current number of cases unstated? What is the oldest unstated case? Will Forensics Science Services Tasmania have four FTE cut?

There has been an increase in the number of cases and samples submitted to Forensic Science Service Tasmania (FSST), including for serious crimes, consistent with the increase in these types of crimes in the community. Serious crime cases utilise significant resources because there are no sample submission caps placed on these crimes and so there are generally more exhibits per case. Serious crime samples usually also require more analysis time to process than volume crime samples thus compounding the resource demands.

FSST manages backlogs through liaison with investigators to ensure that work remains necessary and to ensure analysis work is focused on investigative outcomes. Where required, Tasmania Police can request cases are given priority through the Inspector, Forensic Services. FSST grant these cases priority bringing them forward. FSST is also currently working with Tasmania Police to prioritise results for volume crime cases involving high-priority target offenders and those causing the greatest harm to the community.

One additional staff member has recently been appointed in Forensic Biology which will assist in reducing the number of cases where testing has not commenced once that person has been trained and appropriately authorised.

Case & Sample numbers

The below table provides information relating to the testing undertaken at FSST. The second column provides the number of cases or samples,¹ where testing has not commenced. The third column provides the date for the oldest case/sample where testing has not commenced, which is based on the date of arrival at FSST.

	Number of cases/samples where testing has not commenced (as of 2 October 2024)	Oldest case where testing has not commenced (based on date of arrival at FSST)
Biological Examination – Volume and Serious Crime	267 Cases	October 2023 ²
Total DNA – Crime Scene Samples (Volume and Serious Crime)	1069 Samples	March 2024
DNA – Reference Samples	163 Samples available to test 397 Samples waiting for approval from Forensic Procedures Compliance Unit (FPCU)	July 2024 January 2024
Criminalistics	8 Cases	September 2024
Illicit Drugs	5 Cases	September 2024
Toxicology	110 Cases	September 2024
Evidential Breathalyser Calibration	0	N/A

Through the budget efficiency process with the Department of Treasury and Finance, DPFEM estimated the theoretical number of positions that would need to be reduced at FSST to meet the overall budget efficiency dividend on a pro-rata basis. This estimation apportioned positions across portfolios and resulted in a figure of 4.1 FTE at FSST.

This strategy has not been supported, and DPFEM has commenced work on an alternate budget strategy to determine the specifics of how the overall budget efficiency dividend will be achieved.

¹ “Cases” are based on distinct reported crimes and corresponds with Police Offence Reports. For each “case” one or more “samples” might be sent to FSST – volume (property) crime has an average of approximately 2 samples/case whereas serious (person) crime can have between 1 and many 100’s of samples/case. Where police deliver an exhibit to FSST this can result in multiple DNA samples being taken, thus DNA sample numbers can exceed Biological Examination (BEX) items received.

² This is a sole case – the vast majority of cases where testing has not commenced are from March 2024.

2. What is the current age and time in-service profile of the Tasmanian Police workforce?

Age Profile by Gender	Police Officers	
As at 30 June 2024	Male	Female
15-19	19	23
20-24	65	68
25-29	91	63
30-34	96	92
35-39	98	81
40-44	124	63
45-49	118	66
50-54	184	67
55-59	138	33
60-64	27	5
65+	0	0
Total	960	561

Time in Service (years)	Police Officers		Total
As at 30 June 2024	Female	Male	
0-5	196	293	489
6-10	101	134	235
11-15	43	60	103
16-20	87	128	215
21-25	58	106	164
26-30	37	121	158
31-35	24	61	85
36-40	15	43	58
40+		14	14
Total	561	690	1521

3. What is the number of family violence related call outs in comparison to all callouts as a percentage?

Please note, the below statistics were provided by DPFEM to the Committee on 23/9/24.

	2022/23	2023/24
Family Violence Incidents	4,680	5,353
Family Arguments and Information Reports	2,757	3,019
Total FVMS Incidents	7,437	8,372
Total TASPOL Dispatch Incidents	142,012	150,106
% of Dispatch that was FVMS-Related	5%	6%

Source: TASPOL FVMS and ESCAD Systems at 1/8/2024

Please note that the percentage of total police time taken up by Family Violence Management System (FVMS) content would be much higher than this. Police respond to family violence in the community at an average over 20 attendances per day across the State.

Family violence can be complex for police to respond to and time on these calls is considerable and often the most time consuming job that police attend, averaging nearly 4 hours for each call.

4. Have 000 calls this year been connected within 10 seconds with a Radio Dispatch Operator? What percentage of calls have waited longer than this before being connected?

37% of the 57,036 calls presented to Tasmania Police via Triple Zero in the 2023/24 financial year were not answered within 10 seconds.

5. What is the average wait time for 000 calls for each of the last 3 years?

There are a number of factors that can affect Triple Zero 'wait times' including:

- Major incidents and high profile events – these will attract multiple calls to Triple Zero simultaneously.
- Natural disasters and emergencies – for example unforeseen flood, bushfire and emergency events
- In recent years there have been advances in technology that have created additional calls to Triple Zero. This includes iPhone SOS function and automatic crash detection technology.

Average wait times for Triple Zero calls presented to Tasmania Police:

Financial Year	000 calls received by RDS	000 average wait time	000 answered < 10 seconds %	Total calls in/out of RDS
2021/22	48,225	9.9 seconds	63%	985,976
2022/23	52,316	11.2 seconds	58%	989,504
2023/24	57,036	11.9 seconds	63%	1,024,243

6. What have been the five 000 calls with the longest wait times for connection this year?

The Triple Zero platform includes backup mechanisms to re-route calls that are either not answered promptly or otherwise are disconnected, to other available lines, which ensures that critical information is not lost and is provided to the relevant emergency service in the most efficient manner. The reporting functionality within the system does not support a query that seeks to identify the 'top 5 calls' in terms of extended wait times. There is no ability to accurately provide that information due to limitations in the reporting functions of the systems used.

7. Within the last two years, have any 000 calls that have had to wait for connection related to incidents where a death has occurred either before or after the call? Can you provide the incidents where this has occurred?

Tasmania Police is not aware of any incidents where a death has occurred as a result of a delay in a Triple Zero call being answered by Tasmania Police.

It should be noted that calls of this nature, where there are critical injuries, may be presented to Ambulance Tasmania rather than Tasmania Police.

The table below shows the total number of Fatal Crashes, Suicides and Sudden Death incidents reported to RDS via Triple Zero over the last three financial years.

Financial Year	ACC MV Fatal	Sudden Death	Suicide	TOTAL
2021/22	7	85	24	116
2022/23	9	89	19	117
2023/24	10	117	32	159
TOTAL	23	291	75	392

This table does not show all deaths reported to/attended by Tasmania Police. Some deaths are reported to police via other lines such as 131 444, where there is not an urgent response required.

8. Why don't the budget papers reflect the income statement of the 2024/25 State Fire Commission Corporate Plan?

There are minor variations between the Budget Chapter and the State Fire Commission Corporate Plan.

This is due to:

- positions endorsed by the State Fire Commission in the Corporate Plan (for example, the State Emergency Service funding increase) not yet being accepted within the Treasury Budget Management System, and
- State Government Budget announcements (for example, funding for the Tasman Peninsula training facilities) occurring after the Corporate Plan was finalised.

This is not uncommon when the budget cycle is outside of the traditional budget cycle.

9. Supplies and Consumables has nearly \$1 million less in the budget than the State Fire Commission Corporate Plan for 24/25. Can you explain this.

The State Fire Commission approved an increase of \$1.1 million to the Commission's contribution to the State Emergency Service. This contribution is longstanding, having been in place since 2013. The funding increase had not been accepted into the Treasury Budget Management System prior to the preparation of the Budget Chapter.

In addition, the State Government provided \$154,000 for the upgrade of training facilities on the Tasman Peninsula, which was not known at the time of preparing the Corporate Plan.

10. How much from the Supplies and Consumers output is being paid to the DPFEM and SES?

For 2024-25 the allocations endorsed by the State Fire Commission are:

- DPFEM - \$16.197 million
- SES - \$4.696 million

11. How many people have been charged under the Police Offences Amendment (Workplace Protections) Act 2022? And, in the same time, what number of people have been charged with trespass and public nuisance provisions?

Further context is provided regarding the operation of the amendments introduced in the *Police Offences Amendment (Workplace Protections) Act 2022*, which apply following a court convicting a person of a trespass offence under section 14B of the *Police Offences Act 1935*.

Among other amendments, section 14B(2AC) was inserted as follows, which include body corporates under the operation of the offence:

(2AC) Despite [subsections \(2\)](#) and [\(2A\)](#), if the court that convicts a person that is a body corporate of an offence under this section is satisfied that –

(a) the person, by or while committing the offence, substantially impeded, or prevented, another person from carrying out lawful work; and

(b) the person, by or while committing the offence, intended to substantially impede, or prevent, a person from carrying out lawful work –

the person is liable to a penalty not exceeding 250 penalty units.

Therefore, a person is charged with the offence of unlawful entry on land or trespass, and a court determines the application of subsection 2AC, or the other subsections of section 14B.

Number of prosecutions between 20/9/2022 and 30/6/2024:

s 14B Unlawful Entry on Land, &c.	1,566
s 13 Public Annoyance	788

Explanatory notes:

- Note that the Unlawful Entry on Land statistics above refer to all trespass prosecutions, not only to prosecutions specific to workplace protestors.
- The percentage of Trespass prosecutions related to workplace protestors is unknown but it is believed to be very low.

- Persons prosecuted on multiple occasions will be reflected multiple times in the statistics.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Felix Ellis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Felix Ellis MP

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management

8/10/2024

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management
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Mr Simon Behrakis MP
Chair – Estimates Committee 'B'
House of Assembly

Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence dated 24 September 2024 seeking answers to Questions on Notice in relation to the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee 'B' (the Committee) examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Skills and Training.

**Department of State Growth
Skills and Training**

Q12. Can you provide for the Committee the Saving Strategy for TasTAFE and Skills and Training?

The 2023-24 Budget indicated that our Government would seek operating efficiencies while protecting frontline services.

The Efficiency Dividend to be achieved by the Department of State Growth is:

- \$2.6 million in 2024-25;
- \$5.1 million in 2025-26;
- increasing to a structural reduction of \$7.7 million in 2026-27.

The Department of State Growth will achieve these efficiencies through a combination of efficiency measures and ceasing or scaling back on non-core and non-priority activities that are either not the highest strategic priorities or have been replaced with new commitments.

Efficiency measures must be achievable in both the short and long term.

This means that our agency must identify efficiency measures that are structural and achievable on an ongoing basis.

The Department of State Growth has recently undertaken an internal organisational realignment. This is a separate process to consideration of the efficiency dividend, however by its very nature, we are finding ways to operate more efficiently.

The Department of State Growth is working to deliver a simpler and more efficient operating model which delivers on our Government's priorities and our core services for the Tasmanian community.


State Growth Strategies

The Department of State Growth has identified several strategies that it will use to meet the Budget Efficiency Dividend:

- Combining functions and service delivery areas to implement leaner operating models.
- Reviewing how we administer programs (for example grants or capital programs) to ensure they deliver value for the Tasmanian community and considering process improvements and systematising processes to ensure they are efficient.
- Reducing operational expenditure on supplies and consumables including:
 - marketing and consultancies
 - accommodation
 - ICT costs (including telecommunications)
 - travel
 - postage (for registration and licencing renewals)
- Managing the workforce to ensure that resources are targeted to the areas of highest priority.

The Department does not have a formal vacancy control process currently in place.

Yours sincerely



Hon Felix Ellis MP

Minister for Skills and Training

8/10/2024

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management
Minister for Housing and Planning
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Mr Simon Behrakis MP
Chair – Estimates Committee 'B'
House of Assembly

Dear Chair

Thank you for your correspondence dated 24 September 2024 seeking answers to Questions on Notice in relation to the Legislative Council Government Administration Committee 'B' (the Committee) examination of the Estimates of the Minister for Housing and Planning (incl. Homes Tasmania). I provide the below answers to questions, asked under Division 10 – Department of Premier and Cabinet, in relation to the above portfolio.

13) Why does the Budget Overview state that 3000 new homes have been delivered when this is clearly not accurate?

As at 31 August 2024, the Tasmanian Government, through Homes Tasmania, has delivered 3,772 social and affordable homes towards the Government's target of 10,000 social and affordable homes between 1 October 2020 and 30 June 2032.

14) With regards to the Residential Development Zone at the Macquarie Point site, has any of the Federal Government contribution of \$240 million been earmarked for this development?

The Federation Funding Agreement sets out deliverables that the Australian Government requires as part of its contribution towards the urban renewal of Macquarie Point. These relate to deliverables such as the delivery of a refreshed Precinct Plan, which is now complete and has milestones leading up to June 2025.

The Agreement does not specify or earmark any of the funding for a specific development on site.

15) How will the Regatta Point development be funded, and is there any allocation in this years' budget and the forward estimates for Homes Tasmania to start planning and development work for this zone? What will be the mix of health worker accommodation versus apartments for release to the general market? Will you retain equity in this development?

The Mac Point Precinct Plan sets out the zones that have been identified for development and uses across the site. This includes areas where master-planning will support updated planning settings and for a brief to be taken to market to deliver a private-sector led development.

As part of the development, the target is for 20 per cent of the apartments to be affordable housing for key workers in the health sector. At this stage, the retention of equity in relation to this development has not yet been determined.

16) What is the:

- a. Debt to equity ratio; and**
 - b. Debt service cover ratio (or proxy measure)**
- for Homes Tasmania?**

The debt to equity ratio on Homes Tasmania's 2024/25 budget is 0.13.

The debt service coverage ratio on Homes Tasmania's 2024/25 budget is 1.0. The debt service coverage ratio reflects the ability to service debt at an organisation's income level. Homes Tasmania is provided guaranteed funding from Treasury for 100% of debt servicing costs.

17) How is the debt servicing funding of Homes Tasmania treated by Treasury? As a grant, as an interest payment or as a liability?

The debt servicing funding is received as State Grant Revenue (disclosed in the Grants budget figure under 'Revenue and other income' in the Statement of Comprehensive Income – Table 28.3 of Budget Paper No 2, Volume 2).

18) How many existing homes on the private market were purchased each month for the 2023/2024 financial year, broken down by region (Southern Tasmania, Northern Tasmania, and North-West Tasmania)?

In the 2023-24 financial year, there were 9 existing homes purchased on the private market including:

- a. North:
 - i. July 2023 – 2 existing homes
 - ii. September 2023 – 1 existing home
- b. North-West:
 - i. July 2023 – 1 existing home
- c. South:
 - i. July 2023 – 3 existing homes
 - ii. August 2023 – 2 existing homes.

The average price of the existing homes purchased was \$433 630.

19) What number of new homes are planned to be purchased from the private market this financial year?

As at 30 September 2024, there are no planned (contracted) new home purchases from the private market this 2024 25 financial year.

20) How many newly constructed homes were purchased by Homes Tasmania in each month of the 2023/2024 financial year, by region these homes were purchased (Southern Tasmania, Northern Tasmania, and North-West Tasmania)? What was the average price of those purchased? What was the highest price paid for any new home and in what suburb was it located?

In the 2023-24 financial year, there were 46 new homes purchased on the private market including:

d. North:

- i. August 2023 – 2 new homes
- ii. September 2023 – 2 new homes
- iii. April 2024 – 24 new homes (key worker accommodations in Punchbowl)

e. North-West:

- i. July 2023 – 10 new homes

f. South:

- i. October 2023 – 8 new homes.

The average price of the new homes purchased was \$432 057.

The highest price paid for any new home was \$445 000 in Wynyard.

21) How many staff have left Homes Tasmania since inception in December 2022? What proportion of the workforce is this?

At 30 June 2024, Homes Tasmania had a total of 186 full-time equivalent staff.

Forty-one (41) employees have separated from Homes Tasmania since its inception in December 2022 (21 months). This includes five retirements, the conclusion of four fixed-term appointments, two voluntary redundancies, 13 appointments to other Tasmanian State Service agencies through recruitment processes and 17 resignations from the Tasmanian State Service.

22) What measures are Homes Tasmania putting in place to deal with high turnover?

The turnover of staff is not deemed to be high in Homes Tasmania.

Feedback given by employees in the 2024 Tasmanian State Service Staff Survey was positive in relation to their employment experience and does not indicate that employees are unhappy.

There was an increase in the percentage of employees who responded to the survey from 57 per cent to 60 per cent. The average response rate across the State Service was 26.4 per cent.

Homes Tasmania's ratings across key indices - Workplace Behaviours and Conditions (73 per cent), Workplace Diversity (72 per cent) and Agency Engagement (64 per cent) - were largely consistent with the average across the TSS.

23) Can you advise the total sum, inclusive of capital costs, spent and allocated to Wintringham?

The total sum of funds allocated to Wintringham between 2020 and 2026 is \$5.43 million, including:

- Capital expenditure of \$2.03 million for establishment costs, furniture and fit-out of Wirksworth Estate Integrated Aged Care to enable Wintringham to operate an Aged Care facility that caters to homeless people who are eligible for federal aged care funding and independent living units. This funding was provided in 2023-24.
- Operational expenditure of \$3.4 million over six years (2020-2026), equating to \$680 000 per annum, for the provision of Housing Connect Support for older people in the south and supportive tenancy management for a portfolio of 170 social housing dwellings

Additional funding, not allocated directly to Wintringham but for the purpose of enabling services by them, includes:

- Capital expenditure of \$17.271 million was spent on the construction of the Wirksworth Estate Integrated Aged Care facility. The property is owned by Homes Tasmania and leased to Wintringham.
- Capital expenditure of \$20 million is committed for the expansion of Wintringham to the north and north-west for construction and acquisition on supported accommodation for older people that will be owned by Homes Tasmania.

24) How many properties have Homes Tasmania purchased in the 2023/2024 and 2021/2022 financial years which have sitting tenants? How many of these tenants are at risk of homelessness or rental stress if they are evicted?

In the 2023-2024 financial year there were 6 properties purchased with sitting tenants. None of these tenants are at risk of eviction into homelessness or rental stress.

In the 2021-2022 financial year, there were no such properties purchased by Homes Tasmania.

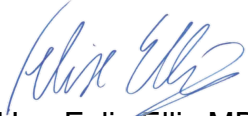
25) Will you get targets and measure progress to be reported in the monthly dashboard regarding Homes Tasmania's Housing First Approach to homelessness?

Homes Tasmania is developing a clear understanding about what is required to implement a Housing First approach that addresses primary homelessness in Tasmania.

This is a long-term project, and it is therefore too early to commit to communicating targets and measures on the Homes Tasmania monthly dashboard.

Implementation of Housing First will likely include a pilot project, the results of which will inform Homes Tasmania's future strategy.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Felix Ellis', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Hon Felix Ellis MP

Minister for Housing and Planning

8/10/2024

Attorney-General
Minister for Justice
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing
Minister for Veterans' Affairs

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Ref: MIN24/2355/1

11 October 2024

Mr Simon Behrakis MP
Chair
House of Assembly Estimates Committee B
Fiona.murphy@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Behrakis

Thank you for your letter of 25 September 2024 in relation to my appearance before Estimates Committee B on 24 September 2024. Please find below additional information as requested by the Committee:

1. In one report in 2021 the Coroner said:

'I do not consider that [the patient's] death was due to, as the Medical Certificate of Death indicated, a pulmonary embolism, nor, as the post-mortem report suggested, cardiac related. The cause of [the patient's] death was sepsis.'

When the Department reviewed these Coroners' reports and saw the Launceston General Hospital had failed to appropriately report a death, and that death certificates were incorrect, was anything done to investigate the issue?

The Department of Health (DoH) carefully reviews all adverse events to learn from what has happened and implement any changes necessary to ensure such events do not happen again.

The DoH introduced the Mortality Module in the Safety Reporting and Learning System (SRLS) in 2019 to enhance and improve visibility of death reporting processes across their hospitals and services. This includes a review function to enable oversight of the cause of death to enhance and support reporting mechanisms to the Coroner, and allows for education on appropriate terminology and practices to be provided through professional feedback mechanisms.

The DoH also initiated a new complaints process in 2022 that provides a no wrong door approach to complaint management and escalation process for complaints. Work is also underway to implement a policy that will include providing a response to the Coroner on the implementation of the Coroner's recommendations for all investigations, with or without inquest, within six months of the findings being provided to the Department.

2. How many times, in raw numbers, were ambulances not assigned within three minutes to P0 and P1 emergency calls?

A response was provided to the committee by the Chief Executive, Ambulance Tasmania during the hearing. Please see Hansard for this information.

3. What was the total number of paramedic shifts worked in 2023-2024 (in raw numbers)? What were the total number that went unfilled (in raw numbers)?

Statewide, Ambulance Tasmania required 64 605 paramedic shifts in 2023-24, 8 703.5 shifts were not filled, resulting in 55 901.5 shifts worked.

4. In 2023-2024, how many emergency incidents (in raw number terms) experienced a response time greater than:

- a. 30 minutes;
- b. 45 minutes; and
- c. 60 minutes.

Please refer to the table below:

Financial year	Emergency Medical Services P0,1 incidents with response time >30min	Emergency Medical Services P0,1 incidents with response time >45min	Emergency Medical Services P0,1 incidents with response time >60min
2023-24	6 503	2 387	1 053

5. How many single response shifts were worked by paramedics in 2023-24?

Paramedics may be required to respond to emergency medical incidents as a single responder so as to provide the most immediate response to a patient. In some circumstances a paramedic may operate as a single responder for a shift, or they may provide a single response as required throughout a shift.

For example, a Branch Station Officer (BSO) may commence a shift with a volunteer, but the volunteer may not be available for the entire shift, and the BSO may then be deployed as a single responder. A similar situation may occur in urban settings when a paramedic calls in/goes home sick or requires a fatigue break, leaving the other member to potentially be deployed as a single responder.

Ambulance Tasmania cannot provide the number of incidents when a single paramedic has been deployed to an incident in 2023-24, due to system limitations and reliance on paper-based shift documentation.

6. Have any systemic issues or trends been identified with the use of portable suction units used by paramedics in certain events?

A response was provided to the committee by the Chief Executive, Ambulance Tasmania during the hearing. Please see Hansard for this information.

7. Women's Health Tasmania put in application through the budget process for top up funding to meet the \$112,000 worth of cost increase it is facing (including inflation and the national wage increase). It was unsuccessful. Its Board has been forced to approve a deficit budget. This organisation runs part of the health system

- **it manages the brokerage funds that pay for terminations of abortion and long-acting reversible contraceptives. It also provides a range of services accessed by victim survivors of family and sexual violence (the people who are the focus of the work of the Commission of Inquiry). What plans are in place to ensure that these essential services are not cut when its Board runs out of resources?**

When Community Sector Organisations supported by the Department identify emerging financial challenges with the potential to negatively impact funding requirements, and when there is no identified funding to support an increase in funding to the organisation, policy advisors from the Department work with the organisation to review performance measures and to ensure outputs are more targeted to areas most in need.

Additional support is provided by the Department to organisations to ensure they understand their reporting obligations and that they collect meaningful data that meets the funding requirements and is also useful to support the organisations to plan more targeted service delivery.

8. How many triage category 2 patients were subject to transfer of care delays longer than 15 minutes in 2023-24?

A response was provided to the committee by the Acting Secretary during the hearing. Please see Hansard for this information.

9. Regarding the question on how many staff are appropriately trained and registered to conduct forensic medical exams, how many staff are there at each hospital currently (i.e. Royal Hobart Hospital, Launceston General Hospital, North-West Regional Hospital and Mersey)?

At the Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH) the following can undertake a forensic examination and participate in the on-call roster:

- **Paediatric sexual assault service**, which includes 11 consultants.
- **Adult sexual assault service**, which includes:
 - an on-call roster, with 7 staff appropriately trained.

The Hospitals North Sexual Assault and Family Violence Forensic Service (SAFE) consists of:

- six CNCs that have completed the appropriate post graduate training to provide a response to alleged adult sexual assaults.
- six general paediatricians that support the SAFE team when a paediatric patient presents to SAFE.
- All general paediatricians are provided with training in responding to alleged paediatric sexual assaults during their advanced training years, and this work is undertaken as part of their paediatric hours.

The Hospitals North West Sexual and Forensic Examination- Sexual Assault Medical Services (SAFE SAMS) consists of:

- one general paediatrician that supports the SAFE SAMS team when a paediatric patient presents to SAFE SAMS.
- three Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs) have the appropriate training to support the SAFE SAMS.

The North West has no trained nurses willing to work in this space.

10. Research is linking even mild acute COVID infections with population wide increases in a large number of chronic diseases. This has huge implications for our health system and the increased demand we can expect on services, not to mention people's quality of life. At a briefing with the Acting Secretary two weeks ago, we were told demand for health services in Tasmania increased dramatically since COVID infection became widespread. Could you please provide data on the rates of the following health conditions in 2019-2020 and 2023-2024?

- a. **Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS)**
- b. **Heart disease**
- c. **Arrhythmias**
- d. **Mood disorders and anxiety**
- e. **Stroke or blood clots**
- f. **Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS)**
- g. **Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS)**
- h. **Diabetes, including Type-1 diabetes in children**
- i. **Cancers**
- j. **Strep A**

Has the Health Department observed increases in these conditions?

The Australian Burden of Disease study, published by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, is the most accurate approach to measuring the impact of diseases on a population. This approach estimates the rates across the population and adjusts for

changes in the overall age of the population which impact disease rates. This is not dependent on if or where patients present to receive care.

Other data, such as hospital admission data, is dependent on clinical coding and does not present an accurate or complete picture at a population level.

State and territory estimates for 2023 are yet to be released; it is anticipated this will occur in 2026. Reports for previous years, which will have the specific data requested can be found at www.aihw.gov.au/reports-data/health-conditions-disability-deaths/durden-of-disease/overview.

11. How many staff are on stress leave or workers compensation leave from the Spencer Clinic in Burnie? How many positions are vacant (if it can be provided)

As of 25 September 2024, there are 7 employees with a workers compensation leave booking for Spencer Clinic.

As of 25 September 2024, there were 6.08 FTE positions vacant.

12. What are the government's plans to start collecting data on numbers of terminations (medical and surgical) that it needs to track trends, budget for costs, and support women to avoid unwanted pregnancies by identifying the barriers to accessing contraception?

Tasmanian hospitals collect data on all services provided to admitted patients in accordance with the Australian Refined - Diagnosis Related Group (AR-DRG) classification system. This classification is used in all Australian hospitals.

AR-DRGs group patients with similar diagnoses requiring similar hospital services. This includes termination of pregnancy, noting it is not always specific enough to differentiate between incomplete spontaneous abortion (miscarriage) requiring surgical intervention, and induced surgical termination, noting the data is reliant on hospital clinical coding.

In 2023-24, there were 647 terminations of pregnancy recorded against this classification.

Data at the AR-DRG level is used to fund hospitals through activity-based funding and is used to project hospital activity to inform long-term planning for health services.

Medical termination of pregnancy is primarily provided in a primary care (i.e. general practitioner) setting, which is a responsibility of the Australian Government. The DoH regularly engages with non-government sector organisations which provide information and support to those who need it in relation to this service.

The DoH provides extensive information about contraception on its website, and contraceptive counselling is available at the state's Women's Health Clinic and The Link Youth Health Fund Service (12-25 years) via telehealth when appropriate. This includes support for contraception choices and options, referral options around pregnancy choices, Long-acting reversible contraception (LARC) such as hormone implants and IUDs (intrauterine devices).

In addition, funding is provided to Family Planning Tasmania (FPT), through the DoH to support improved sexual and reproductive health for Tasmanians. This includes the

delivery of contraceptive services with a focus on improving access to LARC to those who need it most. FPT also delivers IUD and Implanon (a type of LARC) insertion training. The DoH also fund Women's Health Tasmania which offers sexual and reproductive health information and support.

13. How many women who are not covered by Medicare gave birth in Tasmanian hospitals in the last financial year?

One hundred and thirty-three (133) Medicare Ineligible women gave birth in Tasmanian public and publicly contracted private maternity hospitals in 2023-24.

a. What was the average of their antenatal and birth costs?

The average of the antenatal and birth costs for the 133 Medicare Ineligible women is estimated as \$16 012.

b. How many required support for gestational diabetes and what was the average cost of that treatment?

Thirty four (34) of these Medicare Ineligible women had gestational diabetes. It is not possible to separately identify the cost of treating gestational diabetes from the overall cost of antenatal, birthing, and postnatal care as noted above.

c. How many were put on payment plans?

Three of the Medicare Ineligible women agreed to payment plans to pay for the costs of their treatment.

d. What was the average rate of repayment at the payment plans?

The average rate of repayment of the three payment plans is \$223.60 per month.

e. How many had their fees waived due to financial hardship?

None of these Medicare Ineligible women have had their fees waived due to financial hardship.

14. What steps is the Department taking to reduce the risk of scatter radiation experienced by nurses and doctors working in catheterization labs? What steps is the Department taking to move to a more modern form of personal protective equipment than lead aprons?

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), commonly referred to as Lead aprons, are the most common means of providing radiation protection to staff all around the world, and it is still best practice to utilise these as radiation protection. The aprons are screened annually, as well as when needed (e.g. if found to have been stored inappropriately) and the results recorded. The gowns cover all vital areas, as well as the option of glasses, shin guards, 'lead' cap, or a sleeve addition to lead vest. An adequately positioned ceiling mounted shield covers areas such as forearms and heads.

Scatter goes everywhere. The map of scatter from a patient on a Cath Lab table primarily travels down. The cath lab table has lead drapes down to the floor to protect the doctor and nurse scrubbed, plus there are lead shields on wheels to protect team members near the patient's head and close to the primary beam.

The THS applies the internationally accepted basic concepts of radiation protection which are time, distance, and shielding. All radiation healthcare workers are monitored for radiation doses and wear personal radiation dosimeters. Several different strategies are utilised in shielding healthcare workers from radiation, including lead aprons, lead thyroid collars, lead glasses (eye protection) and lead shields which are either mobile or fixed. Additional forms of radiation protection equipment include ceiling mounted shields, under table curtains, and mobile shields, all of which are utilised at the RHH.

The THS uses lightweight lead aprons. The use of the term "lead" is historical and refers to previous generations of radiation protection that were made of lead. Modern "lead aprons" are composite and are made of lead impregnated materials. Composite lead aprons are significantly lighter and pose less mechanical risk to the wearer, whilst continuing to provide radiation protection to the healthcare worker. There are currently no replacements for "lead aprons".

The main risk factors from radiation are cell damage that leads to cancer and cataracts. Risk reduction strategies include access to the best protective equipment possible; and promotion of best practice radiation hygiene.

The current composite fabrics designed to provide sufficient protection from radiation have changed over the years. But the reality is that lead aprons and even lead glasses, collars, caps are not light weight items, although they have reduced in weight over the years.

All cath Lab nurses and cardiologists wear dose monitors. There is no current evidence that the current radiation levels registered by any of the staff (monitored through the wearable monitors) exceeds the international recognised safe limits as defined by IAEA (International Atomic Energy Authority) or ARPANSA (Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency).

Tasmania has a robust reporting system for reporting high procedural radiation doses. See: <https://www.health.tas.gov.au/health-topics/radiation-protection>. These reports are tabled at each meeting by the Tasmanian Radiation Advisory Board to the Minister of Health. The cardiac interventional laboratory has not submitted any such reports.

Yours sincerely



Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

Question on Notice

House of Assembly

Asked by:

Answered by: Hon Guy Barnett MP

Question: **What is the annual salary of your Senior Veterans' Affairs Adviser? Is this adviser's salary drawn down from Veterans' Affairs allocations?**

Answer: All Ministerial and Parliamentary services staff are employed through the Office of the Premier. Salaries are paid from the Ministerial and Parliamentary Services establishment budget.

Salary information for all Ministerial and Parliamentary staff are routinely disclosed on the Department of Premier and Cabinet website.

Approved / Not Approved


Hon Guy Barnett MP
Minister for Veteran's Affairs

Date:

7/10/24

Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Minister for Racing

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Mr Simon Behrakis MP
Chair
Budget Estimates Committee 'B'
House of Assembly
Parliament House
Email: Fiona.Murphy@parliament.tas.gov.au

14 OCT 2024

Dear Mr Behrakis

Appropriation Bill (No. 1) 2024

I refer to your letter of 26 September 2024 seeking additional information following my appearance before Budget Estimates Committee B on 25 September 2024.

Please find below the additional information requested and I apologise to the Committee for the delay in providing this response:

PRIMARY INDUSTRIES AND WATER:

- 1. Communities in the north of Tasmania have stated issues with feral pigs at Gunns Plains and around Waratah, which would be an enormous issue given the damage pigs can cause. What measures and planning have you in place to get on top of this issue as soon as possible?***

Roaming pigs on mainland Tasmania are considered domestic stock and managing them is a Council matter under the *Local Government Act 1993*.

There have been reports of free roaming pigs at Gunns Plains for several years and the pigs are believed to have originated from a pig farm in the area. The Central Coast Council imposed an abatement notice last year under the provisions of the *Local Government Act 1993* requiring the owner of the pig farm to fence the land to keep domestic animals on the land. The Central Coast Council arranged for a contractor to install improved fencing which was completed in December 2023.

Biosecurity Tasmania has been meeting regularly with officers from the Central Coast Council as a way of understanding and assisting with the management of the pig issue so that appropriate measures can be considered to assist in mitigating any associated biosecurity risks.

Recent Biosecurity Tasmania monitoring suggests that there still does not appear to be a feral population of pigs at Gunns Plains. Biosecurity Tasmania will continue to monitor the situation and respond if that should change.

2. *What is the threshold for taking action in invasives? How much damage must occur before action is taken?*

Biosecurity Tasmania uses a risk-based approach to the management of all invasive species. An invasive species is an introduced animal or plant that poses a significant threat to Tasmania's biodiversity, agriculture, community, or economy.

If there is evidence of an invasive species incursion requiring a response, then Biosecurity Tasmania has powers to initiate a control program under the *Biosecurity Act 2019* to mitigate that risk.

3. *Will the Government consider declaring unmarked, roaming pigs and goats as a 'pest' under the Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations 2021, thereby enabling effective control of these animals?*

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania (NRE Tas) does not consider that declaring unmarked, roaming pigs and goats as a 'pest' under the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations 2021* will result in more effective management of roaming stock by Councils and landowners.

Existing legal options for councils and landowners to manage escaped animals apply under the *Local Government Act 1993* and the *Law of Animals Act 1962*.

4. *Can you please provide the document read out by the General Manager of Biosecurity Tasmania in relation to inspections conducted?*

This information was tabled on the day of the hearing.

5. *With the recent passing of the Bill to facilitate community management of Irrigation Schemes and Tasmanian Irrigations conduct of consultation with irrigators on each side of the 19 schemes operated by TI, is it anticipated that there will be any schemes that apply to transition to community management, and if so, which schemes have indicated they are interested in doing so?*

In consultation with Tasmanian Irrigation, the Government is aware of only one group of irrigators currently actively considering transition to community management. The scheme is the Winnaleah Irrigation Scheme.

6. *Can you clarify how many birds have been shot by the Tasmanian Salmon Industry since the beginning of 2024 and what weapon or implement is used by the salmon industry to shoot native birds?*

As at the date of this response, take returns have been provided indicating that 30 Little Black Cormorants and 50 Great Cormorants were taken under two permits.

Three permits to take cormorants remain current and take returns have not yet been provided for those permits.

All these permits include a condition requiring that animals must be humanely killed with an appropriate calibre firearm. It is the responsibility of the permit holder to ensure that the firearm used to take the wildlife is appropriate to ensure a humane kill.

7. What is the saving strategy across each of your Ministerial responsibilities?

See Attachment 1 - Efficiency Dividend Table 2024-25, consistent with the answer provided to the Legislative Council Estimates Committee B on notice.

Please note that Primary Industries and Water is inclusive of Marine Resources, and that Marine Resources is the responsibility for the Minister for Business, Industry and Resources.

8. Is the efficiency dividend being applied to Biosecurity?

The Department will seek operating efficiencies broadly while protecting frontline services. Importantly, the Tasmanian Government has invested significantly in biosecurity in the 2024-25 State Budget, with commitments of \$4.2 million over four years under the Government's Strong Borders, Strong Sector policy, as well as a recurrent increase of nearly \$8 million or \$1.99 million each year for Biosecurity Frontline Services.

9. Please provide for the Committee the Inspection of Abattoir table read from at the Estimates B House of Assembly Committee in the Primary Industries and Water portfolio on 25 September 2024.

This information was tabled on the day of the hearing.

RACING:

10. Have there been any referrals arising from the Murrihy review recommendations made to police?

Yes. Mr Murrihy did provide information to Tasmania Police.

I also provide the Committee with some additional clarifying information in relation to video monitoring systems in abattoirs and slaughterhouses, for the avoidance of any doubt.

The answers I provided to the Committee indicated 24-hour, seven day a week closed circuit television is a requirement. To clarify, the *Guidelines for Video Monitoring in Tasmanian Abattoirs & Knackeries 2024* do not require processors to have 24/7 CCTV. The requirement is for the video monitoring system to be working and always recording when and where there are live animals present and being handled at the livestock processing premises, including the delivery of animals to the premises outside normal working hours.

The answers I provided to the Committee also indicated that all abattoirs and slaughterhouses had a video monitoring system in place. Subsequently I have been advised that on the day of the hearings, there were two small slaughterhouses that did not have a video monitoring system operational. One of the two slaughterhouses became fully compliant shortly after this date. The remaining slaughterhouse is currently trialling technology to ensure it is fully compliant. Biosecurity Tasmania is working closely with the operator to ensure that it is fully compliant as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Howlett', with a stylized, cursive script.

Hon Jane Howlett MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water
Minister for Racing

Attachment 1:
Efficiency Dividend Table 2024-25

Attachment 1 - Efficiency Dividend Table 2024-25

Answer:

	2024-25
	Budget
	\$'000
Discretionary expenditure	421
Salary expenditure ¹	840
Other savings measures	440
Allocation	1 701

Note:

1. This savings target represents less than 1 per cent of the Department's overall salary budget from all funding sources.

The savings to be achieved by portfolio are as follows:

	2024-25
	Budget
	\$'000
Arts (Heritage)	22
Business, Industry & Resources	50
Parks & Environment	1 244
Primary Industries & Water	336
Racing	49
Allocation	1 701

Minister for Education
Minister for Disability Services
Deputy Leader in the Legislative Council

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11 OCT 2024

Mr Simon Behrakis MP
Chair, Estimates Committee B

Via
Ms Fiona Murphy, Committee Secretary
fiona.murphy@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Behrakis

Please find attached responses to questions I took on notice during my appearance before the House of Assembly Budget Estimates Committee B on 25 September 2024.

Question 1 – Please provide the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and any other associated documents from the Government press conference today, 25 September 2024.

Answer:

- [Heads of Agreement](#) (attachment 1)
- [Statement of Intent](#) (attachment 2)

In addition, the [joint media release](#) from the day is also provided (attachment 3).

Question 2 – Please provide to the Committee the breakdown of the survey of schools related to the election commitment of expanding Out of Hours School Care (OHSC) in Tasmanian Schools.

Answer:

- I understand my Office contacted you on 1 October 2024 regarding this question. During Estimates I did not agree to take this question on notice and instead stated that I would consult the Department for Education, Children and Young People to understand if this information could be released.
- I am advised that this information can be provided at an aggregated level.
- There were 104 responses to the survey. Please note that in two instances, two separate responses were received on behalf of a school. With these two duplicates removed, the number of schools responses were received for was **North 30; North West 27; South 45.**

Please breakdown the 30 of the 104 respondents who wanted to see this service introduced and the 17 who wanted to expand their current service?

Answer:

- Of the 49 responses for schools who do not currently have OSHC, 29 (as above, two schools responded twice) indicated their interest in exploring the potential to provide OSHC on their sites. **North 12; North West 8; and South 9.**
- Of the 55 responses for schools who have an OSHC service on their site, 17 reported a need to expand their service. **North 3; North West 5; South 9.**

Question 3 – Please provide details of all staff employed in Aboriginal Education Services from 2014 to 2024 by region including:

- a. Role and FTE level; and**
- b. B. status (permanent or annual)?**

Answer:

Please see attachment 4

Explanatory notes to attachment 4:

- During the Budget Estimates hearing, the Department for Education, Children and Young People provided the budgeted staffing allocations for Aboriginal Education Services.
- While a permanent funded allocation indicates that a position is permanently budgeted for, the individual filling it can be either a permanent or fixed-term employee.
- The employee data provided in attachment 3 shows the total actual Full-Time Equivalent staffing of Aboriginal Education Services by employment category (permanent and fixed-term) for each year as of 30 March, over a 10-year period.
- An additional count as of 11 September 2024 is included to align with the timing of budgeted allocations shared during the Estimates hearing.

For the same period, provide the annual budget for Aboriginal Education Services Division within the Department.

Answer:

Annual financial year based budget allocations for Aboriginal Education Services

2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m	\$m
2.020	3.181	2.897	2.615	2.256	2.343	2.366	2.646	2.688	2.779

Notes:

- Figures between 2014-15 and 2017-18 include both State and Australian Government funding.
- Figures from 2018-19 onwards reflect recurrent State Government appropriation funding.
- Between 2014-15 and 2017-18, additional State and Australian Government funding was provided to Aboriginal Education Services for the following specific time-limited initiatives:
 - The development of a Professional Learning Suite
 - Aboriginal curriculum development
 - The Indigenous Education Agreement
 - Indigenous Advancement Strategy - Early Years Indigenous Family Outreach Program

Yours sincerely



**Hon Jo Palmer MLC
Minister for Education**

Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034



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Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034

PRELIMINARIES

1. The Parties acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waters on which Australians live, learn and work, and pay respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.
2. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and knowledge are fundamental to shaping and improving education systems and outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and students. The Parties to this *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034* (Agreement) will encourage and support self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, to significantly improve Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education.
3. All Parties have committed to working in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders as part of the *National Agreement on Closing the Gap* (Closing the Gap Agreement). The Parties express their thanks to the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC) and the Coalition of Peaks for their significant engagement and work in partnership on the development of this Agreement. Working in partnership will lead to a better and fairer education system, including for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
4. The Parties acknowledge the contribution of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and ways of learning to Australia's education system. The Parties commit to supporting the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to design and deliver reforms to increase education equity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
5. Australia has a strong education system, but it can be better and fairer. To do that, governments and school systems, in partnership with families, will support every student to succeed so that no one is held back or left behind.
6. All Australian governments have agreed to uphold the vision for Australian schooling outlined in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* (the Mparntwe Education Declaration) for a world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face.
7. Specifically, this Agreement will support the Mparntwe Education Declaration's 2 interrelated goals - that the Australian education system promotes excellence and equity and that all young Australians become confident and creative individuals, successful lifelong learners, and active and informed members of the community. An equitable system also needs to build on and include local, regional and national cultural knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
8. All Parties recognise teachers, educators, support staff and school leaders are vital to achieving these education goals for young Australians. All Parties commit to working

together to foster high-quality teaching and leadership, including through developing well-prepared pre-service teachers, and building a diverse educator workforce that is reflective of the contemporary Australian population.

9. A high-quality, equitable and inclusive school education system has the power to transform lives and support young people to realise their full potential by providing the skills they need to participate in society and the economy.
10. The Parties acknowledge that learning is a partnership with parents, carers and others in the community, all of whom have a role to play in nurturing students' success at school and in life.
11. The Parties also recognise the importance of agency in empowering students to be active and engaged in their learning.
12. The Parties also affirm their continued commitment to the implementation of *Australia's Disability Strategy 2021-31*.
13. This Agreement sets out the shared intention of the Parties to work in partnership to improve education outcomes for all Australian students and build on the capability and capacity of the education workforce. The Bilateral Agreements between the Commonwealth and individual state and territory governments set out the specific intentions for the relevant state or territory and the Commonwealth, building on the shared intention in this Agreement, and the strategies and initiatives that will be pursued to deliver them.
14. This Agreement operates in the context of, and gives effect to, requirements under the *Australian Education Act 2013* (the Act). The Act sets out conditions on states and territories for grants of financial assistance based on the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). The SRS is made up of a base funding amount for every student plus additional loadings for schools and students with greater needs. This Agreement and its schedules satisfy the requirements of paragraphs 22(2)(a) and (b) of the Act.
15. The Parties recognise that the constitutional responsibility for school education lies with states and territories. States and territories have in place their own regulatory frameworks, local policies and priorities intended to maximise students' educational outcomes. Non-government approved authorities and approved system authorities have their own policies and priorities intended to maximise students' educational outcomes.
16. Subsection 78(3) of the Act requires approved system authorities to distribute all Australian Government recurrent funding in accordance with a needs-based funding arrangement that is compliant with subsection 78(5) of the Act. This approach recognises that approved system authorities are best placed to understand the individual needs of their schools and students.
17. The Parties acknowledge the significant ongoing reform, investment and effort already underway or occurring outside this Agreement, both at a national level and in individual states and territories and systems. This includes substantial work being undertaken by all governments and schooling sectors through the response to *Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel* and the *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan*.
18. This Agreement and all schedules to this Agreement are not intended to limit the operation of the Act and the Australian Education Regulations 2023 (the Regulations), including decisions made under that legislation.

19. This Agreement replaces the *National School Reform Agreement 2019-2024*. All Parties acknowledge the Act may be amended to reflect the changes required as a result of this Agreement and its schedules.
20. Reflecting the long-standing practice of collaboration between all Australian governments to deliver school education reform, the Education Ministers Meeting is responsible for overseeing the implementation of this Agreement.
21. The Parties recognise the important role of the non-government school sector in school education, including non-government approved authorities, approved system authorities and non-government representative bodies, and commit to working with the non-government school sector to implement this Agreement.

PART 1 – PARTIES, OPERATION, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Parties

22. The Parties to this Agreement (the Parties) are:
- a. the Commonwealth of Australia (the Commonwealth)
 - b. the states and territories, being:
 - i. the State of New South Wales
 - ii. the State of Victoria
 - iii. the State of Queensland
 - iv. the State of Western Australia
 - v. the State of South Australia
 - vi. the State of Tasmania
 - vii. the Australian Capital Territory
 - viii. the Northern Territory.

Term

23. This Agreement and any schedules (except Schedule D) will commence on 1 January 2025 and expire on 31 December 2034.
24. The Bilateral Agreements between the Commonwealth and a state or territory (which will be included at Schedule D) will commence on 1 January 2025 and expire on 31 December 2029, unless otherwise agreed.
25. The subsequent Bilateral Agreements, for the period 1 January 2030 to 31 December 2034, unless otherwise specified in the Agreement, will be included at Schedule D when signed.

Variations

26. In accordance with the Council on Federal Financial Relations' processes for oversight of federal financial arrangements, this Agreement may be varied or extended at any time with the agreement in writing of the Education Ministers of all the Parties, or by First Ministers where appropriate.
27. Unless otherwise specified, the schedules to this Agreement (except Schedule D) may be varied or revoked, and new schedules may be added, at any time with the agreement of the Education Ministers of all Parties. Any new schedules will be developed and included with the agreement of the Education Ministers of all Parties.
28. Bilateral Agreements between the Commonwealth and a state or territory (included at Schedule D) may be varied, or added to Schedule D, with the written agreement of the Education Ministers of the Commonwealth and the state or territory to which the Bilateral Agreement relates.
29. Where variations materially impact the non-government school sector, the relevant Parties agree to consult with relevant non-government representative bodies on proposed variations on a national or state level, as appropriate.

Withdrawal of Parties

30. A Party to this Agreement may terminate its participation in this Agreement at any time by notifying all the other Parties in writing. If a Party intends to withdraw, it should provide as much notice as possible before withdrawing and a minimum of 3 months.

Dispute resolution

31. Any Party may give notice to the other Parties of a dispute under this Agreement or any schedule to this Agreement, except Schedule D.
32. Officials of relevant Parties will attempt to resolve any dispute under this Agreement in the first instance. If a dispute cannot be resolved by officials it may be escalated to the relevant Education Ministers and, if necessary, to the Education Ministers Meeting. If a dispute cannot be resolved by the relevant Education Ministers, it may be referred to the relevant First Ministers and, if necessary, to the Council on Federal Financial Relations or National Cabinet for consideration.
33. In the case of a dispute related to a Bilateral Agreement between the Commonwealth and a state or territory, officials of relevant Parties will attempt to resolve any dispute relating to the Bilateral Agreement in the first instance. If a dispute cannot be resolved by officials, it may be escalated to the relevant Education Ministers and, if necessary, to relevant First Ministers or the relevant Council on Federal Financial Relations Ministers.
34. A dispute does not, of itself, constitute failure to implement this Agreement.

Progress reviews

35. The Commonwealth will commission an independent progress review of this Agreement, excluding implementation of National Reform Directions set out in Bilateral Agreements at Schedule D, on behalf of Education Ministers, with the reviewer(s) and the terms of reference to be agreed by Education Ministers. The reviewer(s) will provide its final report to all Ministers no later than 31 December 2028. Following consideration of the progress review, updates or modifications could be made to this Agreement in accordance with the processes at clauses 26 to 29.
36. The Commonwealth will commission a second independent review of this Agreement, excluding implementation of National Reform Directions set out in Bilateral Agreements at Schedule D, on behalf of Education Ministers, with reviewer(s) and the terms of reference to be agreed by Education Ministers. The reviewer(s) will provide its final report to all Ministers no later than 31 December 2033. The review will inform the next national agreement.
37. The reviews at clauses 35 and 36 will consider the impact and effectiveness of the National Reform Directions and National Enabling Initiatives in achieving the overall objectives and outcomes of this Agreement. The reviews will take into consideration the levels of school funding investment across systems and sectors when assessing impact and effectiveness. The reviews will not include any assessment of compliance with sections 22A and 78 of the Act, which have discrete review provisions under section 128 of the Act.
38. The reviews at clauses 35 and 36 will have regard to the specific scope of this Agreement, which is supplementary to efforts by Parties that occur outside of this Agreement.

39. The reviews at clauses 35 and 36 will be conducted in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities, including NATSIEC and the Coalition of Peaks.

Shared responsibilities of the Commonwealth and the states and territories

40. The Commonwealth and the states and territories commit to:

- a. continue to work together through the Education Ministers Meeting, recognising their complementary roles in the federation
- b. commission the national education agencies and bodies to support the delivery of work consistent with the Objectives and Outcomes articulated in this Agreement and the priority of Education Ministers, noting that states and territories will not be held accountable for a failure of a national agency to deliver agreed actions
- c. establish and maintain formal partnerships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities, consistent with the Parties' Closing the Gap Agreement Implementation Plans
- d. work collaboratively with education stakeholders in the development and implementation of national reforms, including in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative organisations, consistent with the intent of the Closing the Gap Agreement and with the non-government sector
- e. work together to improve the quality and timeliness of the data that supports the achievement of the Outcomes and Objectives of this Agreement
- f. share best practice and school improvement strategies, including evaluations of programs, where appropriate, to support school and school system improvement
- g. provide public leadership by promoting the excellent work of teachers and school leaders, the value of their contribution to society and the critical role they play in realising the national school reform agenda and improving outcomes for Australia's children and young people.

41. The Parties acknowledge there are a range of factors and services outside the scope of this Agreement and education settings more generally that may impact a student and their learning. The Parties recognise that reform processes in other portfolios may impact the education system and have the potential to influence student outcomes in education settings, including progress and achievement of Improvement Measures.

Responsibilities of the Commonwealth

42. The Commonwealth will:

- a. maintain and administer the Act and associated legislative instruments
- b. consult, collaborate and seek agreement from the Education Ministers Meeting, as the key body for making decisions and in recognition of the significant impact

of changed Commonwealth funding arrangements on state and territory investment, about:

- i. amendments to the Act, Regulations and policy guidelines that underpin the operation of the Regulations and Act
 - ii. terms of reference for reviews by the National School Resourcing Board (the Board) established under section 128 of the Act
 - iii. any changes that impact the operation and calculation methodology of the SRS
 - c. provide assistance as required to support the operation of the Board
 - d. provide timely access to Commonwealth funding and SRS data to assist states and territories to meet the requirements of section 22A of the Act, and consider what arrangements might provide for greater certainty for states and territories to support jurisdictional budget management, including consideration of the timing of SRS indexation rates
 - e. develop a First Nations education policy in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education stakeholders and state and territory governments
 - f. work with states and territories to facilitate the non-government school sector to implement relevant aspects of this Agreement (see clause 57)
 - g. monitor the non-government school sector's compliance with the Act and the Regulations and support the achievement of the outcomes and objectives of the Agreement
 - h. facilitate Australia's international engagement on educational matters, including the international assessment programs of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
 - i. lead and meet milestones of the National Enabling Initiatives for which the Commonwealth has primary responsibility, in collaboration with states and territories
 - j. implement significant national initiatives, including those announced in the 2024-25 Budget such as the Commonwealth Prac Payment for teachers undertaking supervised mandatory placements and the establishment of a National Teacher Resource Hub.
43. Where the Commonwealth proposes to take a compliance response in relation to a state or territory under the Act, the Commonwealth will ensure that the terms of that proposed response are provided to the state or territory concerned and the views of that state or territory are sought and taken into consideration prior to any final decision.
44. In the event of a change to any of the following components of the SRS arising as a direct result of amendments to the Act or the Regulations that commence from 1 January 2024 until 31 December 2034, the Commonwealth will ensure a state or territory contribution amount as set out as a share of the SRS under section 22A of the Act, or in this Agreement

or a Bilateral Agreement at Schedule D, will not be impacted by the following, unless otherwise agreed by the Education Minister of that state or territory:

- a. the SRS indexation factor (see section 11A of the Act)
 - b. the SRS base and funding amounts (see section 33 and 34 of the Act)
 - c. the Commonwealth's and states and territories' annual shares (see section 35A and 22A of the Act)
 - d. the student with disability loading (see section 36 of the Act)
 - e. the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander loading (see section 37 of the Act)
 - f. the socio-educational disadvantage loading (see section 38 of the Act)
 - g. the low English proficiency loading (see section 39 of the Act)
 - h. the location loading (see sections 40 and 41 of the Act)
 - i. the size loading (see sections 42 to 51 of the Act)
 - j. the methodology for calculation of SES scores and capacity to contribute settings (see section 23 of the Regulation and section 54 of the Act).
45. Parties note that in the operation of clause 44, the amended contribution share should be consistent with the expected value of the original contribution share agreed under the SRS settings as set out under section 22A of the Act, or in this Agreement or a Bilateral Agreement at Schedule D, that were in operation at the time that shares at Schedule D were agreed, unless otherwise agreed.
46. Parties note that a state or territory would not exercise clauses 44 and 45 if a change to a component of the SRS was a result of the review of the SRS base and loadings and the change is agreed by the Education Minister of that state or territory.
47. The Board provides independent oversight of Commonwealth school funding, including undertaking independent reviews under section 128 of the Act. Given the significance to all jurisdictions of the advice provided by the Board, the Board will consult with Education Ministers, in addition to requirements for consultation with the states and territories in undertaking each review.

Responsibilities of the states and territories

48. States and territories are responsible for schooling in their state or territory, including the regulatory framework for all schools. States and territories are responsible for developing policy, delivering services, monitoring and reporting on performance and employment of school staff in the government school sector.
49. In this context, states and territories will:
- a. deliver state-specific reforms against National Reform Directions and report as set out in their respective Bilateral Agreement
 - b. work with the Commonwealth to facilitate the non-government school sector's implementation of relevant aspects of this Agreement (see clause 57)

- c. engage with the non-government school sector to facilitate their implementation of relevant aspects of this Agreement (consistent with subsection 77(2A) of the Act), noting that states and territories will not be held accountable in the event that an approved authority does not meet its obligations under subsection 77(2A) of the Act
- d. provide financial and student data where appropriate from government systems to the relevant national education body as agreed by the Education Ministers Meeting
- e. distribute Commonwealth funding to schools according to state and territory needs-based funding arrangements as provided for under subsection 78(5) of the Act
- f. work together with the Commonwealth in the development and implementation of the National Enabling Initiatives.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

- 50. Through the Closing the Gap Agreement, all Australian Governments and the Coalition of Peaks have agreed a fundamentally new way of developing and implementing policies and programs that impact the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
- 51. This Agreement acknowledges the rich histories and continuing cultures of Australia's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and commits the Parties to work in genuine partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities.
- 52. The Parties commit to work in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education stakeholders including NATSIEC and relevant state and territory Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies, consistent with the partnership agreement to be agreed by Education Ministers.
- 53. The Parties also acknowledge the importance of data sovereignty and undertake that reporting of data under this Agreement should be shared with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, organisations and communities where appropriate, and align with the targets agreed under the Closing the Gap Agreement.
- 54. Consistent with the Parties' shared commitment under the Closing the Gap Agreement to increased transparency of funding allocations, approved system authorities and approved authorities will continue to prioritise funding towards supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through the operation and publication of needs-based funding arrangements consistent with the Act.
- 55. Consistent with the Priority Reforms under the Closing the Gap Agreement, the Parties also undertake to support and develop the Community Controlled Sector to deliver culturally safe and appropriate services to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and the education workforce.

Responsibilities of the non-government school sector

- 56. The Act establishes ongoing requirements for all approved authorities. These include requirements to implement the Australian Curriculum, ensure schools participate in the

National Assessment Program and provide information in accordance with the Regulations (under subsection 77(2) of the Act).

57. Under subsection 77(2A) of the Act, non-government approved authorities are required to cooperate with their local state or territory government in the implementation of this Agreement, including the National Enabling Initiatives and the relevant Bilateral Agreement, which includes implementing the National Reforms.
58. Reporting for the non-government school sector is outlined in Part 5 of this Agreement.

Enforceability

59. The Parties do not intend any of the provisions of this Agreement to be legally enforceable; however, this does not lessen the Parties' commitment to the Agreement.

PART 2 – PURPOSE, OBJECTIVES, OUTCOMES AND IMPROVEMENT MEASURES

Purpose

60. The Parties commit to actions that will support full and fair funding for schools, build a world class education system for all students, and encourage and support every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they face.
61. To guide implementation and evaluation of the Agreement, the Parties agree to a set of Objectives, Outcomes and Improvement Measures against each of the 3 priority areas identified at clause 62. The Objectives articulate the broader goal for the education system; the Outcomes summarise the expected benefits that will be realised through the successful implementation of the reform agenda; and the Improvement Measures identify progress against outcomes.
62. Education Ministers have agreed that the following 3 national priority areas form the basis for the Agreement, which are consistent with the goals of the Mparntwe Education Declaration:
 - a. equity and excellence
 - b. wellbeing for learning and engagement
 - c. a strong and sustainable workforce.
63. The Objectives and Outcomes of this Agreement are a shared responsibility of the Commonwealth, states and territories and the non-government school sector. In conjunction with the goals and visions of the Mparntwe Education Declaration, they articulate a shared aspiration for Australia's education system.
64. All Parties are responsible for working together to achieve the Objectives, Outcomes and Improvement Measures of this Agreement. While the Parties are collectively committed to this, Commonwealth funding to states and territories under the Act is not conditional on the achievement of these Objectives, Outcomes and Improvement Measures.

Objectives

65. The Parties commit that, in pursuing the National Reforms at Part 4, they seek to deliver upon the following Objectives:
 - a. Equity and excellence – schools and education systems are equipped to provide all students with highly effective evidence-based teaching and equitable learning opportunities and support them to maximise their learning.
 - b. Wellbeing for learning and engagement – schools take a structured approach to wellbeing for learning in a way which reflects their school and learning environment, and students have a sense of belonging, safety and engagement with their learning.
 - c. A strong and sustainable workforce – the workforce is respected and continues to grow, and teachers and non-teaching school staff are supported to innovate and be at their best to ensure young Australians thrive in their education. A sustainable

workforce means that the Australian community recognises the value teachers and school leaders bring to students, communities and the economy.

Outcomes

66. The Parties agree that the Agreement will contribute to the following Outcomes:

- a. Equity and excellence – all students are provided access to high-quality evidence-based teaching that is inclusive, where young Australians of all backgrounds and levels of need are supported to achieve their full educational potential.
- b. Wellbeing for learning and engagement – students are provided with appropriate support, experiences, teaching and resources to positively and confidently engage in learning.
- c. A strong and sustainable workforce – all staff are supported to innovate, consistent with evidence-based teaching, and be at their best to ensure young Australians thrive in their education. Teaching is valued and more Australians consider a career in education, and there is a high teacher retention rate.

Improvement Measures

67. The Parties agree that national Improvement Measures, including national level targets, are essential to articulating the joint ambition of all Parties for the national education system, in line with the goals of the Mparntwe Education Declaration and the national priorities for reform.
68. The Parties agree to focus on measures that, both individually and collectively, promote a greater understanding of how the joint effort of governments, school systems and approved authorities are leading to better outcomes for students and educators. Parties aim to contribute to these national targets through continuous (i.e. year-on-year) improvement.
69. The Parties and non-government representative bodies will track progress against the Improvement Measures and report against these where the Commonwealth does not separately have access to the data, consistent with their reporting obligations (see Part 5).
70. Where appropriate and relevant jurisdiction-specific targets exist, Bilateral Agreements may specify jurisdiction-specific targets which clarify how an individual state or territory will contribute to the national target within the unique context of that state or territory. Where a state or territory has negotiated a jurisdiction-specific target, this will be included in their Annual Implementation Report where the Commonwealth does not separately have access to the data. A state or territory's data will be included in the measurement of the national target.
71. Where a Bilateral Agreement does not specify a jurisdiction-specific target and where the Commonwealth does not separately have access to the data, the relevant state or territory will report its progress towards the national target in its Annual Implementation Report to the Commonwealth.
72. Parties note that progress on Improvement Measures and targets may be impacted by the point at which Parties deliver full and fair funding for schools in their respective jurisdiction.

73. For the purpose of this Agreement, priority equity cohorts are Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, students living in regional, rural and remote locations, students with disability and students from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.
74. All Parties agree that Improvement Measures will be disaggregated by priority equity cohorts where data is available and where disaggregation does not materially reduce the reliability of the data or inappropriately identify individuals or schools. Where data is not available, Parties will look to make improvements over time to enable that to occur.
75. The Parties agree that the Improvement Measures outlined below:
- a. supersede the education targets from the *National School Reform Agreement 2019-2024*
 - b. build on but do not replace or supersede any targets from the Closing the Gap Agreement or any other active national agreements between states and territories and the Commonwealth during the life of the Agreement.
76. Should National Cabinet endorse updated targets relevant to school education during the life of the Agreement, these may be adopted as part of the Agreement, subject to agreement by the Education Ministers Meeting.

Priority Area	Improvement Measure
Equity and excellence	<p>Year 12 certification: Recognising that finishing school education is key to ensuring students have the skills and confidence they need to become successful lifelong learners, confident and creative individuals and active and informed citizens, the Parties agree to the following improvement measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2030, increase the proportion of students with Year 12 (or equivalent) certification by 7.5 percentage points, compared with 2022 results, nationally (for all students); <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ and trend upwards compared with 2022, for the following priority equity cohorts (nationally): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i) regional and remote locations including: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. outer regional; and b. remote and very remote (combined as per the National Report on Schooling in Australia and the Report on Government Services); and ii) low socio-economic status (SES) backgrounds. <p>Note: Certification rates are estimated by calculating the number of students who meet the requirements of a Senior Secondary Certificate or equivalent expressed as a percentage of the potential Year 12 population. The potential Year 12 population is an estimate of a single year age group which could have attended Year 12 that year, calculated as the estimated resident population (ERP) aged 15 to 19 divided by 5.</p> <p>Where statistically possible, we will seek to report annually on the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students with a Year 12 (or equivalent) certification.</p> <p>The Parties will seek to progressively develop a sub measure that captures the alternative pathways available to young people (including Vocational Education and Training (VET),</p>

Priority Area	Improvement Measure
	<p>traineeships and apprenticeships, at the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) Certificate III and above level) over the course of the Agreement.</p> <p>Pathways for success: Recognising that schools play an essential role in supporting students to complete both in-school senior secondary qualification and non-school VET qualifications, the Parties agree to the following improvement measure, which aligns with the ambition articulated in the Closing the Gap Agreement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2031, increase the proportion of people (age 20-24) attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96 per cent; and • By 2031, increase the proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people (age 20-24) attaining Year 12 or equivalent qualification to 96 per cent. <p>Note: As per the Closing the Gap Agreement, Year 12 or equivalent refers to a school qualification of Year 12 or equivalent, or a non-school qualification at Certificate level III or above based on the AQF. This is a Closing the Gap target and will be updated to adopt any changes to the target in the Closing the Gap Agreement.</p> <p>Education Ministers will support the efforts and work with Skills Ministers to achieve the outcomes for young people outlined in this improvement measure.</p>
	<p>Learning equity: To ensure that schooling delivers learning to all students, the Parties agree to the following improvement measure focused on increasing proficiency in the skills needed to engage across the curriculum and striving for success for priority equity cohorts:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2030, in the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) Reading and Numeracy, of Years 3, 5, 7 and 9: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ reduce the proportion of all students in the Needs Additional Support proficiency level by 10 per cent; and ◦ increase the proportion of all students in the Strong and Exceeding proficiency levels by 10 per cent. • and trend upwards in the proportion of priority equity cohort students (including, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, outer regional, remote and very remote, and parental education (Year 11 or below)) in the Strong and Exceeding proficiency levels. <p>Parties will monitor NAPLAN participation and exemption rates, to ensure these do not impact efforts to measure and improve proficiency levels of all students and for students from priority equity groups.</p>
Wellbeing for learning and engagement	<p>Student attendance: Recognising that reform efforts to lift learning outcomes and improve wellbeing can be effective only if students are attending schools, the Parties agree to the following improvement measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2030, increase the Student Attendance Rate, nationally (for all students), to 91.4% (2019 level): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ and return to 2019 levels for the following priority equity cohorts, nationally:

Priority Area	Improvement Measure
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students; ▪ students from regional and remote locations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outer regional; • remote; • very remote; and ▪ students from low socio-educational advantage (SEA) schools*. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2035, the Student Attendance Rate for priority equity cohorts is the same as the overall student population. <p>Note: Student Attendance Rate is the number of full-time equivalent student-days attended by full time students in Years 1 to 10 as a percentage of the total number of possible student-days.</p> <p>* Low SEA is defined as the student attendance rate in the first ICSEA Quarter – as currently reported in the National Report on Schooling in Australia.</p>
A strong and sustainable workforce	<p>Building the workforce:</p> <p>Recognising the importance of building the Australian teacher workforce by focusing on building a pipeline of teachers and supporting them to develop rewarding and long-standing careers, the Parties commit to the following improvement measures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2035, increase the engagement rate (completed or still enrolled)* for domestic students enrolled in initial teacher education by 10 percentage points; and • The Parties will seek to develop by 31 December 2027, an early career retention measure that captures the number and proportion of teachers who remain engaged as teachers after 3/5 years.^ <p>Note: these will be reported nationally only.</p> <p>*The engagement rate captures initial teacher education students who have either completed their qualification or still ongoing (at the 6 year point for undergraduates and at the 4 year point for postgraduates).</p> <p>^Through the National Enabling Initiative at clause 88(d), the Parties will develop methodology, baseline and future targets by 31 December 2027.</p> <p>Strengthening the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce:</p> <p>Recognising the importance of developing a workforce that better reflects the Australian community, the Parties commit to the following improvement measure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By 2035, increase the engagement rate (completed or still enrolled)* for domestic students enrolled in initial teacher education who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander by 10 percentage points. <p>*As per the previous initial teacher education target, the engagement rate captures initial teacher education students who have either completed their qualification or still ongoing (at the 6 year point for undergraduates and at the 4 year point for postgraduates).</p>

PART 3 – FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

77. Parties recognise that states and territories provide the majority of public funding for school education in the government sector and the Commonwealth provides the majority of public funding for school education in the non-government school sector.
78. To support all public schools on a path to 100 per cent of the SRS, the Commonwealth will increase its share of the SRS from 20 per cent to up to 22.5 per cent for all government schools by no later than 2029 (or the year specified in each state and territory Bilateral Agreement in Schedule D), subject to:
- a. the implementation of National Reform Directions as set out in this Agreement and the Bilateral Agreements
 - b. states and territories directing the increase in Commonwealth funding provided as part of this Agreement to schools with the highest levels of need according to their needs-based funding arrangements. For the avoidance of doubt, this may include but is not limited to, allocation of funding or resources, or central or regional services or supports or resources provided to schools by a state or territory as part of its local needs-based funding arrangements consistent with the Act.
79. The following exception to clause 78 applies:
- a. In respect of the Northern Territory, the Commonwealth will increase its contribution to 40 per cent for all government schools by 2029, with the Northern Territory increasing its funding share to 60 per cent by 2029.
80. The Commonwealth will continue to provide at least 80 per cent of the SRS for all non-government schools. For most non-government schools, the base per student SRS amount is reduced by the anticipated capacity of their school community to financially contribute towards the school's operating costs.
81. Details of state and territory funding contributions are outlined in their relevant Bilateral Agreements at Schedule D.

PART 4 – NATIONAL REFORMS

82. Parties acknowledge the significant existing national, state, territory, and sectoral effort and investment in Australia's education system. All governments and schooling sectors are committed to improvement and to building on the significant strengths of Australia's education system and the progress already made.

83. In considering national reform activities in the context of this Agreement, the following taxonomy is applied:

Activity	Explanation
National Reform Directions	<p>National Reform Directions capture activities committed to by Parties to the Agreement which will contribute to the Objectives and Outcomes in Part 2.</p> <p>National Reform Directions are commitments to areas of action by all Parties, with flexibility in delivery provided to reflect existing state and territory reform agendas, local needs and the diverse context in which schooling is delivered across Australia.</p> <p>Implementation details for the National Reform Directions will be outlined in Bilateral Agreements for each state and territory.</p>
National Enabling Initiatives	<p>National Enabling Initiatives are specific activities that require collaboration between all Parties to be achieved.</p> <p>National Enabling Initiatives will enable Parties to effectively implement future reform efforts and system-level improvements. Implementation milestones for National Enabling Initiatives are outlined in Schedule B.</p>

National Reform Directions

84. Parties commit to continue and/or build on existing efforts in the areas of equity and excellence, wellbeing for learning and engagement, and a strong and sustainable workforce for all students and particularly those in priority equity cohorts through:

- a. Equity and excellence
 - i. Whole-of-system and/or whole-of-school approaches that identify student learning needs early and provide tiered and targeted, intensive supports, in line with evidence-based teaching and a 'multi-tiered systems of support' approach
 - ii. A Year 1 phonics check and an early years of schooling numeracy check (once available) is made available to schools in Australia to support teachers and school leaders to identify student learning needs early
 - iii. Initiatives that encourage student uptake of high-quality science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education opportunities

b. Wellbeing for learning and engagement

- i. Initiatives that support connections between schools and other non-school services to support students to come to school ready to learn, for example through full-service school models where appropriate
- ii. Structured initiatives that support wellbeing for learning and engagement, for example in-school wellbeing coordinators or access to School Counsellors, psychologists, mental health workers and/or youth health nurses
- iii. Initiatives which support student engagement in learning, for example through greater student participation, attendance, inclusion and/or enhanced school-family engagement

c. A strong and sustainable workforce

- i. Initiatives to develop, recognise, reward and/or deploy highly expert teachers, particularly in schools which need additional support, for example Highly Accomplished or Lead Teachers or equivalents
- ii. Access to high-quality and evidence-based professional learning for teachers and school leaders and the provision of quality-assured curriculum resources that have been developed in partnership with the teaching profession
- iii. Initiatives to strengthen teacher and school leader wellbeing, for example actions to support safe and respectful schools, strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety, and reduce teacher and school leader workload
- iv. Initiatives to increase teacher attraction and retention including those that encourage students to take up a career in teaching and increase the diversity of the teacher workforce, for example initiatives focused on increasing the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators, or through implementing actions under the *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan* and/or recommendations of *Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel*

85. Parties acknowledge that states and territories will have flexibility to determine the appropriate level of activity in delivery of each National Reform Direction to reflect their individual contexts and existing efforts. The detail regarding the specific activities to be undertaken in respect of the National Reform Directions will be outlined in the Bilateral Agreements at Schedule D.

86. Parties will co-operate with the non-government school sector in the implementation of National Reform Directions where appropriate, reflecting that the non-government school sector will have flexibility in delivery of each National Reform Direction to reflect their individual contexts and existing efforts, and noting that states and territories will not be responsible should a non-government approved authority not meet its obligations under the Act.

87. The implementation of Bilateral Agreements is a condition of Commonwealth funding to states and territories under subsection 22(2) of the Act. States and territories will not be

held accountable for non-government approved authorities not meeting its obligations under the Act. Nor will the non-government school sector be held accountable for a state or territory not meeting its obligations under this Agreement.

National Enabling Initiatives

88. The Parties agree to the following National Enabling Initiatives:

- a. Review of the SRS base and loadings calculation methodology. The review should include a cost neutral option.
- b. Implementation of the Unique Student Identifier for school students.
- c. Undertake collective work to better understand and provide advice to Education Ministers on:
 - i. socioeconomic diversity, its impact on schools and student learning and approaches to addressing these impacts
 - ii. school attendance, its impact on learning and mechanisms to advance evidence-based approaches to addressing non-attendance, including school refusal.
- d. Review of the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia to ensure it remains a relevant tool, including by considering the range of student level outcome data captured, appropriate disaggregation of data, and possible new and updated measures. This Review will include consideration of the costs and benefits (with primacy given to any impact on teacher workload) of:
 - i. a new measure of student engagement
 - ii. a new equity in learning gain measure, to enable measurement of student learning growth
 - iii. national measures of access, participation and outcomes for students with disability to establish a better understanding of the education experiences and outcomes of schooling for students with disability
 - iv. extending the Australian Teacher Workforce Dataset to ensure that comprehensive data, based on teacher registration, is collected to better understand workforce trends, including on early career retention and diversity, and extending the Australian Teacher Workforce Survey to capture data on out-of-field teaching.
- e. Development of an early years of schooling numeracy check to support teachers to assess their students' numeracy skills and identify and respond to students who need tailored support.

89. Each National Enabling Initiative project will have a Project Plan, endorsed by Education Ministers, which will appropriately scope the project, set out the Parties' joint commitment to coordination of effort, specific actions to be taken by Parties and a timeline for implementation (see the milestones outlined in Schedule B).

90. Consistent with Action 20 of the *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan*, a Teacher Workload Impact Assessment will be prepared, in consultation with states and territories, the non-government school sector and unions, as part of the development of the Project Plan which is presented to Education Ministers Meeting on each National Enabling Initiative. Ministers will have regard to this assessment when considering each Project Plan.
91. The implementation of the National Enabling Initiatives as outlined in Schedule B is a condition of Commonwealth funding to states and territories under section 22 of the Act. Education Ministers Meeting may vary Schedule B over time.
92. The cost of National Enabling Initiatives will be met by Parties according to the cost sharing principles outlined in Schedule C, or as otherwise agreed by Education Ministers Meeting, including alternate cost sharing arrangements for specific National Enabling Initiatives, where agreed.
93. Parties will co-operate with the non-government school sector in the implementation of National Enabling Initiatives, noting that states and territories will not be responsible for the non-government school sector or a non-government approved authority not implementing National Enabling Initiatives.
94. If the Education Ministers Meeting agrees in future to any new National Enabling Initiatives as related to sections 22(1)(a) and 77(2A) of the Act, these will be separately progressed through Education Ministers Meeting processes.
95. The Commonwealth, in consultation with states and territories and through the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee, will annually report to the Education Ministers Meeting on the progress of action on the National Enabling Initiatives.

PART 5 – REPORTING AND PUBLIC TRANSPARENCY

96. Reporting and public transparency are key mechanisms to give the community confidence that outcomes are being achieved and that reforms to improve the quality and equity of school education in Australia are being implemented by all Parties.
97. Parties acknowledge that states and territories have an existing level of accountability through their respective Parliaments for delivery of education in government schools.
98. Parties agree that, as far as practical, reporting requirements under this Agreement will leverage existing reporting processes and data sources. Unless explicitly stated otherwise, reporting under the Agreement will not impose any additional burden on schools. Requests to provide data and information to support public reporting will provide reasonable timeframes to respond and ensure the accuracy and integrity of data provided.
99. Parties agree this Agreement and its schedules, including Bilateral Agreements at Schedule D, will be made publicly available.
100. Parties reiterate their commitment to funding transparency and to building public understanding of how funding is distributed to schools for the benefit of students, especially students from priority equity cohorts. All approved system authorities will ensure full and accessible information on their needs-based funding arrangements are publicly available. In line with the intent of subsection 78(5) of the Act, this could include but is not limited to:
 - a. providing a clear rationale and explanation of the methodology and the calculation of funding, including the period of coverage, base amount, eligibility, and centralised costs and levies. This includes providing a clear explanation for how the local loadings are calculated
 - b. providing meaningful and understandable information on how the needs-based funding arrangements support schools and students, particularly how funding for students with greater educational needs flows to schools
 - c. publishing this information in a timely and accessible manner.

National and state and territory reporting

101. Parties agree the following reporting and transparency arrangements are critical to community confidence in the schooling system, and to provide clarity about the use of Commonwealth funds, noting that these arrangements will leverage existing data sources:

- a. an Annual Implementation Report from states and territories, as the approved system authorities for government schools, on progress on National Reform Directions and Improvement Measures (where the Commonwealth does not separately have access to this data), as outlined in the Bilateral Agreements and as part of assessing compliance with paragraph 22(2)(c) of the Act
- b. an annual report from the Commonwealth to the Education Ministers Meeting regarding the implementation of National Enabling Initiatives (per clause 95)
- c. public reporting on progress against this Agreement through an education reporting dashboard, with the Commonwealth to seek agreement on the format and content of the dashboard from state and territory Education Ministers
- d. an annual report from the Commonwealth to the Australian Parliament on Commonwealth funding for government and non-government approved authorities, as required under section 127 of the Act
- e. annual funding reporting from states and territories to the Commonwealth on state and territory funding for government and non-government schools for the purposes of assessing compliance with section 22A of the Act, as set out in the Bilateral Agreements
- f. publication of the 2 independent reviews set out at clauses 35 and 36, following agreement of the Education Ministers Meeting.

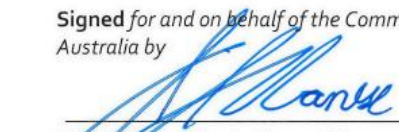
Non-government school sector reporting

- 102. Parties recognise that the participation of the non-government school sector will be important in achieving progress against the reform directions outlined in this Agreement.
- 103. Non-government representative bodies are approved by the Commonwealth Education Minister as the bodies that represent non-government schools under subsection 91(1) of the Act.
- 104. Non-government representative bodies will provide an Annual Implementation Report to the Commonwealth each calendar year.
- 105. A template for completing the Annual Implementation Report for non-government representative bodies is provided at Schedule E. The Annual Implementation Report should include:
 - a. activity against the National Reform Directions
 - b. progress towards specified Improvement Measures, where the Commonwealth does not separately have access to the data.
- 106. Education Ministers may, from time to time, ask non-government representative bodies to provide information on other matters relevant to the Objectives and Outcomes of this Agreement, where appropriate.

PART 6 – SIGNATURES

Signed for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of
Australia by 

The Honourable Jason Clare MP
Minister for Education
Date 31/7/24

Signed for and on behalf of the Commonwealth of
Australia by 

The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister
Date 31/9/24

**Signed for and on behalf of the
State of New South Wales by**

The Honourable Prudence Car MP

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early
Learning

Date

**Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Queensland by**

The Honourable Dianne Farmer MP

Minister for Education

Date

**Signed for and on behalf of the
State of South Australia by**

The Honourable Blair Boyer MP

Minister for Education, Training and Skills

Date

**Signed for and on behalf of the Australian Capital
Territory by**

Yvette Berry MLA

Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and
Youth Affairs

Date

**Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Victoria by**

The Honourable Ben Carroll MP

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education

Date

**Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Western Australia by**

The Honourable Dr Tony Buti MLA

Minister for Education

Date

**Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Tasmania by**

The Honourable Jo Palmer MLC

Minister for Education

Date

**Signed for and on behalf of the Northern
Territory by**

The Honourable Mark Monaghan MLA

Minister for Education

Date 31/7/24

Signed for and on behalf of the
State of New South Wales by

The Honourable Prudence Car MP

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education and Early
Learning

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Queensland by

The Honourable Dianne Farmer MP

Minister for Education

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the
State of South Australia by

The Honourable Blair Boyer MP

Minister for Education, Training and Skills

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the Australian Capital
Territory by

Yvette Berry MLA

Deputy Chief Minister, Minister for Education and
Youth Affairs

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Victoria by

The Honourable Ben Carroll MP

Deputy Premier, Minister for Education

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Western Australia by

The Honourable Dr Tony Buti MLA

Minister for Education

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Tasmania by

The Honourable Jo Palmer MLC

Minister for Education

Date

Signed for and on behalf of the Northern
Territory by



The Honourable Eva Lawler MLA

Chief Minister

Date 31/7/24

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State of New South Wales by

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The Honourable Ben Carroll MP
Deputy Premier, Minister for Education
Date

Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Western Australia by

The Honourable Roger Cook MLA
Premier
Date 3/4/29

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State of Tasmania by

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Minister for Education
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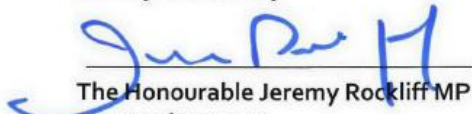
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Deputy Premier, Minister for Education
Date

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State of Western Australia by*

The Honourable Dr Tony Buti MLA
Minister for Education
Date

*Signed for and on behalf of the
State of Tasmania by*



The Honourable Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier of Tasmania
Date **25.09.24**

*Signed for and on behalf of the Northern
Territory by*

The Honourable Mark Monaghan MLA
Minister for Education
Date

PART 7 – SCHEDULES

Schedule A – Definitions

Schedule B – National Enabling Initiatives

Schedule C – Cost sharing principles

Schedule D – Bilateral Agreements

Schedule E – Annual Implementation Report for non-government representative bodies

Schedule A:

Definitions



Approved authority	An approved authority is a legal entity that the Commonwealth has approved to receive and administer Commonwealth funding for one or more schools. The approved authority for a government school is its relevant state or territory government. The approved authority for a non-government school is the body corporate for that school, as approved by the Commonwealth Minister.
Approved system authority	An approved authority for more than one school that distributes Commonwealth recurrent funding to its member schools using its own needs-based funding arrangement.
Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)	ACARA is the independent authority responsible for the development of a national curriculum (Kindergarten to Year 12) and a national assessment program, including managing the National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). ACARA also manages the <i>My School</i> website (www.myschool.edu.au).
Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)	AERO is a ministerial-owned company governed by a board and jointly funded by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments. AERO conducts research and shares knowledge to promote better educational outcomes for Australian children and young people.

Coalition of Peaks	Coalition of Peaks consists of national, state and territory non-government Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak bodies and independent statutory authorities that have responsibility for policies, programs and services related to Closing the Gap.
Council on Federal Financial Relations	Comprises the Commonwealth Treasurer and all state and territory treasurers and is responsible for overseeing the financial relationship between the Commonwealth and state and territory governments.
Education Ministers	Australian Government and state and territory government ministers responsible for school education.
Education Ministers Meeting (EMM)	The Education Ministers Meeting is a forum for collaboration and decision-making on early childhood education and care, school education, higher education and international education. Australian Government and state and territory government ministers responsible for education attend the meeting. The Commonwealth Minister for Education is the Chair of the Education Ministers Meeting.
First Ministers	The Prime Minister, the Premiers of each Australian state, and the Chief Ministers of the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.
National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Corporation (NATSIEC)	NATSIEC is the community-controlled education peak body. NATSIEC will provide national collective Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education engagement, cultural and pedagogical expertise and strategic advice in order to ensure Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities' educational aspirations are heard, acted upon and reviewed.
National Cabinet	National Cabinet is a forum for the Prime Minister, Premiers and Chief Ministers to meet and work collaboratively. National Cabinet was established on 13 March 2020 and is chaired by the Prime Minister. The Commonwealth and state and territory governments individually have flexibility to determine the best way to achieve any agreed outcomes made by National Cabinet in their jurisdiction. A representative of Local Government is invited to meet with National Cabinet once each year.

National Enabling Initiative	A matter set out in the <i>Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034</i> (the Agreement) for which the Education Ministers Meeting agrees an approach and timetable for national implementation and is overseeing its implementation. Implementation of National Enabling Initiatives in the Agreement is a condition of funding under subsections 22(2) and 77(2A) of the <i>Australian Education Act 2013</i> (the Act).
National School Resourcing Board	The National School Resourcing Board (the Board) provides independent oversight of different parts of the Commonwealth recurrent public funding model. The Board reviews different parts of the funding model under the Act and the Australian Education Regulations 2023.
Non-government representative body	A non-government representative body is a body that represents approved authorities for non-government schools, as approved according to section 91 of the Act.

Schedule B:

National Enabling Initiatives

Under clause 88 of the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034*, Parties commit to undertaking the following activities. These National Enabling Initiatives complement the extensive local and national reform efforts underway across states and territories. Project Plans will be developed to guide implementation, under clause 89.

The National Enabling Initiatives will be scoped in collaboration with government and non-government school sectors and broader education stakeholders. A number of National Enabling Initiatives involve a review of existing arrangements. For the avoidance of doubt, agreement to undertake a review does not constitute agreement to any subsequent recommendations of the review.

Parties note that, under clause 27 of the Agreement, schedules to the Agreement may be varied or revoked, and new schedules may be added, at any time with the agreement of the Education Ministers of all Parties. Variations to Schedule B will include the addition or amendment of milestones as National Enabling Initiatives are further developed and considered and decisions are made through Education Ministers Meeting.

Implementation milestones

Implementation and timing of milestones is subject to Education Ministers Meeting considering and agreeing the cost and cost sharing arrangements, scope and governance of each National Enabling Initiative, acknowledging the different local contexts and starting points of each jurisdiction.

National Enabling Initiative	Milestone	Timing
Review of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) base and loadings calculation methodology. The review should include a cost neutral option.	a) Education Ministers Meeting (EMM) agree a Project Plan, including terms of reference, for a review of the SRS base and all loadings, and commission the review to be completed by mid-2029. The terms of reference should include a requirement to consider at least one cost neutral option.	No later than mid-2027

National Enabling Initiative	Milestone	Timing
	b) EMM to receive the review.	No later than mid-2029
Implementation of the Unique Student Identifier for school students.	a) Parties provide an implementation plan for their jurisdiction to inform a national Project Plan, setting out actions and deliverables in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. legislation and regulation ii. information privacy iii. data management iv. communication and stakeholder engagement v. technical and business readiness. 	Mid 2025
	b) EMM agree a national Project Plan for implementation of the Unique Student Identifier, reflecting implementation plans in each jurisdiction.	Mid 2025
	c) EMM to consider an annual status report from each Party against their implementation plans.	Mid 2026 and mid-2027
	d) All school students have a Unique Student Identifier.	End 2027
<p>Undertake collective work to better understand and provide advice to Education Ministers on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. socioeconomic diversity, its impact on schools and student learning and approaches to addressing these impacts ii. school attendance, its impact on learning and mechanisms to advance evidence-based approaches to addressing non-attendance, including school refusal. 	<p>a) EMM agree national Project Plans for 2 projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Socioeconomic diversity, its impact on schools and student learning and approaches to addressing these impacts. b) School attendance: Its impact on learning and on different cohorts, and mechanisms to advance evidence-based approaches to addressing non-attendance, including school refusal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Late 2025 ii) Mid 2025

National Enabling Initiative	Milestone	Timing
	b) EMM to task Parties and the non-government school sector with providing quantitative and qualitative information to contribute to each of the projects at a)i) and a)ii) above, with this information reported to EMM.	i) Mid 2026 ii) Late 2025
	c) EMM to receive a findings report on each of the projects at a)i) and a)ii) above.	i) No later than end 2027 ii) Early 2027
Review of the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia to ensure it remains a relevant tool, including by considering the range of student level outcome data captured, appropriate disaggregation of data, and possible new and updated measures. This Review will include consideration of the costs and benefits (with primacy given to any impact on teacher workload) of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. a new measure of student engagement ii. a new equity in learning gain measure, to enable measurement of student learning growth iii. national measures of access, participation and outcomes for students with disability to establish a better understanding of the education experiences and outcomes of students with disability 	a) EMM agree a national Project Plan and commission a review of the Measurement Framework for Schooling in Australia (MFSA). The review should consider the range of student level outcome data captured, appropriate disaggregation of data, and the costs and benefits of possible new and updated measures set out at clause 88(d).	Early 2025

National Enabling Initiative	Milestone	Timing
iv. extending the Australian Teacher Workforce Dataset to ensure that comprehensive data, based on teacher registration, is collected to better understand workforce trends, including on early career retention and diversity, and extending the Australian Teacher Workforce Survey to capture data on out-of-field teaching.	b) EMM to receive the final report	No later than early 2027
	c) EMM to consider findings from the review and revisions to the MFSA.	No later than mid-2027
Development of an early years of schooling numeracy check to support teachers to assess their students' numeracy skills and identify and respond to students who need tailored support.	a) EMM agree a national Project Plan for the development of an early years of schooling numeracy check, including consideration of existing checks, timelines and estimated costs.	Mid 2025
	b) EMM to commission the development of an early years of schooling numeracy check.	Early 2027
	c) Once developed, the early years of schooling numeracy check is trialled in all jurisdictions with findings presented to EMM for consideration.	From 2027
	d) The early years of schooling numeracy check is available to be rolled out to schools across Australia.	From 2028

Schedule C:

Cost sharing principles

1. The Parties recognise that the agreed National Enabling Initiatives will likely require investment by the Parties to meet our reform ambitions. Parties will consider the fully costed initiatives when finalised, along with anticipated benefits, before implementation.
2. The Parties also recognise that existing investments in national infrastructure will be utilised wherever possible to most efficiently implement the initiatives.
3. The Parties acknowledge that final costs incurred by Parties will include ongoing funding for implementation and possible future work arising from the National Enabling Initiatives, which cannot yet be determined.
4. The cost of the National Enabling Initiatives borne by the state or territory count towards the state or territory contribution to school funding, for the purpose of section 22A of the *Australian Education Act 2013*.
5. The cost sharing arrangements for each of the National Enabling Initiatives will be considered and agreed by the Education Ministers Meeting as part of the initial milestone for each initiative. Parties will consider the final cost sharing arrangements before implementation.
6. Cost sharing arrangements will consider previous precedents for investment in national initiatives, including the existing Education Ministers Meeting cost sharing formulae.
7. The Parties recognise that costs for implementation and ongoing costs will differ significantly between jurisdictions (for example costs of some reforms could be higher in rural and regional areas).

Schedule D: Bilateral Agreements



APPENDICES

The following bilateral agreements have been agreed:

Appendix 1 – Northern Territory agreed 31 July 2024

Appendix 2 - Western Australia agreed 3 September 2024

Schedule E:

Annual Implementation Report for non-government representative bodies

Purpose of this reporting template

This reporting template, the Annual Implementation Report for non-government representative bodies, contributes to achieving the transparency and accountability commitments under the *Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034* (the Agreement), as outlined in Part 5. Non-government representative bodies are required to fill in the Annual Implementation Report for non-government representative bodies annually and report it to the Australian Government Department of Education.

Non-government representative bodies will report for each calendar year, and the report will be due by 30 November following the end of the calendar year, or a later date as agreed by the Commonwealth and the relevant non-government representative body.

National Reform Directions

Non-government representative bodies are required to fill in the below table outlining their implementation of the National Reform Directions.

National Reform Direction	Description of local implementation	Outline the focus on priority equity cohorts and schools needing additional support (where applicable)	Details of qualitative or quantitative impact
[National Reform Direction]			
[For example] Structured initiatives that support wellbeing for learning and engagement, for example in-school wellbeing coordinators or access to School Counsellors, psychologists, mental health workers and/or youth health nurses.			For example - Ratio of wellbeing functions to students, where applicable.

Specific National Reform Direction implementation

National Reform Direction	20xx Update	Evidence/Caveats/Background information
Phonics and early years of schooling numeracy check participation rates, including for priority equity cohorts (where data is available)		[Please note overarching commitment in the Agreement that there is no requirement for more data collection by schools – this table will report data non-government representative bodies already collect with no requirement for more data collection by schools.]
Number of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers or equivalent		For e.g. certain percentage being deployed in schools which need additional support.

Improvement Measures

Non-government representative bodies are required to fill in the following table outlining their progress against identified agreed Improvement Measures, only where data is not available at the Commonwealth level:

Improvement Measure	20xx Update	Evidence/Caveats/Background information
[Identified Improvement Measure]		

Statement of Intent

Better and Fairer Schools Agreement

"We are committed to ensuring every Tasmanian public school is on a path to reach 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard – the fair funding level."

Australia has a good education system, but it can be better and fairer.

To ensure all schools get on a pathway to full and fair funding, the Commonwealth and Tasmanian State Government have jointly committed to achieving a Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) of 100 per cent over the life of the Agreement. The Commonwealth commits to increasing its SRS contribution for Tasmanian government schools to 22.5 per cent. The Tasmanian Government, as the primary funder of government schools, commits to achieving an SRS contribution of at least 77.5 per cent.

This funding will drive reforms that help improve outcomes for all students, especially for students from low socio-economic backgrounds; regional, rural and remote Australia; students with disability; First Nations students and students from a language background other than English. That is why we agree that the additional funding will be tied to reforms that ensure no child in a Tasmanian public school is held back or left behind.

Recognising the key role that education plays in improving social equity, lifting social and economic outcomes for individuals and their communities, all governments are committed to working in partnership to negotiate the next Better and Fairer Schools Agreement. Our governments acknowledge the importance of continuing our commitments made under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap by ensuring reforms tied to additional funding under the next Better and Fairer Schools Agreement contributes to meeting those commitments.

Should the Commonwealth provide more favourable funding terms to another state or territory (with the exception of the Northern Territory) as part of the Better and Fairer Schools Heads of Agreement or Bilateral Agreement, then the Commonwealth will offer Tasmania those terms as well.

To represent a shared commitment to improving Australia's education system, national commitments are contained within the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement 2025-2034. Reform that supports the needs and local context of individual States and Territories will be agreed through Bilateral Agreements. Working together, these new agreements will build our education system into one where every child can meet their potential.

The Parties have confirmed their commitment to this agreement as follows:

**Signed for and on behalf of the
Commonwealth of Australia by**


The Honourable Anthony Albanese MP
Prime Minister

Date:

25/9/24

**Signed for and on behalf of the state of
Tasmania by**


The Honourable Jeremy Rockliff MP
Premier

Date:

25.09.24

Australian and Tasmanian Governments agree to fully fund all Tasmanian public schools

[Home](#) > [Latest news](#) > [2024](#) > [September](#) >

25 September 2024

Jeremy Rockliff, Premier

Jo Palmer, Minister for Education

Anthony Albanese, Prime Minister of Australia, Jason Clare, Federal Minister for Education

All Tasmanian public schools will be fully and fairly funded by the Albanese and Rockliff Governments following a historic agreement signed today.

Both governments have signed the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement and agreed to increase funding for all public schools in Tasmania to 100 per cent of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS).

Tasmania has become the third state or territory to sign on to the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement.

Currently, the Commonwealth provides 20 per cent of the SRS for Tasmanian public schools. This will now increase to 22.5 per cent by no later than 2029.

The Tasmanian Government, as the primary funders of Tasmanian public schools, will increase its contribution to 77.5 per cent of the SRS by no later than 2029.

The Agreement signed today will be followed by a Tasmanian Bilateral Agreement, which will tie funding to reforms that will help students catch up, keep up and finish school, including:

- Year 1 phonics and early years numeracy checks to identify students in the early years of school who need additional help
- Initiatives that support wellbeing for learning – including greater access to mental health professionals
- Access to high-quality and evidence-based professional learning
- Initiatives that strengthen teacher and school-leader wellbeing.

The Bilateral Agreement will also set out the specific timing of the Australian and Tasmanian Governments' increases in SRS funding shares to get to full and fair 100 per cent funding level as soon as possible but not later than 2029.

Currently, no public schools in Australia, except for schools in the ACT, are at the full and fair funding level.

This announcement follows Western Australia and the Northern Territory each signing on to the Better and Fairer Schools Agreement, delivering record funding to their public schools.

The Albanese Government welcomes Tasmania's decision to work together to fully fund public schools.

The Government is committed to working with all states and territories to get all public schools on a path to 100 per cent of the SRS.

Quotes attributable to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese:

"I know firsthand the power of a good quality education.

"I want to make sure that every student in Australia, no matter where they live and learn, receives every opportunity.

"Today's landmark agreement means every public school in Tasmania will be fully and fairly funded.

"This is a national priority that can only delivered when the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments work in partnership.

"That's why my Government has put \$16 billion in extra funding for public schools on the table - the biggest ever increase in Commonwealth funding to public schools."

Quotes attributable to Tasmanian Premier Jeremy Rockliff:

"Tasmanians deserve every opportunity in the world, no matter where they live or what their parent's income is.

"Today's deal between the Tasmanian and Australian Governments ensures public schools will be fully funded.

"Additional funding will now flow to Tasmanian schools from 2025, with up to an additional \$300 million invested into our public schools over the next five years.

"We have been transforming Tasmania's education system over the past decade, and this funding partnership is the next step in delivering for young Tasmanians."

Quotes attributable to Minister for Education Jason Clare:

"This is a massive day for public education in Tasmania.

"Tasmania's decision to work with the Albanese Government to fully fund public schools will deliver a better and fairer education system for Tassie.

"This agreement means that all schools in Tasmania will be fully funded and that funding will be invested in reforms to help students catch up, keep up and finish school.

"I look forward to working with all states and territories to properly fund our schools and build a better and fairer education system for all Australians."

Quotes attributable to Tasmanian Minister for Education Jo Palmer:

"The Tasmanian Government is focussed on giving children the best possible start in life and learning.

"Our education system is critical in supporting our young people in gaining the skills they need to fully contribute to our community and economic future.

"Our Government has delivered significant generational change and we are committed to further improving our education system.

"This funding agreement will ensure our students are supported to get the educational outcomes they deserve so they can lead their best lives.

"We must move to full funding as quickly as we can, and that is my focus."

[More Media Releases from Jeremy Rockliff](#)

AES Employee FTE by Position, Employment Type, Year, Region (March 2014-2024)												
FIXED-TERM POSTIONS FTE												
Region and Position	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	March 2024	11-Sep-24
North												
Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.50	0.60	0.67	1.00	1.30	1.59
Aboriginal Education Worker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	-	-	-
Aboriginal Education Support Officer									1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
North - Fixed-Term Total FTE	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.50	0.60	2.67	2.00	2.30	2.59
North-West												
Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker	-	0.40	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	-	-	-	1.00	1.00
Aboriginal Education Officer	-	-	-	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aboriginal Learning Facilitator	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.40	0.40	0.40	-	-	-
Aboriginal Education Support Officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Aboriginal Program Worker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.90	2.00	1.60
North-West - Fixed-Term Total FTE		0.40		1.00		1.00	1.40	0.40	1.40	1.90	4.00	3.60
South												
Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker	-	0.40	0.48	1.60	1.62	1.00	1.00	0.60	0.60	0.60	0.71	3.20
Aboriginal Education Officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2.00	-	1.00
Aboriginal Program Worker	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.20	1.20	2.00
South - Fixed-Term Total FTE	-	0.40	0.48	1.60	2.12	1.80	1.80	0.60	0.80	4.80	2.91	6.20
Statewide												
Manager Aboriginal Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	-	-	-
Project Officer	-	-	-	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Senior Curriculum Officer	-	-	-	1.00	1.50	1.80	1.80	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.60	0.60
Senior Policy Officer	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Administration Officer	-	-	-	-	0.50	0.80	0.80	-	0.20	-	-	-
Administration Support Officer					-	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	-
Statewide Roles - Fixed-Term Total FTE	1.00	-	-	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.00	0.60	0.60
Fixed Term Positions Total FTE	1	0.8	0.48	5.6	4.12	5.8	6.7	3.6	6.87	9.7	9.81	12.99

PERMANENT POSITIONS FTE

Region and Position	March 2014	March 2015	March 2016	March 2017	March 2018	March 2019	March 2020	March 2021	March 2022	March 2023	March 2024	11-Sep-24
North - Permanent												
Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker	0.80	0.80	0.80	1.00	2.00	0.50	0.50	1.50	1.40	1.00	1.00	1.00
Aboriginal Education Officer	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	1.00	1.00	0.90	-
Aboriginal Education Worker	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	-	-	-	-	-
Aboriginal Learning Facilitator	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.60	-	-	-	-
North - Permanent Total FTE	1.80	1.80	1.80	2.00	2.90	1.40	2.40	3.00	2.40	2.00	1.90	1.00
North-West - Permanent												
Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker	0.80	0.40	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	-	-	1.00	0.60
Aboriginal Education Officer	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.80	0.80	0.27	1.05
Aboriginal Learning Facilitator	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.40				
North-West - Permanent Total FTE	1.80	1.40	2.00	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.40	0.80	0.80	1.27	1.65
South - Permanent												
Aboriginal Early Years Education Worker	1.81	1.60	1.40	-	1.00	2.00	2.00	2.60	2.60	2.60	0.60	0.60
Aboriginal Education Officer - Support Leader	1.00	1.00	0.97	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.89	1.00	1.00	1.00
Aboriginal Education Officer	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	1.20	1.00	-	-	-
Aboriginal Education Support Officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.80	1.00	-	1.00	-
South - Permanent Total FTE	4.81	4.60	4.37	3.00	4.00	5.00	5.00	5.60	5.49	3.60	2.60	1.60
Statewide - Permanent												
Senior Project Officer	2.00	2.00	2.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aboriginal Programs Administrative Co-ordinator	1.00	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Administration Officer	1.00	0.80	1.00	1.60	1.60	0.60	0.60	0.82	0.82	0.41	0.49	1.00
Administration Support Officer	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	-	-
Program Officer	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	-	-	-
Project Officer					1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	-	-
Manager Aboriginal Education	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	2.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	1.00	1.00	1.00
Senior Curriculum Officer	-	-	-	1.00	1.00	1.00	-	-	1.00	2.00	2.00	0.80
Teacher Librarian	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40	0.40
Statewide Roles - Permanent Total FTE	5.40	4.20	4.40	4.00	6.00	5.00	4.00	4.22	3.22	4.81	3.89	3.20
Permanent Positions Total FTE												
Overall Total FTE	14.81	12.8	13.05	15.6	19.02	19.2	20.1	17.82	18.78	20.91	19.47	20.44

Minister for Science and Technology
Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation
Minister for the Arts
Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

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Simon Behrakis MP
Chair
House of Assembly Committee B
Email: simon.behrakis@dpac.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Behrakis

Thank you for your letter of 27 September 2024, requesting additional information following the examination of the Women and the Prevention of Family Violence portfolio by House of Assembly Estimates Committee 'B'.

Please note your letter requested that a response be provided by Friday, 11 September. As that deadline predates the request, the understanding is that the answer to the question is due Friday, 11 October 2024.

The information you have requested regarding Women and Prevention of Family Violence cannot be provided in accordance with the due date. More time is needed to compile the response, and a subsequent letter will be supplied as soon as possible.

Your sincerely



Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP
Minister for Women and the Prevention of Family Violence

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- 8 OCT 2024

Mr Simon Behrakis MP
Chair
Budget Estimates Committee 'B'
House of Assembly
Email: Fiona.Murphy@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Mr Behrakis

Appropriation Bills 2024 - 2025

I refer to your letter of 27 September 2024 seeking additional information following my appearance before Budget Estimates Committee B on 26 September 2024.

Please find below the additional information requested:

ARTS:

10. Can the Minister please provide the report on the governance review of the Heritage Council concluded by Mr Frank Neasey? (noting redactions of personal information)

At the relevant Estimates Hearing the Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania undertook to review the Neasey report to assess whether it was appropriate to release it to the Committee.

The Department has sought advice from the Integrity Commission. The Integrity Commission has strongly advised that it would be inappropriate to release the report (even in part) at this time.

The Department will reconsider the matter once further advice from the Integrity Commission is received.

Yours sincerely

Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP
Minister for the Arts

Minister for Science and Technology
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Ms Fiona Murphy
Committee Secretary – Estimates Committee B
House of Assembly
Email: fiona.murphy@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Ms Murphy

In response to the Chair's request of 27 September 2024 for further information resulting from the examination of the Estimates relating to the Corrections and Rehabilitation portfolio, I provide the following information.

Corrections and Rehabilitation

1. For community corrections programs from the order of a magistrate:

a. How long does the wait list get?

Community Corrections manages program waitlists for all criminogenic programs and schedules and delivers programs in response in incoming referrals from the courts and probation officers.

The waitlist numbers for each of the programs can vary, depending on the needs of individual offenders.

b. How long can the wait be?

Waitlists are actively managed to support suitable offenders complete programs as soon as practicable. Waitlists are prioritised according to order expiration dates to support program scheduling.

To support referral for a program, offenders must meet relevant eligibility criteria. Waitlists support Community Corrections to assess when offenders are also presenting as suitable for participation and schedule programs accordingly.

All offenders who are sentenced with a program condition or are otherwise referred to complete a program are case managed by a probation officer.

Community Corrections' approach is to ensure interventions are the right fit, for the right person, at the right time. Accordingly, there is no specific time that an offender would be placed on a waitlist.

c. How long is the waitlist?

Offenders can be sentenced with a condition that they ***must complete*** a program or they are to ***complete a program as directed***. Where an offender is required to complete a program, they will be afforded the opportunity prior to the completion of their order.

On 30 September 2024, waitlist numbers were:

Program	As directed condition / case management referral	Must complete condition
Family violence offender intervention program	126	1
EQUIPS Addiction	141	5
EQUIPS Aggression	20	0
EQUIPS Domestic Abuse Program	12	0
Sober Driver Program	26	0

d. How many are on the waitlist? and;

As above.

e. How many can be on the waitlist at any given point?

There is no limit to the number of referrals Community Corrections will assess through the waitlist process.

2. How many cases have occurred where people on home detention orders with electronic monitoring bracelets have slipped the bracelet and have committed crimes?

There was one case of an offender removing their electronic monitoring ankle device without an alert being raised in July 2023. The offender was not subject to home detention but was on parole at the time.

Community Corrections implemented a number of actions to address the risk of this situation arising again. Since those additional strategies were implemented, there is no evidence to indicate that any offender has been able to remove their electronic monitoring device without cutting the strap.

3. Have Corrections staff contacted Mark* from Risdon Vale to request or confirm housing options or availability for soon to be released prisoners?

Yes, Tasmania Prison Service staff have contacted Mark in cases where a prisoner has advised that they wanted to stay with Mark* and requested that he be contacted to make arrangements.

This is a private arrangement into which a person exiting prison, as with any other member of the community, is able to enter.

4. Please provide the number of occasions during the 2023/2024 financial year, a young offender was held at the Hobart Reception Prison for longer than two days.

There was one occasion during the 2023/24 financial year that a young offender (under 18 years of age) was held at the Hobart Reception Prison for longer than 48 hours.

5. What proportion of the current prison population is made up of non-violent offenders, and what is the total cost to the budget of detaining them?

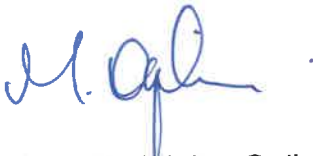
Based on the Australian and New Zealand Standard Offence Classification (ANZSOC), as used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, as at 25 September 2024 the proportion of non-violent offenders housed in Tasmania Prison Service facilities was 34%.

Included in that proportion of 'non-violent' offenders were a significant number of people whose offences (such as burglary, dangerous driving, weapons offences, drug trafficking) have community safety implications.

The level of data required to truly understand the differences in costs for managing violent vs non-violent offenders is not available.

The cost to house those prisoners, expressed as a proportion of the total annual net operating expenditure, would be \$46,379,406.

Yours sincerely



Hon Madeleine Ogilvie MP
Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation