



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

COMMISSION OF INQUIRY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

with

**THE HONOURABLE ROGER JAENSCH MP
MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, CHILDREN AND YOUTH
(Out of Home Care)**

Tuesday 5 December 2023

MEMBERS

Mr Wood MP (Chair);
Ms Johnston MP (Deputy Chair);
Ms Butler MP;
Ms Dow MP; and
Dr Woodruff MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Mr Bayley MP
Mrs Alexander MP

WITNESSES IN ATTENDANCE

Hon Roger Jaensch MP, Minister for Education, Children and Youth, Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

Mr Tim Bullard

Secretary, Department of Education, Children and Young People

PUBLIC

THE COMMISSION OF INQUIRY SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MET IN COMMITTEE ROOM 1, PARLIAMENT HOUSE, HOBART, ON TUESDAY, 5 DECEMBER 2023

The Committee resumed at 3.45 p.m.

CHAIR - The time now being 3.45 p.m., the scrutiny of the Minister for Education, Children and Young People in relation to out-of-home care will now begin. Welcome, minister, and departmental staff. Minister, for the purposes of *Hansard*, I invite you to introduce who's at the table beside you.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Chair. Sitting with me is Mr Tim Bullard, the secretary of the Department for Education, Children and Young People.

CHAIR - Thank you. The time scheduled for scrutiny of out-of-home care is two hours. Minister, would you like to make a brief opening statement?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you very much, Chair. Yes, I would. I thank the committee members for the opportunity for this conversation. I would like to, at the outset, take the opportunity to acknowledge and to offer my sincerest apologies to every person who has ever experienced abuse in state government institutions. We are indebted to the brave survivors of abuse who spoke out on behalf of themselves and others to ensure that children and young people's voices were heard and that the failings of the past were uncovered. We thank them for their strength and courage and for their dedicated resolve to ensure the injustices they experienced and witnessed never happen again, and to protect future generations of Tasmanian children and young people.

I also want to thank our staff in the child safety and out-of-home care systems for their important and extraordinary work. They work with children who have had trauma in their young lives and they build trust and advocate for them and ensure their safety and provide them with opportunities. This is a challenging job. In undertaking it, they exhibit great integrity, service and professionalism.

My commitment to them is that this Government will continue to invest heavily in their professional development and capacity building, especially in relation to evidence-based practice, identifying and responding to sexual abuse, sexual exploitation and harmful sexual behaviours and providing trauma-informed and therapeutic care. We will also continue to prioritise the recruitment and retention of staff to ensure we have a depth and diversity of expertise within our child safety and out-of-home care systems that meets the needs of each individual child.

I am and this Government is fully committed and already working hard to implement all of the recommendations from the commission of inquiry. We are a small state and we have the opportunity to truly transform our child safety and out-of-home care systems. Our reforms will ensure that children have a real voice in the matters that affect them.

We will provide effective avenues for children and young people to participate in decision-making and to build relationships with trusted adults involved in their care. We will deliver responsive and child-friendly processes to ensure children's concerns and complaints

are heard and understood and acted upon. We will ensure the unique needs of each child are met and their rights upheld.

We will deliver the biggest changes to the out-of-home care system in our state's history, including fully outsourcing out-of-home care to the not-for-profit sector, resourcing and upskilling that sector to provide therapeutic and trauma-informed care, establishing and administering an effective regulatory and quality-assurance scheme, implementing evidence-based clinical practice models and investing in our leaders to ensure that we have the skills and expertise to develop and deliver a strategic vision for these reforms.

This Government is doing and will continue to do everything we can to deliver all of the commission's recommendations as quickly as possible. In the Children and Young People portfolio, nine recommendations have altered time lines to those recommended by the commission. Six recommendations have been moved back and three have been brought forward. Of those that have been moved back, all will have significant actions completed well before the required delivery date and most are already under way.

Since 2014, this Government has increased child safety staffing funding by 40 per cent. During 2023-24, the Government has allocated an additional \$17.6 million to the Department for Education, Children and Young People to support the immediate response to the commission of inquiry's recommendations. Of this, \$11.2 million is to fund priority action areas to support youth justice outcomes and to safeguard children and young people in the child safety and out-of-home care systems. This investment will be increased again in the 2024-25 budget to effectively implement the commission's recommendations related to child safety and out-of-home care.

This Government is absolutely committed to ensuring that all children and young people in our care are known, safe, heard, are well and are learning. We will leave no stone unturned to ensure our children and young people are safe and protected, now and into the future. I look forward to leading these reforms and I will be very happy to receive your questions.

Ms DOW - Minister, my first question is in relation to phase 1 and recommendation 9.1 around funding and workforce for out-of-home care. Recommendation 9.1 calls for one-off funding to implement the proposed reforms. How much one-off funding is required and can you break that down into broad categories of what the funding is for?

Mr JAENSCH - In my opening statement I made reference to funding that has been provided in this financial year to commence initial work. What we have listed in our response to recommendation 9.1 is that there will be additional one-off funding and increased ongoing funding that will be allocated through the 2024-25 budget process. Significant policy and legislative work has to be done in developing a profile for that funding for the budget process and it needs to take into account the full range of matters covered by the recommendations of the commission of inquiry that will have work needing to commence in the next financial year. That work has commenced and there is also a team being put together to work with the non-government sector on some of the early requirements for the transition of out-of-home care more into their area of service delivery. I might ask Mr Bullard if he has any additional comments to make in relation to that process.

Mr BULLARD - That one-off funding is to establish the team that can do the design work for some of the matters the commission raised. You will be aware that the commission

asked that we take a very strategic approach to out-of-home care and all of its elements around workforce, supporting foster careers better and ensuring that the voices of children and young people are heard. We've got some initial funding through the Government's budget allocation of \$30 million to attend to some of those urgent and important matters. What we're now doing is moving into some design scoping to establish the team that will take the strategic out-of-home care reforms forward.

Mr JAENSCH - I can list a few of the other areas of the commission's work that we have in scope to help develop that profile.

Ms DOW - That's all right. We might get to that, but I've got some further questions to drill down on so I'll do that and if we get to the end of that then maybe you could do that. Minister, it also calls on you to significantly increase ongoing funding of out-of-home care including out-of-home care services provided by Child Safety Services. By how much do you intend to significantly increase ongoing funding, how will the required funding be calculated and can you give a breakdown of where the funding will be allocated?

Mr JAENSCH - As I said, there is some intensive work being done right now and over coming months to inform our budget process for 2024-25 and out-year budgeting. There are a number of recommendations that we need to take into account and be able to put some budget requirements against. They include ensuring that our NGOs can comply with new standards of care, implement a therapeutic model of care and are equipped to prevent, monitor and respond to incidents of child sexual abuse and harmful sexual behaviour. That's recommendation 9.3. We need to establish and maintain a carers register. There are several new executive roles within the department that are recommended and we've accepted their recommendations by way of restructuring the department, including the appointment of a chief practitioner under recommendation 9.4.

We need to assess what is required to fund all of our placements across kinship, foster, and respite care as well as residential care, to ensure that we're meeting all assessed needs for all of the children with that individualised needs-based care approach where they're not covered by other schemes like NDIS or public health services. That is recommendation 9.25. There are several others, another seven or eight areas, that give you an indication of how broadly our budget planning and profiling process needs to work over this coming couple of months.

Ms DOW - How many additional staff do you anticipate will be required to safely staff this new system you have proposed?

Mr JAENSCH - There will be new appointments involved in many of these recommendations.

Ms DOW - Do you know how many staff?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have a number on how many staff are needed to meet each of these.

Mr BULLARD - No, we don't at this point in time. What we do know is that one of the recommendations, 1.10, was around a workforce strategy and we had already commenced that work in the agency. The workforce strategy will identify the knowledge, skills and capabilities that different individuals need to ensure that children are safe across the whole agency. In the

Child Safety Service we have been pretty blunt in some respects in saying that we have child safety officers that do a majority of that work. We are seeing that bringing online business specialists, people who can do some of the administration, is paying dividends, but we know that we need to do more.

There are two elements. One is to identify the who, and then we can identify how many. This report calls for a total rethink of how we approach out-of-home care. You would know that out of the Take Notice, Believe Us and Act report, where we heard the voices of children and young people, what they really want is to be known as individuals within our system and they want adults to respond to their needs. We know that one of the things we need to do is build a system that knows those young people well and then responds to their individual needs and does not treat each young person in the system as only being defined as being in out-of-home care; that's just way too blunt.

Mr JAENSCH - A related thing that comes down to staffing is that in addition to the new positions and functions that are envisaged by the commission and that we're working on with redesign and reform in the system, we are also very focused on the immediate challenges of filling all the positions that we currently have funded and resourced in our out-of-home care system in particular.

Ms DOW - That was my next question, actually. Safe staffing and proper resourcing for out-of-home care has long been an issue in Tasmania. As minister, do you accept accountability that areas have been demanding more resources over many years and you have actually refused to provide them over many years as a Government? What is your plan for recruitment and safe staffing?

Mr JAENSCH - I need to pick up on your assertion there about the Government's refusal to increase staffing and resources. Since 2014 our Government has increased our child safety staffing by around 40 per cent. As recently as the last couple of budgets we have added millions of dollars more to do that. We are in a position now where I'm advised that our service is funded for every child in out-of-home care to have a primary child safety officer allocated to them. We have the positions and the resourcing, but we have a real supply shortage of people to fulfil those roles. Not unlike any other sector that you might be talking to at the moment, we're in a labour market where we share that pressure of being able to get and keep good people.

Ms DOW - Are you looking actively at incentivising around your workforce or targeted retention measures and the like?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. We are working on a workforce strategy and we acknowledge recommendation 9.1 regarding having a workforce strategy. We've got one in progress now. It's envisaged by the commission to be something that is achieved by phase 3, out at 2029. We're working hard on that right now.

The work we're doing right now includes working with the union on wage agreements as part of the new allied health agreement. A range of additional matters that will assist with attraction and retention have been included: salary increases of 9.5 per cent over three years; cost-of-living adjustments of \$1000 in year one, \$500 in year two and similar low-income payments; personal upgrades to higher classifications; and an annual professional development fund for workers of \$1000.

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Building on that through discussions with unions on specific child safety matters, in-principle agreement has been reached on a number of aspects, including: specific minimum appointment levels; recognising people's qualifications and experience; specific classification progression criteria so employees can seek elevated classifications; a pathway for support and admin employees to frontline service roles; and a child safety payment to assist with attraction and retention.

These agreements and negotiations are continuing. The union and the department have met recently with the shared objective to resolve the outstanding matters.

While that's happening, we're continuing with targeted recruitment. We've got our Make a Difference recruitment campaign under way. There is advertising occurring across a number of platforms to make sure that we're letting everybody know about the variety of roles that are available within the sector. We have our staff wellbeing and inclusion plan, which has got actions in it to support the wellbeing of our people who we already have to make sure that we have an attractive workplace. This builds on other things we've done to make better use of the staff we already have.

For example, earlier in the year or late last year, we went through a process of appointing new unit coordinators to work in our out-of-home care offices and with our child safety staff so that we were removing some of the administrative burden from people who had specialised skills that we needed to be able to free up to do their work, to meet caseload. Things like that have made a difference.

We've provided electronic devices and tablets so that more of our workers can complete their reports in the field, rather than having to return to an office at the end of the day, giving them more hours of effective work.

We've been working with the university on providing more pathways, internships and such for people who are coming up through the ranks and who could be our new recruits. Beyond looking to the market, which is very tight, we're also looking at how we grow our own and make better use of the staff we already have. I'll take the opportunity again to thank them

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Ms DOW - Are you doing that right across the state, minister, or just in the major centres?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes, right across the state, as I understand. I thank them all for the incredible work they're doing. I know some of the pressures our child safety officers have been under when their workloads have changed, where they're directed very much into the acute end of case management as we've been able to have other strategies to deal with lower acuity and other out-of-home care roles. I really want to again shout out to our staff who do an amazing job and let them know that we look forward to being able to deliver them more colleagues to work alongside over coming months.

Mr BAYLEY - To continue this theme on staffing levels, can you provide an update on the current number of vacant positions within the child safety service as a whole and, specifically, within the advice and referral line, and units managing out-of-home care; and how this has changed over the last year?

Mr JAENSCH - I'd be happy to take those on notice.

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Mr BAYLEY - You may need to take the next one on notice as well because I was also interested in how many new individuals have been employed to work in out-of-home care over the past two years. Is that similarly on notice? And how many of these individuals remain within the department?

Mr JAENSCH - Can I just check on that? Are we able to provide numbers on that or are you talking about tracking individuals in and out?

Mr BAYLEY - I'm talking numbers, not individuals.

Mr BULLARD - I don't know that we'd be able to provide you with information about 'Mike's started and Mike's left'. It would be more data as to new recruits and separation, how many in and how many out.

Mr BAYLEY - That is fine, thank you very much. I will get that through to the Chair.

The commission of inquiry report found it hard to discern the role clinical practice consultants and educators play in the out-of-home care system. Can you tell us how many clinical practice consultants and educators are employed to work on out-of-home care?

Mr JAENSCH - We can get you a number. If you would like an explanation around how those roles work -

Mr BAYLEY - We are more interested in the numbers, thank you very much. We've got some context around how they actually work.

The last one in this space, perhaps is also on notice, is how many of these were assigned to case management and out-of-home care teams? And what is the average number of teams attached to each individual?

Mr JAENSCH - To each individual case?

Mr BAYLEY - The average number of cases attached to each individual case worker?

Mr JAENSCH - Is that number of cases per -

Mr BAYLEY - Per worker.

Mr JAENSCH - If you would be happy to put those in writing, I would be happy to take them on notice.

Mr BAYLEY - Absolutely, thank you.

Ms DOW - I understand that the CPSU presented an emergency workforce package for child safety, in particular, over 12 months ago. You made commitments that you would work with them on implementing that emergency workforce package. What has happened to that and are you continuing to do that?

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Mr JAENSCH - I gave you some details before of matters that are currently in an advanced stage of negotiation with unions regarding their current claims for members across the service. But the previous claims, I will just confer again with the secretary.

Mr BULLARD - I can speak to that as it is an industrial relations matter. There are two elements. One is that we are currently in negotiations, as the minister said, with the unions on specific child safety matters. Those discussions are underway and some of those ideas that came through their workforce package are being considered through that negotiation.

More importantly is we have in-principle agreement around having a child safety-specific agreement. Rather at the moment, as you'd be aware, it is sitting under sort of the allied health professional agreement, actually looking at the particular needs of child safety officers and progressing those, so that discussion is underway as well.

I think it is fair to say there isn't a single silver bullet to the issue around retaining or attracting workforce. As the minister alluded, there are workforce pressures across every area where allied health professionals are required. We are open to having discussions with our partners about how we can best look at different ways to recruit and retain staff.

Ms DOW - In phase 2, recommendation 9.2, which looks at the outsourcing of out-of-home care to the non-government sector, will you rule out outsourcing of any aspects that, including monitoring and governance, and child safety? That being out-of-home care.

Mr BULLARD - If we think about out-of-home care as being twofold, then you've put monitoring in there, there's an element around the child safety service, so people that make professional judgement around the safety of individual children and whether they may need to be removed. Then there's the actual foster care placements or residential care or special care package placements where children go. Are you asking for us to delineate between those and then discuss which element is to be outsourced?

Ms DOW - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - As I understand the recommendation, it is for the provision of the care. It is seeking, as I understand the recommendation and the intent of the commission of inquiry, to enable the department to focus its efforts and grow its capabilities in skill in the quality control, the monitoring, the support functions and the services that lead into those. The department will specialise in those roles and the provision of the care for young people and children will be fully outsourced.

I understand about a third of the cases that we currently have in out-of-home care at the moment are cared for by non-government providers. This would be a case of working with those providers in our market to identify the strategies to grow their capacity and capabilities, to ensure that we have a seamless transition over time that doesn't disrupt the care and wellbeing of the young people that we are collectively responsible for. We have great partnerships with providers in the sector.

The commission's recommendations are concepts that have been talked about in Tasmania before and we have experience working with them. What's left is for us to plot a path working together with the non-government sector to ensure that we minimise disruption

and we maximise the certainty of the steps of transition for those care arrangements and for the transition of carers to be working under a framework managed by the non-government sector.

Ms DOW - With regards to the non-government sector, what work are you doing with them to identify what funding will be required for that transition and around workforce? Workforce is an issue for you internally. Externally we know that it's an issue as well. What are you doing to assist them to get those additional staff that they are going to need? Where do you think they are going to come from?

Mr JAENSCH - In our answer to a question about 9.1, we spoke about a project team that's being stood up in the beginning of next year to co-design that transition with the sector. That will involve, in the first instance and in preparation for next year's budget, a resourcing profile needed to get that work underway and we'll start to be able to model from there the cost structure of the services, the development of the sector and the year-on-year provision of those services. We're going to need a new financial model which also identifies quite clearly what it is we're asking them to do under the sorts of new templates and standards of care required by the commission's recommendations. It provides us the opportunity to sit down and model out the commission's -

Ms DOW - Is the project team responsible for doing that modelling, or is that more the financial?

Mr BULLARD - We've been involved in needs-based funding models previously in the previous Department of Education. Be aware the schools funding model is all needs-based. We know that model moves us closer towards equity in the system, in terms of recognising the needs of each individual young person. We want to use that expertise to look at how we would then model a financial system that reflects the differing costs of caring for young people with different attributes, needs and aspirations.

At the moment you would be aware it is a fairly blunt model, you are a foster carer and you get a payment. We want to make sure that we know and understand the aspirations of young people and what they need to achieve that, then the foster carer is supported to help us work in partnership to deliver it.

Mr JAENSCH - This does build on some work that has already been done before the commission of inquiry recommendations to review the payments and resourcing for carers, but also - as Tim was saying - looking again at the menu of care options that we need to provide to meet a range of different needs, from traditional foster care models through to special care and maybe some other things in between, which might be a more intensive form of potentially salaried foster care and those sorts of models, so that we find the right tool and we're not putting young people into inappropriate models of care, that then risk breaking down with the disruption and trauma that that causes for everybody involved.

Ms DOW - Before I think you said that a third of children in out-of-home care were with NGOs, that was right?

Mr JAENSCH - That is as I understand it. Someone will correct me.

Ms DOW - My next question is how many foster families or placements are there currently with the department, and then with NGOs as well?

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Mr JAENSCH - There are two-thirds in government.

Ms DOW - That is for foster families as well?

Mr BULLARD - We are delineating. We could have individual children and we could give you an allocation of those that are being supported by NGOs and those who are in foster families supported by government. The foster family question wouldn't align with that, because there are some families who have multiple children. In terms of the question, are you asking for a count of both?

Ms DOW - I think it is important to understand both.

Mr BULLARD - We would need to take that on notice.

Ms DOW - How many additional placements do you think are going to be required for this new model? How many additional carers will you require across the system?

Mr BULLARD - At its bluntest, none. Because at its bluntest you could, if you were taking a very reactive approach to this, just say, 'If you're a family that is managed by the government, we'd like you to move to NGO A, B, and C'. Therefore the capacity issue remains the same, because those families would move. However, as the minister has articulated, we want to look at different types of care and that may require bringing in different caring arrangements and different foster family arrangements.

Ms DOW - What you are saying is that it will be determined once you have done your design work?

Mr BULLARD - Yes. If you look at the professional model, I don't know if that's quite the right term, but where we pay someone a salary to look after a young person who needs intensive support, and that is something we're starting to trial now with one of our NGOs, that's a whole new model of care. There would be people who aren't currently foster carers who would be interested in signing up for that, but you might find you need new placements as well because you're not going to make every foster family move into that high-intensity support. I think the model will give us a really good indication of the types of care that we need. Then we'll be able to see what other providers or foster carers we need to bring on.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, to pick up on your pick up, so to speak, of Ms Dow's comments around budgets and adequacy of funding, I note that the former secretary of the Department of Communities was quoted in the commission of inquiry report as saying that the Government has been consistent in not providing funds to the department to implement change. As the report says, 'The former secretary cited this factor as fundamental to the slow progress towards improving systems in the department'. How many times has the department asked your Government for more money for out-of-home care? On how many of these occasions has the request been granted in full, how many times has it been granted in part, and how many times has it been refused?

You have a perplexed look on your face, minister, but these are the words of the former secretary, 'The Government has been consistent in not providing funds to the department to implement change.'

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Mr JAENSCH - Our Government invested over \$50 million in the new Strong Families Safe Kids reforms in our sector, which really did transform it. They have led to a sustained drop in the number of young people entering statutory care and an increase in the number of families who have been able to be supported to remain safe places for their kids. The advice and referral line as an entry point, recognising that the vast majority of concerns that are raised are people seeking help rather than reporting immediate danger to kids, has been fundamentally successful and as I mentioned before, we've increased the staffing for the Child Safety Service by around 40 per cent since we've been in government.

Every agency that I've had anything to do with as a minister puts up bids each year and every minister goes in to bat hard for them. That's to be expected out of a budget process and responsible budget management means that the Government has to make its allocations to cover the essentials, to make sure that we're meeting our priorities and our promises, so -

Mr BAYLEY - Do you know how many times the department asked for - has the department ever had its full budget claim met?

Mr JAENSCH - Yes. Its wildest dreams? I would say there are very few government agencies who have gone through a budget process getting everything they have asked for.

Mr BAYLEY - I guess because we're getting it straight from the secretary himself in his evidence to the commission of inquiry, when it comes to out-of-home care explicitly and specifically, how many times are you aware that the ask from the department hasn't been met in the budget allocation?

Mr JAENSCH - Okay. I'm not in a position to provide you with any definitive information that goes to Cabinet processes or the internal workings of a budget committee or anything like that, so I'm sorry, I won't be able to give you evidence of the -

Mr BAYLEY - Failures?

Mr JAENSCH - The events that you've been asking about. What I can reiterate is that we've grown the child safety system, we've reformed substantially and invested massively in the reform of that sector so far and we are preparing to do so again right now. As I said before, our department is resourced for there to be a child safety officer allocated for each young person in out-of-home care. What we lack at the moment is the workforce to be able to fill all those positions and therefore we've had to be innovative in how we've used the resources we do have to cover our priorities responsibly.

Mr BAYLEY - In recommendation 9.3 in point 4 the commission says that the Government, 'Should resource non-government out-of-home care providers appropriately.' We've spoken to a number of those providers and they believe that this is not occurring now. There's some concern that children are receiving divergent outcomes based on the provider responsible for their care because the contracts for each provider include different funding arrangements. Have you heard those concerns direct from those providers? What's your response and also, what's your time line for getting all of those private providers onto satisfactory contracts so they can meet the needs of the children in their care?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you. I wouldn't refer to them as private providers.

Mr BAYLEY - Non-government.

Mr JAENSCH - Non-government is the term we'd use. We will always listen to them. They're our partners, we rely on them and so do children and carers. As I mentioned earlier, there is a new financial model that will be developed that is based on meeting the needs of individual young people in care and also the needs or expectations of the carers and the care meeting new compliance standards for there to be training and development of the carers and those who work in the sector and the systems that manage them through the NGOs. There will need to be a new financial model for the sector as we go forward and achieve this transition to the NGO-driven care provision.

Mr BAYLEY - Will that new model prescribe different funding formulas depending on the needs of the child? Is that how you propose to -

Mr JAENSCH - It will be driven by the needs of the child and the expectations of the system to be compliant, registered, accredited, insured, monitored and delivering the highest standards of care.

Mr BAYLEY - How long do you think it'll take to migrate all of those non-government providers over to these new contractual arrangements and at the end of the day also migrate the children in government care across to them as well?

Mr JAENSCH - On 9.3, the contract management arrangements with providers, the commission has suggested a time frame of by 1 July 2026 and we've accepted that time frame. We note that with the transition of carers and cases to the non-government sector we need to plan and negotiate that so that it is a smooth transition and it minimises disruption and it doesn't push any providers beyond their capacity to ensure that they're providing a high level of care. The safety of young people is absolutely paramount.

Mr BAYLEY - Of course; that's good to hear, definitely. We have heard also some fears from the sector around - not so much poaching - but the transfer of staff depending on contract levels, ability to pay, incentivisations and so forth. Have you a mind to that and how are you going to address that through this migration so that there's not some serious sort of workforce fluctuations as part of this migration?

Mr JAENSCH - I have a couple of comments and then I'll pass to the secretary to speak about the sort of business approach to it, but non-government service provision isn't new, it's a part of our current operation for out-of-home care. A lot of families rely on it and it works very well and we have excellent relationships with those providers. As I understand it, the financial model and the basis for procurement or commissioning would be discussed and developed with the sector and known to all, so it was a consistent approach as we worked with the sector. There would be differences obviously between providers based on their own business models and the ways they work, and the way they might specialise in different areas of care as well, or in different areas of the state, which might also affect the cost of delivery of services. I will ask the secretary if he has anything to add to that.

Mr BAYLEY - And whether you envisage brand-new providers entering the sector?

Mr BULLARD - A couple of points on that. One is market readiness, so we need to ensure, as you've alluded to, that we've got a robust market. We don't want to be in competition

with NGOs, we want to be in partnership with them, and certainly that's a model that we have worked on with the 30 per cent, 40 per cent of foster carers that are supported by NGOs to date. There are elements in the report such as the workforce strategy, the training of foster carers, the monitoring and oversight and some of the policy work, where the commission is very clear that that is not government doing it for itself, that is something that needs to be shared across all parties who are caring for children and young people and that absolutely will be at the centre of what we do. We want to be connected and we want to work in strong partnership around a child; we don't want to be in competition.

Mr BAYLEY - How many contracts do you have now with non-government providers and how many do you envisage needing to have when this process is complete?

Mr BULLARD - At the moment, Mr Bayley, I'm advised we have 52 grants with non-government providers in relation to children and families and an additional three in relation to family violence. I don't know how many we'll need because there might be a consolidation of some of those grants to make the administration easier, but what we do know is that we want to be working with those NGOs around what those grant arrangements look like into the future.

Mr BAYLEY - So that's 57 grants, not necessarily -

Mr BULLARD - There are 52 grants but there are not 52 providers because we buy different special care packages. We might buy foster care, we might buy some a transition to independence, intensive family support, so we're purchasing across a spectrum.

Ms DOW - In relation to the salary model that you spoke about before, the new model that you were going to trial for foster families. Where has that model come from? Is that a new model and can you explain more about it?

Mr JAENSCH - Mr Bullward will be able to fill in more details. As I understand it we have traditional family based foster care provision where the carers receive a level of support for what they do.

At the other end of the scale, there have always been some very complex cases and a special care package provision which has been quite a different thing, often requiring rosters of trained people with specialised accommodation for children with dysregulation, disability, behavioural matters and such that need different support.

The briefings I've had over the years has been that there need to be a few more stages in between to ensure that we have forms of care that are going to be able to deal with complex cases. Children with trauma backgrounds that might influence their behaviour may either need a prolonged period of more intensive care, more trained care and complex care. It may be that some of them need that for a period of time as they're settled into a model.

The most important thing is to ensure we're finding the right care for young people, rather than having the wrong care and having it fail again and again. That then works against them being able to build relationships and trust.

Ms DOW - You said it would be pivotal to young people being consulted and being the centre of the care model and having their needs addressed. How will you ensure that happens, particularly for those children you mentioned before who have those really specialist unmet

needs? How will you ensure that what they want for their care arrangements is respected and built into that model of care? What sort of processes do you have in place? What professionals, additional social workers and the like, how will you achieve that? It's good to say, but what's the practicality of it?

Mr JAENSCH - There are a few different ways of ensuring that. Partly it's to do with the assessments that are made of young people entering care at the outset to ensure we understand their needs. It's also about an approach which is based on more than the carer in their foster care or other placement, more than just their child safety or out-of-home care worker, but a range of people who work together, possibly including their teacher, their doctor, their disability worker, social workers, depending on their need, who all listen to and share information about the young person and help to create a plan and a package of care that suits their needs.

How that interacts with the financial model and the purchasing of services for those young people, that's a matter that needs to be worked out through this new financial model. Would you be happy to speak on that?

Mr BULLARD - I think you've gone to the crux of what we're advocating the model should be, which is a model that knows young people really well and responds to their needs. You'll be aware that the commission of inquiry had a number of recommendations around how we might do that, such as 9.16 around case management, 9.26 around care plans, 9.23 around holistic assessment.

Those recommendations intersect really well with some work that we've been doing since we've come together into the new Department of Education, Children and Young People with what we call care teams. Groups of adults come together with the carer, with the child, to discuss the needs and assets of that young person in regard to the wellbeing domains and then planning goals that we want to support that young person to achieve, then acquitting our activity against those. That work is fairly new, but it's getting legs.

We are putting energy and effort into talking about that expectation, that every young person will have a care team and a care plan. We are supporting staff to interact in those teams and to make really good decisions. Most excitingly, we have a lot more resources in being able to bring the school social worker, being able to bring the child safety officer, being able to bring a principal together with our colleagues from CAMHS or NGOs or foster carers or birth parents to help with that plan. It's positive to see the commission reflecting that back to us as a way of working, because it's work that we have already started.

Ms DOW - In relation to the teams model that you have introduced, have you seen a reduction in children remaining in their place of harm? If so, what is that reduction? If not, what is the plan to support children who are still in their place of harm due to resource and foster care shortages?

Mr JAENSCH - It is an interesting question. I am not familiar with the place of harm you are referring to.

Ms DOW - Well if they are in a harmful situation, I suppose.

PUBLIC

Mr JAENSCH - The Strong Families Safe Kids reforms included earlier interventions and did not wait until a series of notifications or observations led to a point where a child was at immediate risk of harm before the child safety system swung in and removed them from harm's way. The idea of the Strong Families Safe Kids reforms was to pick up on concerns early, either from the family themselves or from people who observed them, to conduct some assessment. It introduced some supports where possible and some diagnosis of that family's opportunity to be helped to be safe as a place for kids to stay.

What we have seen as that has rolled out since December 2018 has been an increasing number of families supported to be safe places for their kids. It is important that they are safe for everyone's sake, and particularly the child's. It is also borne out of an understanding that removing a child from a family is in itself a traumatic experience for the child and the family. The damage of that can stay with them for their life, and -

Ms BUTLER - Not always, though. Sometimes it might not be traumatic, it might be a good thing.

Mr JAENSCH - It would only be done if it resulted in a better outcome for the wellbeing of the young person. As we understand it, particularly for those older than infants, that whole process of removal and separation from families is a complicating factor which affects their wellbeing. Where families can be supported to be safe and to have supports that enable them to continue to look after their kids and get through what might be a rough patch or a set of circumstances that they find themselves in - which may have to do with their housing situation or other health matters in their lives - that have complicated their ability to provide safe housing, then that has been a desired outcome.

For some of the young people where there is an intervention it is for a short period, a period for months maybe, while those interventions and supports or assistance for the family to be a safe place are undertaken. There is an intensive family restoration service that works on the other side of that intervention point as well. That's one part of the reform that has worked quite well and we'll continue to invest in that and its component parts. The care teams' approach is about the individual child and their care, and the responsible adults they deal with in their life who work together and share information about how to replace what might happen in a stable loving family in looking out for the child's best interests.

There is a separate matter to do with case management and the allocation of cases to teams, which is a different matter, which is where child safety and related support staff are working together to provide collective supervision of those cases in terms of how the service conducts its work.

Mrs ALEXANDER - The department published its safeguarding framework in April of this year, which was ahead of the commission of inquiry publishing its findings. That was quite a comprehensive piece of work that I assume you've undertaken ahead of the findings of the commission. The safeguarding framework has a number of dot points but none of them refers to the mandatory training. In effect, later on in the year when the commission published its findings, it found that mandatory child safety training was informal, ad hoc, as they described it. I want to understand, has any work been done to update your document, which represents the fundamental document from what I am reading, to include mandatory training?

PUBLIC

Mr JAENSCH - I will hand over to Mr Bullard in a moment. The safeguarding framework was a recommendation from -

Mrs ALEXANDER - It is implementing the national -

Mr JAENSCH - I interpret it to be from the Smallbone and McCormack inquiry into the Department of Education's responses to child sexual abuse, which commenced and had concluded, I think, before our commission of inquiry set sail. One of the recommendations was for a safeguarding framework for government schools in Tasmania, whereby there were safeguarding officers or leads appointed in every school, that they received training on risk assessment and planning for schools and they were able to provide leadership and peer support in the school environment and for the school community on ensuring all of our schools were safe places for kids in relation to sexual abuse.

Mrs ALEXANDER - I think what you are referring to is slightly different. My understanding was that the safeguarding framework was structured around the national principles for child-safe organisations, not around what you are referring to. That is my understanding, that is a different aspect you have just talked about.

Mr JAENSCH - I think it might be both. That framework might respond to those principles as well and it does include elements of mandatory training for staff that Mr Bullard might be able to comment on.

Mr BULLARD - We did pick up on the national safeguarding structure but this came out of Professors McCormack and Smallbone. What we want to do is try and make sure that we are talking about the same things to staff. They are not going to be able to navigate, 'Is this the Tasmanian commission of inquiry, the Education department review or the national review?'. In terms of what we need to do in raising the knowledge, skills and capability of staff, we have to simplify it so we are using that as our organiser.

In terms then of your question, which I think was around mandatory training, all staff were required at the beginning of this year to undertake mandatory training into their obligations to report. We went through a full cycle of that on the basis of staff going through that and seeking their feedback about, 'Did it make sense, was it simple enough?'. We are revising some elements of that, being cognisant of the fact that we have a workforce that spans the whole gamut of people and the jobs that they do. So, that is there doing that.

We are also looking at modules around induction, beginning practice for child safety staff and also carers through their Shared Lives training. We are also rolling out training, as I said, around the care teams and also the Wellbeing in Care procedure. So, there's a range of training underway. In terms of mandatory training, yes, all staff are required to undertake mandatory training at the beginning of every year.

CHAIR - We are scheduled to have a five-minute break, so could we please stop the broadcast and we'll have a five-minute break. Thank you.

The committee suspended from 4.45 p.m. till 4.50 p.m.

CHAIR - Welcome back to those watching.

Mrs ALEXANDER - My question is still around the training. Specifically, there's been identified through the various findings of the commission, especially around the topic we're talking about right now, around child sexual abuse, how to identify that, how to identify grooming and how to ensure that people working with children understand boundaries and all of that and what boundary violation is.

I'm quite interested to know about the context of the framework and developments. I'm a bit worried that you have a big piece of work that was developed before the commission of inquiry, then you have the commission of inquiry. So there's going to be this rush of many things that will be extremely confusing to teachers and staff and everybody else, and you'll have to demonstrate that you're bringing it all together.

Around the grooming, I'd like to understand how you are developing the training, especially when it comes to staff and teachers working with children with disabilities and children with gender dysphoria to ensure that assisting those specific categories of children is preventing grooming or inappropriate conduct.

Mr JAENSCH - Mrs Alexander, thank you for your question. At the outset, I want to confirm that the safeguarding framework policy is rolled out in the Education space and across our schools. As I understand it, the leads in our department have been in the Education side of the business. Whilst it's named up in the commission of inquiry's report, the inquiry that generated it was one specifically into the Department of Education. I don't think we have our relevant managers from the department's education side of things with us for this hearing right now. We've got our child safety and out-of-home care people instead, but we can answer questions to the ability that we have regarding how that came about.

Mr Bullard might care to speak about what the training is and where it has come from. The matter I'd like to touch on is that to me the value in the safeguarding framework has been that the training and the capacity-building is the same for people who have been specifically paid to do this work in every one of our 195 schools across Tasmania the same way. They're looking for the same signs or risks and deploying the same responses to them, which is of value in each place where it happens but also it makes the system safer when we consider findings or matters discussed by the commission like in the past, a teacher who has moved from school to school through the network and gone undetected, or where they've been moved or they've moved themselves and been able to damage many lives along the way.

Where we've got an awareness and a trained response to pick up on signs of harm or danger of grooming, and the circumstances and behaviours that can lead to that is the same in all schools, that net closes and you can't escape from it. There are no dark spots for people to hide. That's one of the huge achievements that's come about in the last couple of years due to the work the department did through this inquiry.

Mrs ALEXANDER - So you're sure that of the people who are currently being investigated or suspended, none of them occurred as instances through falling through this particular net that you're talking about, the safety net?

Mr JAENSCH - Maybe Mr Bullard can speak about the time frame in which the safeguarding framework has come up, which is also intended to ensure that people know and are encouraged and reminded of their obligations to report as well, because everybody is part of this network.

Mr BULLARD - Building on my previous answer, if I understood your question correctly it's around staff being able to identify grooming or potentially harmful behaviour and to delineate that from maybe a lack of understanding of professional boundaries. As I said, this year we did the mandatory reporting training for all staff. Next year that will grow to be - I don't know that this is the best title - but basically child sexual abuse training to assist staff to identify behaviours that may be of concern, and to know what to do about them. That will be rolled out across all staff.

One thing I will say is adults identifying behaviours in other adults is only one element. What we heard really clearly from the Take Notice, Believe Us and Act report is one of the most important things is having the confidence and the ability to speak up as a young person, to know that you'll be believed by a trusted adult, and to see that some action is taken. Just as rolling out the training for our workforce is a really important pillar, the work we're doing around empowering children and young people to truly influence those decisions that affect them is also key and we're putting some energy and effort into that.

The department for Communities had a child advocate. I was lucky enough to take that position on and that has been very much around the individual child's voice. It's important that children in out-of-home care have that ability. We've upped the number of people in those advocacy roles, but the next piece of work is around that empowerment strategy to ensure that in everything we do, young people are truly given a say. That will ensure that we are getting that early information and data.

One of the things I've seen which I take heart in is that there are more young people who will raise matters of concern in schools with principals before they become at the serious end. We are getting matters of concern notices from young people now around, 'I think that teacher is too close to me, I don't like the way he sits next to me'. That's really important. That's absolutely what we want to make sure we are doing and the culture we are building.

I suppose what I am saying is that there are two elements: the training for adults but also empowering children and young people is equally important.

Ms DOW - In relation to empowering young children, recommendation 9.6 relates to empowering and supporting children to contribute to the decision-making processes. As part of this, the Child Advocate told the commission of inquiry she had developed an online questionnaire for children in care called Viewpoint, which they said unfortunately had not been implemented. They then recommended the questionnaire be implemented without delay.

Minister, has it been implemented? If not, when will it be? Why wasn't it implemented if it hasn't been if you're so focused on empowering children to have their say?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have up-to-date advice in front of me regarding that. Is that the survey? What was the -

Mr BULLARD - Viewpoint.

Mr JAENSCH - Okay, could you speak to that, then?

Mr BULLARD - Sure. That is a really important component. Yes, the Child Advocate was working in the previous department of Communities to get that up and running. We were

PUBLIC

fortunate to inherit the considerable investment that she put into designing that survey. There have been some system issues in terms of IT systems and getting that running, but we will be trialling that in 2024 so that we can make refinements for the full rollout.

Ms DOW - Do you have a date for when you will be doing that?

Mr BULLARD - My understanding is that we will have to see how that trial goes. I am incredibly committed to it as the guardian of those young people. I see it as a really good way that we can get just-in-time feedback for both the really positive things that are happening in care for those young people and also areas of concern.

We will use that data set to triangulate with a whole lot of other data that we have already brought together in a live system that provides constantly updated information about children in out-of-home care. We are trying to build a triangulated data set so that we have a lot more information about those children.

Ms DOW - Just to confirm, that will be implemented in the new year?

Mr BULLARD - In the new year, trialled in 2024.

Ms DOW - Recommendation 9.16 looks at child safety officers and their workload, which has been a consistent issue now for a very long time. It was revealed just over a month ago, on 1 November, that half of all children in out-of-home care did not have a dedicated case worker and are, instead, supported by a team. You also revealed that decisions about whether primary care or team-based care is provided can be a decision based on resourcing. You said, and I quote:

Twelve applicants have accepted offers of employment with the Child Safety Service. As this occurs they will take on up to approximately 15 children's cases each. So, this successful period of recruitment will result in significantly more children with a primary child safety officer.

By your figures, minister, that should mean there are now, or very soon to be, 180 more children with a dedicated case worker. Are you able to provide to the committee an update to the figures you provided on 1 November? What percentage of children in out-of-home care now do not have a dedicated case worker in Tasmania?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have the numbers in front of me. I am happy to take the request for -

Ms DOW - So you do not know.

Mr JAENSCH - numbers of young people allocated to teams versus to a principal childcare worker on notice. That number will change from day to day. I monitor it, but if you want a numerical answer, we can get that.

Ms DOW - We will put that on notice, if you don't know.

At the commencement of the Strong Families Safe Kids reforms, what was the number of not-for-profit and public sector teams in the advice and referrals service? What is it today?

PUBLIC

Mr JAENSCH - Could you just start that again? The Strong Families Safe Kids reforms? And the advice and referral? Were you looking at the teams involved in the advice and referral line?

Ms DOW - Yes. So how many were there then, and how many are there now?

Mr JAENSCH - How many teams providing the advice and referral service?

Ms DOW - Yes, that is my understanding of it.

Mr JAENSCH - I will see what Mr Bullard can bring. Ms Dow, we can provide an answer to part of your question, but there are other parts we do not quite understand. Your reference to teams providing that service - do you mean the children allocated to teams for case management, or is it in the ARL?

Ms DOW - I think that it is related to the case management of children.

Mr JAENSCH - How many teams were there and how many teams are there now? I will see if Mr Bullard can get -

Mr BULLARD - To be clear, the ARL is the advice and referral line. That's where you make your report and then a determination is made around risk. That might end up in a referral to the Child Safety Service, which will then manage that child. If we're talking about the ARL, that's a partnership between three services: the Government, Mission Australia and Baptcare. During the existence of that ARL was when the Strong Families Safe Kids reforms came in. Staffing has been increased on all sides of the business, both in terms of the Government provision and the provision with our partners.

Is that the question or is the question as to the child safety team?

Ms DOW - Could you please provide me with both?

Mr BULLARD - With both. With the child safety teams, the individual child safety officers who are caring for young people under my guardianship or custody, is all government. In the ARL, they all have an additional team since they commenced. I think you want the number that they started with?

Ms DOW - Would you like me to put it on notice?

Mr BULLARD - That might be easier and then we can just make sure that we answer that for you.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you, Mr Chair. We had an update this morning from the Premier in relation to the total number of children in out-of-home care. I'm interested in exploring it in a little more detail. You may need to take this on notice as well and I'm happy for you to do this.

Can you provide us with the number of children in out-of-home care for each type of child protection order or care arrangement? For example, how many are in assessment orders,

PUBLIC

voluntary care agreements, 12-month care, interim care and protection orders, care and protection orders applying to 18-year-olds? Is that something you're able to give us on notice?

Mr JAENSCH - Happy to provide that on notice.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you. To continue this, can you explain how these types of arrangements relate to the required time frames for visits by a child safety officer? For those different arrangements, what are the required visit time frames for child safety officers? Does every child under the same type of child protection order have the same requirements, or are there other considerations in determining the frequency of visits by child safety officers? Is that clear? Are visits allocated per order type or tailored to the needs of the child?

Mr JAENSCH - I'm happy to provide a lay overview for you. Mr Bullard might see if there's someone else who can offer a little bit more detail.

Mr BAYLEY - Accurate lay overview would be helpful.

Mr JAENSCH - A more technical or informed view. The range of different orders that are granted by courts also reflect the circumstances of those cases. There might be some where a short-term order is sought while there is some intensive work being done by child safety staff to ascertain the safety of a child, or to work with the family and other providers to make a home or a placement safe, or to deal with a placement that's broken down.

There are other forms of orders that are longer term, more stable, where you might have somebody who's reaching the end of their time in out-of-home care, they're 18 or they're 17, and they've had a stable placement with a foster family that loves them and will be part of their life forever. Their challenges are like those of any young person transitioning to independent living and finding their way in the world. There's a different set of supports that might come in.

There's a range of different circumstances and everything in between. Each of those will have different types of people from our Child Safety Service and out-of-home care supports involved in their lives, and other service providers as well.

As a framing for your question about visits by Child Safety staff, it will depend on the case and the type of order that's applied for and granted for those circumstances. Some will have very intensive involvement. Others will require very little in terms of dealing with a safety issue but perhaps a lot to do with helping a young person sign up with the NDIS, or ensuring they have their accommodation and their other supports around them as they move out of a foster care placement.

Is there anything else you can add, Mr Bullard?

Mr BULLARD - I think you have summarised it perfectly, minister. So, expected visit or a benchmark visit but then individualised for each child depending on where they are in their stability.

Mr BAYLEY - In terms of the visits, are you able to provide us a breakdown of the number of children that require weekly visits, the number that require visits every six weeks, and the number subject to any other time frame?

Mr JAENSCH - There might be a difference between what might be required for the individual circumstances and a care plan for a young person and their needs, and what some rule of thumb might be in terms of good practice in a business-as-usual side of things. I don't know if Mr Bullard can comment on any statutory minimum requirement.

Mr BULLARD - I think it would be care type by visit, more than individuals by visit.

I note, in terms of why you have visits to young people, that it is so you can build those relationships and ensure that those young people are known. But that's only one way in our agency that we're putting a focus on that. I've already talked about the guardianship data feed that comes through to me around those young people, some data around how they're faring, also, the care teams that are absolutely crucial, as is the role of schools.

We now have, across 12 000 people in our agency, multiple ways that we are intersecting with a majority of children and young people who are under my guardianship or custody. What we are now trying to do is see the best way we can draw that information together, not for its own sake but to allow us to fully understand the needs and aspirations of those young people and put in place the supports they need. That is a work in progress. We feel that we've been given a unique opportunity as a new agency and we're looking at how many ways we can maximise that.

Mr BAYLEY - In parliament, minister, you provided us with some general information about the number of children, it was then around 39 per cent of these child safety officer visits being conducted in the required time frames. For 2022-23, can you provide the total number of visits that were conducted and not conducted for children requiring weekly visits?

Mr BULLARD - Mr Bayley, I wonder in terms of framing that question, if you're asking about care types that have expected visit times. Is the question how many met those expected times rather than a weekly or -

Mr BAYLEY - That's right. At the same time, for those children requiring visits every four weeks and again those requiring visits every six weeks, so the weekly, the four-weekly and the six-weekly.

Mr BULLARD - Once we have identified the care types, the visit benchmark, then we can report against that, if that's what you're asking.

Mr BAYLEY - Yes, and it's numbers, not percentages, that we are after, please. I'll put that in writing.

Ms BUTLER - Recommendation 9.2 is to establish a harmful sexual behaviours unit. Point 2 talks about allocating additional funding to support responses to harmful sexual behaviours in out-of-home care and youth justice. How much additional funding will be allocated to this?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask Mr Bullard to find us information regarding resourcing or the process for resourcing a service. This recommendation, 9.28, was one of those that we've brought forward. The commission was suggesting that it should be achieved by 1 July 2029. The agency has brought this one forward to 1 July 2026 so that this unit can support work required in a number of the other recommendations that have to be delivered earlier. We see

this as a fairly important enabling initiative that is going to underpin a range of other matters that have been raised.

Our examination of the sequencing means that we have to get these through earlier. There will be a harmful sexual behaviours support unit to work alongside our child and youth safe support team, providing advice and guidance and support for them to develop and review policies and procedures and introduce new programs such as Power to Kids or an equivalent program. We can talk a little bit more about what Power to Kids is.

Ms BUTLER - The question around the funding is a first question. I do have more questions.

Mr JAENSCH - In terms of the funding, there is no current funding allocation but that resourcing requirement will be part of the design process and inform the budget processes between now and when it is due. It is also work that has already commenced in the Education area of the department.

Ms BUTLER - The response says, in the report, that action has been taken to increase resources in schools. Could you run through what has been provided already, noting that the program currently being provided cannot meet the demand? There is concern about whether increases in service provision will be able to meet that demand. Our understanding is that there are 56 people on that waiting list already. That is without any additional resources. It is important to know how you are going to roll out that program and whether that will be prioritised.

Mr JAENSCH - Rolling it out in our settings is one aspect and the resourcing of that. But you would also have seen the Premier's announcement today of an additional \$1 million for SASS (Sexual Assault Support Service), Laurel House and Mission Australia to expand the prevention, assessment, support and treatment of harmful sexual behaviours program statewide, addressing some of the demand for these services.

The department has already been working in the education sector with a student support team providing expert policy and operational advice on preventing, identifying and responding to instances of harmful sexual behaviour in schools and in child and family learning centres. The challenge is now to extend that support and that program to out-of-home care and youth detention facilities. That will be planned and then subject to budget processes.

Ms BUTLER - Do you have a time frame around when that program will be fully funded, fully realised?

Mr JAENSCH - The aim is for it to be operational by 1 July 2026.

Mr BULLARD - As the minister said, there is a core team who were established as a result of the professors' report to build internal capacity and expertise around harmful sexual behaviours. They have done a lot of work in that space. They have commenced training, our social workers, psychologists and school nurses, and they will be ready in early 2024 to provide that training and support more broadly to other staff in the agency. I feel that this is one that we have a bit of a head start on because of the work that we have already done.

Ms DOW - Minister, how many child safety officer vacancies are there across the state currently? How many additional positions are being filled and what is being done to retain these staff?

Mr JAENSCH - I expect that we will need to take the questions around specific numbers on notice just to make sure that we are accurate. As I said before we have provision for those positions and we are actively recruiting. We've also provided authority for the department to recruit over-establishment. That would be lovely if they were able to do that. At the moment we are not able to fill the positions we have at establishment. We recognise that with our workforce, particularly the demographic family circumstances of a lot of our workers, they may want to move in and out of work over a period of time. We need a float, more people than we have positions because at any one time -

Ms DOW - Just checking, you don't have that now?

Mr JAENSCH - We don't have that now. We definitely need it. We have provision for it. I think we should take it on notice with all the other data just to make sure we have good -

Ms DOW - We'll put it on notice, thank you. Recommendation 9.16 says the department should set a maximum case load for child safety officers. Can you tell me what that maximum case load will be, minister?

Mr JAENSCH - I'll ask the department to provide any more information they can on how case loads are developed. While that's happening I'll comment again that we have the positions, just not enough people to ensure that every young person in out-of-home care has their own allocated principal child safety worker. That's why, over the last couple of years, the department has undertaken a review of where the priorities are for the trained staff we do have and developed a coordinated response approach. This has seen a number of generally lower complexity, more stable cases allocated to teams so that there is more than one person with a knowledge of that case. There also is possibly a better allocation of our child-safety-specific-trained staff to where a child safety intervention is required in a complex case for very young children, for new cases or those that are unstable and/or were broken down and need replacement, or in family restoration situations.

Ms DOW - What will that case load be?

Mr BULLARD - The model will determine the case load. If we think about children and young people having different attributes, at the moment we are very blunt. You might be in stable -

Ms DOW - So what is it now?

Mr BULLARD - It's approximately one to 15, but that's a notional allocation. Some child safety officers will have less than that because there are complexities to the young people and they require a lot of additional support and attention and management. Others will have higher because they're in permanent stable foster care. It's the significant adults in those young people's lives. It is not the child safety officer. It's their foster parents.

We need to be able to clearly articulate how we'll make a determination about two things: one is what allocation is appropriate given the particular attributes of what we know about that

PUBLIC

young person; and two, we need to match the skills and capabilities of those workers with those young people. An observation was made the other day: Schools are good at doing this. You move from primary school to high school. You have teachers who are in college who know how to interact with 16, 17, 18 year olds. They're not the same as our early childhood specialists.

Likewise, as you move through your life cycle as a young person we want to make sure you have the best match with a worker to support you. That will be part of this redesign in terms of the out-of-home care system.

Ms DOW - There's a whole raft of data the recommendation lists that the commissioners wanted to see reported on. Is that additional data already held by the department?

Mr JAENSCH - This is under 9.16 2A-F?

Ms DOW - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - I think for a majority of those fields there would be data. I'll defer to the secretary on that.

Mr BULLARD - I wouldn't want to commit to that but looking at that list that is data we would be collecting. We need to ensure there is veracity to that data. If you look at care plans, at the moment there is a system whereby you upload a care plan into our child protection information management system as a Word document that sits there.

If you move to the education side of the business and you look at the learning plans for children who are requiring additional support in school, we've built a system whereby you enter it into the system and the system can tell what the goals are. There's a way that they're moderated, there's a way that they're reported on. It's not, 'Oh did someone remember to upload a Word document?'.

There's work under way in building a system that does a similar thing. We need to ensure the integrity of the data that they request. Yes, we would collect it, but we need to ensure that we are improving the integrity.

Ms DOW - Could you put that question around data on notice, please?

Mr BULLARD - In terms of that quality and risk committee, there's a report that is absent which looks at how young people are going in achieving their goals. In relation to our ongoing monitoring, that's going to be a real through line for us. It's not about how many widgets we've made, it's what goals did you set with us and how did we help you achieve them.

CHAIR - Before I give the next call, I am in receipt of some correspondence from the Premier, who would like to correct the record this morning on something that he was scrutinised over. I'll just read it out.

Dear Mr Wood, as you are aware this morning I appeared before the House of Assembly Commission of Inquiry Scrutiny Committee. Since that appearance I have been made aware by the secretary of the Department of Justice that a figure I provided the committee was incorrect, and I write to

correct the parliamentary record. During my evidence I stated that 26 individuals had received a grant under ED16. The Department of Justice has reviewed the grants and the actual number is 27. This was an administrative error in the count and required a manual review to confirm.

Yours sincerely, Jeremy Rockliff, Premier."

Mr BAYLEY - I would like to ask a few questions about Aboriginal children in out-of-home care. As you are aware and the commission's report detailed, Aboriginal children have a particular vulnerability to being put into out-of-home care, or needing out-of-home care, and they have a disproportionate representation in out-of-home care.

A few questions on statistics and then going to the recommendations. How many children in out-of-home care as at today are recorded as being Aboriginal? Do they all have cultural support plans in place?

Mr JAENSCH - I'd be happy to take that on notice. In terms of these numbers questions, I want to make sure that we can be absolutely clear about that. I'm happy to take those.

Mr BAYLEY - Thank you. Do you have a category where Aboriginality is suspected or claimed but not confirmed? Is there a category of child that may fall into that place, and how do you respond to that?

Mr JAENSCH - I don't think that there's a category of child. I think there is some uncertainty in the data because there may not have been a requirement by anyone to have recorded Aboriginal identity of a young person each time. I believe there are some undertakings to remedy that as we work towards full implementation of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles so that that is known and that information is sought, although it should not be compelled. It's volunteered as information, as I understand it.

Mr BULLARD - Yes, that's right.

Mr JAENSCH - The same for carers as well.

Mr BULLARD - It has been a focus of the department this year to ensure that we have up-to-date information about children who are Aboriginal and we have done a full sweep of children in out-of-home care to verify that. As the minister said, it's not compelling people but, certainly, where birth parents want to identify as Aboriginal, that is noted in the child's plan.

In terms of the cultural support plan, there isn't something called a cultural support plan. In the care plans, in each of the wellbeing domains, is an element that particularly goes to Aboriginality.

Mr BAYLEY - Recommendation 9.4 pertains to expert and active leadership and includes departmental restructure, including the creation of, 'the role of executive director for Aboriginal children and young people, supported by an office of Aboriginal policy and practice'. We note from the Government's response that you're proposing to push out the time frame of delivery of recommendation 9.4 from July 2024 to July 2026. This lines up, then, with recommendation 9.7, which already identified 2026 for the full implementation of this new executive director for Aboriginal children and young people role.

PUBLIC

Given that it has been a clear priority of the commission of inquiry to identify the vulnerability of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and there are some delays - I'm not making any comment on those delays but there are going to be delays in terms of getting that executive director position in place - what steps are you taking in the interim to enhance protection of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care? And have you increased or diverted funding to bolster existing support services for Aboriginal children in out-of-home care?

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you for the question. As I understand it, the commission of inquiry's recommendation that was moved into the medium term, rather than immediate, includes a number of changes to executive structure and appointments, not just the director for Aboriginal children and young people. So there's a fair bit of machinery to mobilise around that -

Mr BAYLEY - And they didn't exactly line up. I appreciate and noted that.

Mr JAENSCH - They have to sequence and I thank you for acknowledging -

Mr BAYLEY - The question is, given the importance of this cohort of children and their vulnerability in the interim, until that position is up, what steps are you taking to ensure their protection?

Mr JAENSCH - There's a number of steps being taken right now. You may be aware of work being undertaken in the name of Closing the Gap with the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre. There's about \$2.5 million being invested in the development of capacity and capabilities to support young people in care and also to build the capacity of Aboriginal carers and providers of services around intensive family engagements, et cetera, so that we've got more Aboriginal people providing services for Aboriginal people and families. Under the Closing the Gap ethos, this is the way to ensure that those services stick better. Better chance of being culturally appropriate for people to be supported in culturally sensitive ways and for us to implement our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child placement principles with more fidelity. There is significant investment from Government on that front through working with the TAC on a model that, once developed, can be expanded to other Aboriginal organisations and populations around Tasmania. They are the leader and they are doing an excellent job, and we will continue to invest with them.

I think there is another support role identified as well. There are Aboriginal liaison officers within the advice and referral line, who work with the TAC and the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation so that there is an Aboriginal liaison and culturally informed approach to some of the investigations and follow-up on matters raised through the advice and referral line.

Ms DOW - I will take you back to data for a moment. Why has the child safety data that was previously part of the Human Services dashboard not been updated since March?

Mr JAENSCH - I was looking at this earlier today. I understand that we have missed one update. We are due to post another update for the dashboard.

Ms DOW - When is that?

Mr JAENSCH - I believe it is due around 15 December, not far away. That is when you can look forward to seeing updated data. There has been one instalment; I understand that was to do with some exchanges at the time regarding questions that we had around the content and the definition of the data that was being put up. We wanted more explanation of that. I think there was an administrative ball drop in there somewhere in that we did not finalise that in the time frame that made that data upload current. I will accept responsibility for that. We will have the latest data available within a week or so.

Ms DOW - Would you be in a position to provide that data retrospectively?

Mr JAENSCH - We will ask. It is important that we have a series that people can look at so we will rectify that as soon as we are able.

Ms DOW - Thank you. Recommendation 9.18 includes a requirement for children entering care to be assessed for trauma symptoms and, where needed, receive appropriate therapy and intervention for their trauma. Is this not common practice now, minister? Why wouldn't that be common practice?

Mr JAENSCH - Each child entering out-of-home care does receive holistic assessment through the out-of-home care paediatric clinics that are being expanded across the community as Kids Care clinics. The assessments include screening for trauma and making necessary referrals and recommendations regarding appropriate care. Responses to trauma and mental health concerns for children in out-of-home care will be strengthened through the proposed reforms being undertaken by the Department of Health in relation to child and adolescent mental health service responses.

The next steps are that the department will establish a project to clearly define core components of trauma-informed and therapeutic care that are relevant to children and young people involved with the child safety service and out-of-home care that builds on existing capabilities and specifications. This work will be progressed in parallel with the model of care for services for youth justice. As I understand, this involves us building a capability within the department to provide these services that previously have been assessed and referred to other services.

Mr BULLARD - That is right. Again, in terms of where we have come from education, we have done a lot of work, as you are aware, in trauma and trauma-informed practice. There are two things that need to occur. We need a consistent approach across the whole agency for how we support young people with trauma because one of the things around trauma is uncertainty around the way adults are going to interact with them. We need to ensure that consistency and we need to ensure that staff are trained in that. Then when the assessment occurs, there needs to be some energy and effort put into ensuring staff then know how to respond once that assessment's been done.

Ms DOW - What's the referral pathway then for those children once that assessment has been done? You mention the kids in care clinics. I was under the impression that there were only one of those established in the state, which is in the south. If those children are in other parts of the state, other regions, how are they assessed? They don't have access to those kids in care clinics to have those assessments done.

Mr BULLARD - There are paediatric out-of-home care clinics in all regions.

Ms DOW - So it is not just provided by these new kids in care clinics?

Mr BULLARD - Kids Care Clinic's a brand, a front door. In other regions the paediatric clinics specifically for children and out-of-home care undertake that work.

Ms DOW - Is there a wait time for those children to see those paediatric clinics?

Mr BULLARD - No.

Mrs ALEXANDER - Minister, going through the recommendations, the Government and in particular your department, a lot of the recommendations have a note that they will be implemented by July 2026 which is two-and-a-half years ahead. What process do you have in place over this timespan to keep the parliament informed about the progress of implementing all these recommendations?

Mr JAENSCH - As you would have heard from the Premier's overview this morning, there's a child sexual abuse reform strategy that the Government will be developing. I understand that's to be delivered in the middle of next year?

Mr BULLARD - Yes.

Mr JAENSCH - Which will cover the further detail on the staging and delivery of our responses. There is also the independent monitor of the commission's recommendations. I believe legislation for that will be delivered in parliament in the first week of next sitting year and an appointment of an office whose job it is then to monitor delivery against each of the commission of inquiry's recommendations.

We will have obligations to feed information through the monitor, so that there is a third party who can give the public and the parliament a clear reporting framework on delivery against the commission's recommendations.

Mrs ALEXANDER - One last question, the expert and active leadership item, recommendation 9.4 part 2, says:

The Tasmanian Government should ensure that the secretary of the department demonstrates active efforts to inform themselves about child protection and out of home care through individual professional development.

Surely this is happening even without this recommendation? This is probably something that can be implemented ASAP and I'm just trying to understand. How can you demonstrate that this is occurring?

Mr BULLARD - It has been happening since I took over as guardian and secretary of the new department that was responsible for out-of-home care and youth justice. I've been very fortunate to have access to the expertise that sat within the agency but also to involve myself in visits to our NGO partners and to be meeting with them and look at what a residential care home looks like, what independent living looks like, to understand the procedures and policies by visiting and staying with the ARL for a day.

PUBLIC

I am already, and have been, actively informing myself of that. I will continue to do so, just as I have over my years as secretary of the department of Education. I am very much of the view that I need to understand the business to run the business.

Mr BAYLEY - The Commission for Children and Young People recently released a new own-motion investigation report into out-of-home care, especially looking at the team's approach. The report was highly critical of the approach, noting that it had a direct negative impact on the rights of children. Can you please provide an update on the current number of children who are allocated to case management teams rather than to a primary child safety officer? How many teams are currently being used for the purpose of such allocations?

Mr JAENSCH - Just checking with the secretary. I believe we have two teams. There were two teams that were the subject of the commissioner's review. The numbers allocated to teams and the number of teams, we can take that on notice or you can provide that straight away? If that can be provided at the table that would be good. I'm happy for you to answer with that. Happy for you to provide the numbers.

Mr BULLARD - Thank you, minister. I've been informed that there are 550 team managed around the state.

Mr BAYLEY - Sorry, 550 children managed by teams?

Mr BULLARD - I'm just hoping that this adds up, Mr Bayley, but maybe if we go to the data underneath and we can do our maths after. There are 47 children in Devonport and 48 children in Burnie managed through the duty system. 191 children allocated to team 10 and 178 allocated to team 7 in the south, and 86 children team-managed within three case management teams in Launceston.

Mr BAYLEY - Are there children that are currently not allocated to either a primary child safety officer nor a case management team? If that's the case, how many are there and what's the current average length of time a child may remain unallocated?

Mr JAENSCH - While the secretary seeks that advice, there is a period of time we've spoken about before between a case entering our statutory child protection and receiving an allocation. Sometimes that reflects a period of diagnostic work being done, resolution of court matters, dealing with various other issues that have to do with the child's care that have to be resolved before an allocation can be made and their future in care can be resolved. Sometimes, a period of time without that allocation reflects work that's underway, including to preserve families, but also to ensure that we've got the right supports in place.

Mr BULLARD - Mr Bayley, I think your question was how many children and young people aren't either allocated to a child safety officer or allocated to a care team?

Mr BAYLEY - That's right.

Mr BULLARD - All children and young people are allocated to either a child safety officer or a care team. Just in terms of that number of team-managed, I'm advised that by and large they are children and young people in stable arrangements, such as stable foster care. Hence that's one of the determinants for why a young person may find themselves in a care team arrangement rather than allocated to a child safety officer.

PUBLIC

Mr BAYLEY - They sort of preserve the child safety officers for those children who are less stable and are comfortable or stable in their out-of-home care environment?

Mr JAENSCH - Where there's a requirement for active management of safety aspects of their care, as opposed to say transition to independence or -

Mr BAYLEY - You've just given us the data on the number of children being looked after by these teams. Have you got the number of staff members in each team? The Devonport, the Burnie, team 10, team 7. I think the other one was Launceston?

Mr JAENSCH - Happy to take that one on notice.

Mr BAYLEY - Okay. Thank you.

Ms DOW - In relation to those children being assessed for trauma when they first present and referral pathways to other service providers in the community, particularly if that child does reveal sexual abuse of some type. Are there going to be additional resources provided to those service providers? I understand they already have very long wait lists for those children to be able to see them for ongoing support and their families or carers. Are you concerned about those wait lists.

Mr JAENSCH - I don't have a breakdown with me on the nature of those referrals, or who the providers are, or what their caseloads are at this stage. As part of another initiative that we are progressing in our department, I am keen to ensure that the state as the guardian for children in out-of-home care has some privileged access to some of the services that are needed, that the guardian can advocate hard for the young people in our out-of-home care system and be a dogged, pushy parent in terms of ensuring they get what they need and that they get a place receiving their services that are essential for their wellbeing.

This is an ongoing piece of work that we are working on across government, particularly for government services, which should give us the ability if we are successful to prioritise care and access to services for young people in our out-of-home care system which relies us to be their parent and to ensure that they are getting the best. In terms of the services that the needs are assessed and the referrals that are made I cannot comment on specific service providers that they may be landing with.

CHAIR - The time for scrutiny has expired. The committee will reconvene tomorrow morning at 10 a.m. Thank you, everyone.

Mr JAENSCH - Thank you, Chair. I thank the secretary and my department and committee members.

The committee suspended at 5.52 p.m.