



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

#### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B**

Hon. Roger Jaensch MP

**Thursday 9 June 2022**

#### **MEMBERS**

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC (Deputy Chair)

Hon Jane Howlett MLC

Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Chair)

Hon Jo Siejka MLC

Hon Rob Valentine MLC

Hon Josh Willie MLC



## **IN ATTENDANCE**

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

### **DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Tim Bullard	Secretary
Kane Salter	Deputy Secretary Corporate and Business Services
Jenny Burgess	Deputy Secretary Strategy and Performance
Jodee Wilson	Deputy Secretary Support and Development
Trudy Pearce	Deputy Secretary Learning
James Burrows	Manager of the Office of the Secretary
Andrea McAuliffe	Senior Project Manager

### **Libraries Tasmania**

Sue McKerracher	Executive Director
Liz Jack	Ex-Executive Director

### **Teachers Registration Board**

Ann Moxham	Registrar
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### **Office of the Education Registrar**

Katharine O'Donnell	Registrar Education
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### **Office of the Tasmanian Assessment, Standards and Certification (TASC)**

Kristy Pereira	Executive Director
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### **Department of Education Registered Training Organisation (DoE RTO)**

Anne Ripper	Director
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## **DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITIES TASMANIA**

### **Children and Youth**

Michael Pervan	Secretary
Narelle Butt	Acting Deputy Secretary, Children and Youth Services
Claire Lovell	Executive Director, Children and Families
Zaharenia Galanos	Director, Children and Family Services
Pam Honan	Director, Youth and Family Violence Services
Alecia Fletcher	Finance

### **Aboriginal Affairs**

Michael Pervan	Secretary
Mellissa Gray	Deputy Secretary, Wellbeing and Engagement
Caroline Spotswood	Director, Aboriginal Partnerships
Scott French	Finance

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

### **Environment Protection Agency (EPA)**

Wes Ford Chief Executive Officer  
Daryl Cook Director, Finfish Compliance

### **Environment**

Jason Jacobi Acting Secretary  
Louise Wilson Deputy Secretary, Environment, Heritage and Land  
Rachael Alderman Branch Manager, Threatened Species and Conservation Programs  
Jo Crisp General Manager, Environment, Heritage and Land  
Joanna O'Brien Senior Project Manager  
Anton Voss CEO, ReCFIT (Treasury)

### **Aboriginal Affairs**

Jason Jacobi Acting Secretary  
Louise Wilson Deputy Secretary, Environment, Heritage and Land  
Steve Gall Director, Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania  
Anne Beach Deputy Chief Operations Officer

## **DEPARTMENT OF TREASURY AND FINANCE**

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

Anton Voss CEO, ReCFIT  
Sarah Russell Acting Director, Climate Change  
Garth Dickinson Assistant Director, Climate Change

## **DEPARTMENT OF STATE GROWTH**

### **Skills, Training and Workforce Growth (Output 1.3)**

Kim Evans Secretary  
Mark Bowles Deputy Secretary, Business and Jobs  
Amanda Russell Deputy Secretary, Business Services  
Alex Paterson Acting General Manager, Skills Tasmania  
Stuart Hollingsworth Director, Jobs Tasmania  
Travis Boutcher Manager, Budget

### **TasTAFE**

Grant Dreher Chief Executive Officer  
Scott Adams Chief Operating Officer  
Scott Cragg Senior Executive Officer

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**The Committee met at 8.58 a.m.**

**CHAIR** - Minister, on behalf of the committee, we would like to welcome you and your team here today and also congratulate you on your portfolio as the minister for Education. It is a big part of our Tasmanian Budget and a very important part.

Before I ask you to introduce your team at the table and provide your overview, I would like to introduce you to our team. First of all, we have Jane Howlett, Rosemary Armitage, Tania Rattray, myself, Josh Willie, Rob Valentine. We have an apology from Jo Siejka who has a little unwell daughter. We have our secretariat support of Julie Thompson and we have Liam with us on Hansard. His third day with us and he has been doing an exceptionally good job. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Madam Chair. It is a great honour to be with you here in my first Estimates as Minister for Education, Children and Youth, as the first minister for Education, Children and Youth that has been appointed in our parliament. At the table with me are our secretary of the Department of Education, Tim Bullard.

**CHAIR** - Well known to the committee.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well known to the committee and well-loved, I am sure. Jenny Burgess who is deputy secretary, Strategy and Performance, and Kane Salter who is deputy secretary, Corporate and Business.

I have an opening statement.

Every child and young person has a right to be safe and to be heard. Every child and young person has the right to be engaged in learning. And more than that, all of our children deserve to have aspirations for their future and to have a sense of hope, confidence and possibility for what is ahead of them.

To help them achieve that goal, we need to continue building an education system where the child and the young person is truly at the centre of all we do. A strong future for our education system is also our greatest opportunity to strengthen our future as a state.

In 2022, the Department of Education released its latest strategic plan. It builds on the progress of recent years, looking ahead to the steps for growth. I am proud of the substantial investment the 2022-23 Budget makes in the department's commitment that working together we will inspire and engage more learners to learn more every day.

We know we must do more work to safeguard the rights of all children and young people to have an education, to be heard and to be kept safe from harm. That is why this Budget invests \$36.4 million over four years, with \$12 million ongoing, to help ensure our schools are safe places for children.

We also continue to prioritise the transformation of the delivery of years 9-12 in Tasmanian schools. There is an unwavering focus on the retention and attainment of senior secondary students across our colleges and high schools, which have now all extended to provide senior secondary options throughout Tasmania. Our Government continues to invest

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in our education leaders, teachers, support staff and the systems they need to provide high-quality education services that accommodate the needs of all of our learners.

The 2022-23 Budget continues to deliver the largest state investment in education infrastructure across the Budget and forward Estimates in more than 20 years. The current allocations for capital works total \$250 million over the forward Estimates, including \$69.7 million in 2022-23 alone.

By creating a new Department of Education, Children and Young People later this year, we are redesigning our systems, breaking silos and putting the child at the centre of every decision. I look forward to leading this important development in supporting Tasmania's young people.

I take this opportunity to thank the dedicated staff in our schools, colleges, child and family learning centres and libraries across Tasmania who come to work every day determined to support all Tasmanians to achieve their potential.

In my portfolio responsibilities for Children and Youth, our Government continues to take action to improve safety and wellbeing outcomes for all children, young people and their families. Our first-ever comprehensive, long-term, whole-of-government Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy was announced by the former premier in August last year. The Tasmanian Government is investing \$100 million over four years on an action plan to deliver a range of initiatives under that strategy.

The Government also continues our long-term reforms of the child safety system, Strong Families, Safe Kids. The 2022-23 Budget continues our investment in supports for at-risk children, young people and their families.

Included in the Budget is also a \$40 million allocation for new custodial youth justice facilities to enable the closure of the Ashley Youth Detention Centre and to support a new approach across our entire youth justice system.

Yesterday I announced what will be a key policy setting for our youth justice system. As part of our comprehensive reform of youth justice in Tasmania, our Government will raise the minimum age of detention from 10 to 14 years. This will be one key element in our plan to build a nation-leading best-practice approach for young people in conflict with the law. We know that for younger children detention does not support rehabilitation or reduce the likelihood of reoffending. Early exposure to a detention environment can also further traumatise young people, expose them to problem behaviours of older detainees and increase criminal networks.

There will always be a need for secure detention as a last resort for a very small minority of young people who commit the most serious offences and to ensure community safety.

Raising the minimum age of detention will be supported by new initiatives as part of our comprehensive youth justice reform. These will include new diversion and community sentencing options for young people, with the change to minimum age not occurring until these new settings are in place. This change will help ensure that detention of young people in Tasmania is truly a last resort. I hope to have more to say on that as we move through our questions. This announcement is further evidence of our Government's strong commitment to

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improve the safety and wellbeing outcomes for children and young people, ensuring they have every opportunity to overcome the challenges they face and reach their full potential. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much, minister. The committee appreciates having a short, sharp overview so that members can get into questions. Probably it won't surprise you that the first line of questioning will come from the member for Elwick, recently re-elected, Mr Willie.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. Starting on page 60, minister, I have a kindergarten screening proposal here at departmental documents. There are some concerning things in here and I am wondering what the department is doing to address that. It correlates with the decline in the Kinder Development Check on page 60. I note that there is a footnote that suggests the department is looking at performance measures. I will read to you some of the concerning things in this document and you can tell me what has been done about it.

There are major declines in 'gross motor' and 'speaks in a manner easily understood by adults'.

This is in the Kinder Development Check.

The other marker has a minor decline but it is not significant. Without any review or changes to the Kinder Development Check, schools and teachers will not be effectively supported. The data will continue to decline, and learners and children will not be supported as best as they could for positive learning outcomes.

The Kinder Development Check's individual indicators could benefit from a review to determine the level of explicitness needed and relevance. The reasons for the decline in the Kinder Development Check 2 are not well understood and exposes the department to questions.

Well, here they are.

The decline does not align with measures like the ADC and the PIPS outcomes, which are stable or improving.

The KDC data is reported in the budget papers and this is politically risky.

There is a suggestion for independent analysis, but one of the risks is resourcing is limited.

**CHAIR** - Perhaps you would like to give the minister an opportunity to respond. I said short and sharp questions.

**Mr WILLIE** - Hang on, one more thing. If we look at the Kinder Development second assessment - it is a screening, not a test: 2014 it was at 74.1 per cent; 2015, 72.6 per cent; 2016, 71.4 per cent; 2017, 69.7 per cent; 2018, 67.8 per cent; 2019, 67.1 per cent.

So, I am interested in what you are doing about this very important area where we are screening children in the early years?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for the question.

**CHAIR** - It won't be a surprise for you, minister, that the member has done his homework.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Oh, he has. And he has done of other people's homework too, I think, or corrected it.

Just in overview, the kindergarten students in Tasmanian government schools are assessed twice-yearly by teachers against the Kindergarten Development Check, involving 21 developmental markers in the areas of gross motor skills, fine motor skills, personal and social behaviour, listening, speaking and understanding, and cognitive development.

In 2021, 61.5 per cent of children demonstrated achievement against all markers, an increase from 60.7 per cent in 2020 but a decrease from 67.1 per cent in 2019. This is the first time since 2012 that the Kindergarten Development Check second assessment result has improved rather than declined. The KDC results were analysed to determine any exceptional trends from previous years. The findings were that most markers were stable, with decline or improvement with one percentage point for 14 out of 21 markers and six out of the 21 markers improved by one percentage point or more. Only gross motor declined by greater than one percentage point. There were no standout changes in Department of Education regions, gender, indigenous or parental education levels factors. Instead, there were slight increases for all demographic categories.

But with that overview, I would like to ask the secretary if he has any further response to the question.

**Mr BULLARD** - I just missed the end of your question, Mr Willie.

**Mr WILLIE** - There is a suggestion in the Budget you are going to change the performance measures. Will this be one of them and clearly some additional support is required for staff in this document here. What is the department doing to address this important screening area?

**Mr BULLARD** - A very timely question in terms of the KDCs. In reviewing the performance measures, that might be a matter the minister wants to speak to in more detail later on. The question there is whether the indicator, as it sits, which is that a young person has to meet all 21 of the indicators for them to be deemed to have met the KDCs as appropriate. At the moment every single indicator out of the 21 needs to be ticked off in the second check.

**Mr WILLIE** - I know it well.

**Mr BULLARD** - But the question on review, I might throw to Ms Burgess because this also sits in a national context, looking at performance measures on early childhood development.

**Ms BURGESS** - The Preschool Reform Agreement, which you would be aware has been under review and we now have four years of funding. As part of the work regarding that nationally, we are looking at what is a fit for purpose and appropriate preschool measure for



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young people. In that context, an expert body had been pulled together and states are now looking at what that should mean in the context of moving on to the prep year and the AEDC. Whether there should be alignment of markers moving through to there. Tasmania would be reluctant to do anything now, when as part of that preschool funding agreement we might be required to change. What we do know is from a Tasmanian perspective, we will be very much focused on it being a screening tool and not a formalised assessment.

**Mr BULLARD** - As to the second part of your question on the support that is provided, certainly, as we came out of COVID-19 and we saw there had been a decline in gross motor skills and oral language, there was very targeted support provided to early childhood teachers in Launching into Learning in kindergarten, in ensuring not only did they better understand what the markers were showing them, but also activities they could implement in their context. We believe that is why we are seeing an uptick - albeit small - in that data. Evidence-based activities that those teachers can provide in their context that directly address those areas, especially for gross motor and oral language we are seeing decline in.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, you have been the third minister in the portfolio in a year. You would be well aware of our NAPLAN results. In 2021, we were the worst of any state across every age group in reading; the second worst in every age group in writing; the worst in every age group in spelling; the worst in every age group in grammar and punctuation and the worst in years 5, 7 and 9 in numeracy. An academic and respected demographer, Lisa Denny, had an analysis last year that showed the Tasmanian education system produces considerably lower levels of educational attainment compared with national average and the Tasmanian results are in crisis. For the 2021 grade 9 cohort, 28.5 per cent could not read above the level expected to engage in the wider curriculum; 41.5 per cent could not express themselves in written form and 23.4 per cent were not numerate. What do you, as minister, plan to do differently?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We welcome scrutiny of literacy and numeracy outcomes for Tasmanian schools and learners. These skills are fundamental for our kids achieving in their lives, not only in their school years, but for the rest of their careers.

It is important to remember NAPLAN is only one measure. It is only one measure, a point in time test. It does little really to inform or support individual student learning which is where our focus really must be. I will get on to what we are doing in those areas.

I do challenge Mr Willie's characterisation. The NAPLAN results for 2021 show Tasmania is performing about the same as South Australia, very similar to Queensland, far better than the Northern Territory. We are behind Victoria, New South Wales and the ACT.

We have improved since 2008, against ourselves on five measures and declined since 2019, on only one. When Mr Willie characterised -

**Mr WILLIE** - And gone backwards in 14 indicators out of 20 since 2008.

**CHAIR** - We only have one person speaking. Once the minister finishes, then I will invite the member to respond.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I reject the characterisation of Tasmania, Tasmania's schools, Tasmanian teacher or Tasmanian students as the worst in the Nation. I do not think that helps anybody.

**Mr WILLIE** - It is factual, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Our numbers, when you look into them a little further than the headlines, which Mr Willie ought to be able to do, identify that when you compare Tasmanian schools, Tasmanian teachers and students to those in similar demographic circumstances, elsewhere in Australia, we are performing as well or better than many of those areas right across.

We do not have a metropolitan population of five or eight million professional people with their own expectations, their own education history that washes through to their kids that gives the NAPLAN outcome for a state like Victoria or New South Wales. We are quite different. We are more demographically like South Australia, but with a far smaller population. We are holding our own against them.

Most important, we take NAPLAN for what it is and we recognise what we are comparing Tasmania to. While we must aspire to be at or above the national minimum, the national average and we are ambitious and aspirational for Tasmanians in this regard. We must not reflect on our teachers, or our students, or our schools here they are the bottom of the pack, because that is not the case.

People working in communities, with the education backgrounds we have, with the regionality we have and the life experiences Tasmanians have had in broad, we are doing the same as, or better than them, in most cases and we need to keep doing better.

Where we are going more, is to rely on progressive achievement testing, more regularly in our schools, down to the individual student and building our continuous improvement and growth approach around that.

We will let NAPLAN, be NAPLAN and it can continue to give us headlines, but I think it is unfortunate when those headlines are used to characterise Tasmanian schools, teachers, and students by comparing them to states with a population of 8 million people and those greater concentrations of people with quite different education background, like the ACT or Victoria.

**Mr WILLIE** - You might try and explain that away and shift the focus to schools and teachers. I am holding the Government to account. Unlike you, I know the conditions that they are working in and it is incredibly tough.

There has been a lot of rhetoric around changing practice to find spaced teaching. Finding spaced instruction in the early years. Unfortunately for you, I am at that stage of life where I interact with a lot of parents with young children across schools and I ask about what is coming home.

It seems to me that, despite the rhetoric of the Government, there are a lot of resources in schools that do not reflect that change in practice - readers that use strategies like queuing, sight words - coming home. I thought this was a key focus of the Government. There are some things that you could do that wouldn't cost a lot of money, like replacing readers in schools, mandating the phonic screening to send a message that the Government values this. Why won't you do those things?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Phonics instruction is essential, I think we agree, for learning to read and write, and it is taught explicitly in Tasmanian schools in prep to year two as part of the Australian curriculum.

In 2021, the Phonics Scope and Sequence Kindergarten to Year Two resource and associated professional learning was developed to further support the teaching of phonics in Tasmanian Government schools. From 2022, all students in year one will be screened using the year one Phonics Check or another approved screening tool. The year one Phonics Check can provide teachers with an indication of how a student is progressing in development of phonic knowledge against what is expected of year one students.

Teachers also use evidence of learning from classroom observations and tasks, to monitor student development in phonics and adjust their teaching to meet the needs of learners. The year one Phonics Check, together with teacher monitoring of student progress, supports the identification of those learners - which is approximately 10 to 15 per cent - who may require more targeted instruction.

Educators, speech and language pathologists work collaboratively to provide targeted supports to students who are not progressing as expected.

**CHAIR** - Minister, the member asked you a specific question about books and that resource. In your notes, is there a response to that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I support doing everything we can to ensure that our schools are equipped and our students and teachers have the tools they need to deliver on better results in the area of phonics. I will ask the secretary to respond regarding the issue of provision of appropriate material for them and what is under way there.

**Mr BULLARD** - I think the issue that you raise, Mr Willie, is around support for early childhood teachers to ensure that they know and understand their students, they know how to use data, they know what effective teaching practice looks like in the teaching of phonics, and they can also have a reflective practice where they are reflecting on the impact of that practice on their students.

Absolutely, there is support going in. We need to accept that this is a huge change management process for us, as you are aware. We've had many different approaches to literacy over the years, and we haven't had in place the really strong guidance and support that we now have to ensure that we are lifting the capacity and capability of the entire workforce to teach using effective evidence-based strategies.

As the minister said, the Phonics Check is now mandated, or an effective other check if we can be convinced of that, in year one. Probably more important though, is the early years assessments which we have also brought in pre-one year in prep to ensure that we are catching those young people early that don't have the basics.

There's professional learning around the teaching of phonics which has been very popular with early childhood teachers, in particular, to raise their understanding of what phonics is and how to teach it. We also have a number of curriculum documents now that step out with a high level of specificity, what each lesson should look like. A really great development that's come

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online through setting up the Virtual Learning Centre for COVID-19 is that there are demonstration lessons across the year that shows how you would teach phonics.

We have to make sure that teachers know and understand the importance of phonics; but they also have the evidence-based capabilities to teach it and that is where we are putting our energy.

**Mr WILLIE** - And resources, Minister, things like the decodable readers in schools. I am not seeing a lot of that in my peer group.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Things like quality teaching coaches for all of our schools. How many altogether now? 125 FTE, or something like that?

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - 125 FTE in quality teaching coaches - again, supporting our teachers.

**CHAIR** - I have a supplementary on this from Ms Armitage, before you go there.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - On the early childhood checks, obviously phonics is a very good way. But what about eye sight and hearing? I know that we have limited ENT specialists at the moment in the state. I am wondering how that has affected schools. Do you still do hearing and eye sight checks on the young children? If they can't hear it makes it hard for the phonics. I think some children are waiting years for an appointment for grommets.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Exactly. I'll ask the secretary to provide some more detail.

**Mr BULLARD** - School nursing school nursing now does Kindergarten checks.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are they still coming into the school?

**Mr BULLARD** - Every school has a school nurse now, and they undertake checks. I do not have the exact figure to hand, it was thousands of checks.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are they part time?

**Mr BULLARD** - It depends on how large the school is. It's on enrolments. Some have a proportion of a nurse and the larger schools will have a full FTE. I think there were 52 school nurses.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Would one nurse cover several schools, on occasion?

**Mr BULLARD** - Potentially, yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are they still called clusters?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Nurses?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, schools. There is a cluster in a region.

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**Mr BULLARD** - Okay, I do not have that figure.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have collectives.

**CHAIR** - Right, thank you. Collective.

**Mr BULLARD** - But yes, they are undertaken.

**CHAIR** - We are happy if that information comes back to the member.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's fine. It's important to make sure we have those checks. The ENT issue is more of a matter for the Minister for Health.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I have some information about school nursing here; if you like I will go through a few figures on that. Introduced in 2015, the successful contemporary model of school health nursing recognises the link between good health and positive education outcomes. This has resulted in over 29,125 individual students being seen by a school health nurse for one-on-one sessions and 34,346 health promotion sessions from July, 2015 to March, 2022. In the 2019-20 Budget, funding of \$2.7 million over four years was committed to provide a nurse in every Government senior secondary college by 2021. This includes, \$920 thousand in 2022-23. On 29 May 2021, the Tasmanian Government committed to delivering an additional 11.4 FTE Grade 4 school health nurses, bringing the statewide total to 50.1. This increases the Government's total investment for school nurses to \$6.5 million in 2022-23 and a total of \$20.3 million over the forward Estimates.

By delivering 50.1 FTE Grade 4 school health nurses, a total of 189 schools and senior secondary colleges will be supported to foster healthy choices, create positive outcomes for students and a culture of lifelong learning -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think the proposal was by 2021; were they able to find the school nurses?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Because sometimes there is a shortage. While you might wish to get them is it the advertising and actually engaging them.

**Mr BULLARD** - We're a popular venue for nurses, so we don't have trouble recruiting school nurses. I can confirm that every Kinder child has access to hearing checks. I can also confirm that in 2021, there were 3,682 checks undertaken in the Kinder screening by our school health nurses.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am assuming you wouldn't have the results of how many children failed those tests and were on a waiting list for the ENT, which can be several years? That is something I can ask Health.

**Mr BULLARD** - I don't have that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No. That is great, though, that at least the school nurses are doing assessments -

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**Mr BULLARD** - And vision, I should say too.

**CHAIR** - You identified 194 schools; we have more than 194 schools. What happens to the remaining schools?

**Mr BULLARD** - No, we have 194 schools.

**CHAIR** - They are in all schools?

**Mr BULLARD** - Small schools will have a proportion and then the larger schools, such as the colleges, will have someone on site all the time.

**Mr WILLIE** - Another key part of this change in practice is support from speech pathologists. How many children have had a learning plan developed for them with a speech pathologist? How many referrals have been made in the past year for a speech assessment? How long does it take, on average, for that to take place?

I am aware, minister, that there is a 47.6 FTE establishment for speech pathologists and there are currently 15.23 FTE vacant, that is 32 per cent of funded positions. What is the current ratio of speech pathologists per student?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There are a lot of questions there. I hope somebody else is writing this down as well -

**CHAIR** - The member can repeat them,

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am sure he will.

**Mr WILLIE** - I can repeat them if you would like.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am sure you will, but just give us a second to get to first base for yours.

**Mr BULLARD** - I think your first question, Mr Willie, was about learning plans? A speech pathologist would not be doing the learning plans. That would be the role of the teacher with input from the speech pathologist.

**Mr WILLIE** - I said with a speech pathologist.

**Mr BULLARD** - I do not know that we would have that data. We would need to examine each individual learning plan. We do not have that data because the learning plans are developed by the classroom teacher. We would not know whether the speech pathologist had been consulted or not, so we would not be able to extract that. I think you had a question about the ratio.

**Mr WILLIE** - The follow-on from having input with speech pathologists was how many referrals were made in this current year for speech assessments with speech pathologists? How long does it take for an assessment to take place, on average?

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**Mr BULLARD** - I think we will need to take those on notice. I will make an observation that there are a number of ways in which a speech pathologist will work with a classroom teacher. The first is that classroom teachers will have a discussion with the speech pathologist about issues that the classroom teacher may be able to deal with in their context on the advice of the specialist. I think we alluded to issues that we were picking up through the phonics check, that approximately 10-15 per cent of students would have an issue that required a referral.

Regarding average wait times, it is 108 days for speech and language pathology. I will also say though, that needs to be a caveat, it is an average. Where there is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed, we triage all of our student support staff to make sure that if there is a significant issue that needs to be dealt with, that they go to the top of the list. So, you do not go into a queue and everyone has to wait that long.

Regarding your question about the ratios, again I will just caveat this by saying that the ratio I am about to give you assumes that every child requires speech and language pathology. Speech and language pathology are for kindergarten to grade 6, and it also excludes support schools. Again, there is that 10-15 per cent where there is an issue, but the ratio as it stands now is 1 to 756.

**Mr WILLIE** - Is that the establishment figure that is used for that or the current employment?

**Mr BULLARD** - No, that is the ratio of students per 1 FTE. Your question is, is that the establishment or the actuals?

**Mr WILLIE** - The actuals, yes, given there are 32 per cent of funded positions that are vacant.

**Mr BULLARD** - That is the budgeted, so that is the allocated FTE, not the actuals. So, it would actually be higher than that.

**Mr WILLIE** - I will ask a couple of other questions, and then I will hand over to someone else. How many students were referred to school psychologists? What is the average wait time? How many students have been referred for social work intervention? I do not know if you collect the wait times for that. -

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am happy for you to answer those.

**Mr BULLARD** - The first question on school psychologist was?

**Mr WILLIE** - How many have been referred this year to date and what's the average wait time?

**Mr BULLARD** - It think we'd need to take that on notice. I can give you the average in days. It's 104 days wait for assessment and 28 days for intervention, that's for school psychologists. For social workers, it's six days.

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**Mr WILLIE** - That's a long time, 140 days. I've written to the minister or previous ministers about constituents of mine and students who may be suffering with their mental health, not being able to see a school psychologist for months.

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is one of the reasons why the 2022-2023 budget includes \$3.8 million in additional resources for eight new positions in social work and psychology that will be available for our schools.

**CHAIR** - Is that across the state?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. It is \$3.8 million AT FTE for social workers and psychologists in response to this acknowledged demand.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Just a little preamble here because I need to explain the question. There is a concern when we look at the output group, the various performance targets which have been set, that is table 3.3 on page 61 of your papers. In relation to the attainment measures for 15-19 year old's, the number of students completing 120 credit points, is targeted to increase from 4863 to 5300. And, the number of students undertaking some vocational education training is also targeted to increase from 5865 to 6100.

However, when considering the targets for students gaining a TEC and achieving an ATAR, the percentages show either a decline from 63 to 62 per cent for the TEC, for instance or are static at 35 per cent for an ATAR.

Can you explain the process for setting targets? It is interesting to see them lower and/or static in those two particular instances. I want to understand how you set your targets? Why we're not being aspirational and lifting them?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Valentine, that's a very good question.

**CHAIR** - Minister, there're all good questions here.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sometimes they might not be. I am a layperson.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I say it's a good question because it's a question we've been asking and discussing in detail ourselves. Looking back on previous Estimates hearings like this, as you do when you're coming into a portfolio for the first time, we note that the previous minister for Education discussed reviewing performance indicators for schools as well. It is something I would like to address.

I want to be open and consultative with a committee like this about how we do that. The intent that we would have, would be to have budget performance indicators that more closely align to the department's internal performance measurement frameworks. So, things that we're already measuring. And targets which would include indicators for important datasets, such as student wellbeing, engagement, literacy and numeracy. Performance indicators for education in output groups 1 and 3 are predominantly historically based and have been updated iteratively in response to individual issues over time.

This has led to the performance indicators lacking in cohesion, particularly as they vary between the Government and non-government sectors. They don't provide an accurate overall



picture. We are looking at how the indicators might be revised and reflect a stronger focus on the department's strategic plan and Government's performance in the sector, which we are responsible for and you are scrutinising.

This could include separation of indicators for the Government and non-government sectors, for example, NAPLAN data which is currently reported at all sector level in output group one could be moved to output group three for consistency with your sector outcomes in that group.

The department is also invested in the progressive achievement test I mentioned earlier as the main standardised test for literacy and numeracy across all year levels from Prep to Year 10. The data could form the basis for a performance indicator for Government and sector performance in literacy and numeracy, which is missing from the budget chapter now.

To ensure a holistic view of learning performance indicators could also include data from the department's student wellbeing and engagement survey as well as maintaining the current focus on student attendance. There are a range of matters there, but I am very conscious of having been on this side of the Estimates table that performance indicators in the budget papers are not something we should, as Government, change unilaterally and just present you with.

You have not got the comparison with previous years and they also have to be meaningful for you in applying scrutiny. The secretary has some further detail to suggest and I would be interested in the committee's advice and feedback on those suggestions regarding those indicators.

**CHAIR** - Rest assured there will be plenty of advice minister.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can I give you two other things before the secretary comes back on that.

In relation to access participation and engagement, the indicators show a decline for this year with attendance levels, for 2022-2023 this coming year, above 90 per cent targeted at being down ten per cent for 2022-2023 as compared to 2021-2022 at just 53.3 per cent.

Similarly, apparent retention rates are showing a small decline with the target for this coming year, down 1.1 per cent compared to last year's papers. There is a decline there and there are also the Aboriginal students, the same decline in targets is apparent there with the education outcome gap for 2022-2023 increasing by 1.8 per cent to 6.8 per cent.

Quite clearly the attainment measure is one thing, but also access, participation and engagement, Aboriginal students and of course the literacy and numeracy Mr Willie was talking about.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Attendance is something we will have further discussion of here today. It is important and it has been a very odd few years, for example, there are times when we have had over the last couple of years, all of our kids at home, but our attendance really high. They are not at school, but they are doing school from home.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I can appreciate there are complexities associated with it.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - We do have some odd things.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I realise that but it is the way the target is set. Over to you, obviously interested in what is going to be done to try and address some of those issues.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask Mr Bullard to talk through some of the suggested changes we have for some of these indicators.

**CHAIR** - As we always do, as short and sharp as we possibly can. Otherwise, we are again going to run out of time and we will still be here until 8 o'clock tonight.

**Mr BULLARD** - I do not want to be here until 8 o'clock, I will do my best to be really short and sharp.

Two questions; one on the targets which I will get Mrs Burgess to speak to directly. With the new measures, what we know at the moment is we are measuring in the budget papers is not what is going to drive improvement in education outcomes. Also, there are some very odd anomalies and referring to attainment measures for 15-19-year olds we are actually measuring FTE there which does not take into account there may be an underlining enrolment change. That might actually be under in number you think could attain that or could be over, depending on what the base enrolment is.

The other thing is in 2016 parliament passed the education act which says what success looks like by the time you reach the age of 18, which is that you are in an apprenticeship, you are starting Years 11 and 12, you have got a TCE, you are in 35 hours of work, you have attained a certificate III or you have got a traineeship. We are not measuring any of those things, we are not reporting back to you on how many students are undertaking each of those. The measures of success in here are not actually the measures that matter.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Perhaps that is what needs to be changed.

**Mr BULLARD** - Then you need to translate that into the agency, we are driving a different set of output measures we know is measuring what matters, but that is not what is reflected here, and I think that is where the minister is going. Did you want to speak to the target setting?

**Ms BURGESS** - I can talk in a very layperson's way about the target setting. If we think about the data and that we plot points and a line of best fit. We plot a trajectory for the data and when we get the new set of data - let us say the data from 2021 - we go and revisit that plotting and the line of best fit. Often, the actuals then change the trajectory for the following years. We do not just plot and then hold and then not adjust, we plot, get the currency of the new data and then readjust the line and the projected anticipated target from that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I can understand what you are saying there. It comes back to how these papers are set up, to be able to truly reflect the performance, as opposed to just being year on year something that is not really reflective. That is where your review of the indicators is going to be really important and yet we do not want to lose the historic data. It is a wicked problem.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - That is my question back to the committee, there has been over a couple of hearings - last one, this one - discussion around the appropriateness of the indicators. The department has suggested a range of indicators that would be more meaningful, we do not want to just though turn up next year with a different set of indicators out of the blue, and have you -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Have us bag you out.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, exactly. What I would be interested in is how do we and would we at this hearing on the record, have some agreement from the committee to progress development of some new indicators.

**CHAIR** - We are also only one of the committees you had scrutiny.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I know, but this is where it came up, this is where it came up last year and in the other House they do not look at these things, they talk about other stuff.

**CHAIR** - This is where we examine the entire allocation of 1.1.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You use the indicators, so if we are going to modify them, they have to be relevant to you too.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They have to be relevant.

**CHAIR** - I would suggest that the minister write to the committee and formally ask for some feedback.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We would need some guidance.

**CHAIR** - We just had it, from Ms Burgess.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, that is how they are set.

**Mr BULLARD** - For Mr Valentine, a lot of the measures you see in here would still exist, but they would be in different places. The NAPLAN data would still be there, but it would be under all sectors. At the moment it looks like it is reporting Government sector performance, when it is actually reflecting all sector performance. You would then have a subset of data that was sat in there which was absolutely about Government school performance. In writing, we could show in a layout how it would look and highlight if there are any indicators - for example the number one I have pointed out down the bottom - that we thought we wanted to get rid of altogether, show that explicitly but also show where the others have moved.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Madam Chair, you are comfortable I will write to you?

**CHAIR** - With your proposed changes to the presentation of that performance information.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - We could give you some feedback. It is going to be valuable for anyone who is on that side of the table, regardless of political colour.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I agree.

**CHAIR** - Because we will not be here forever either.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We could write proposing those and then offer an exchange, a briefing, and discussion about that. It is good to strike while the iron is hot, not in the weeks leading up to the next budget papers, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We do have issues and need to lift the education standards, we all understand that. Can you outline how many Tasmanian state schools are funded below the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) and how many received funding above that standard?

**Mr BULLARD** - Can I clarify that question? To go back one step, under national funding arrangements, there's a notational allocation provided to every school. But under the national agreement, every state and territory has the ability to distribute the funds it receives.

**Mr VALENTINE** - In a way that might go higher to more disadvantaged schools?

**Mr BULLARD** - That's right. So, it can make its own determination on the model, given its context, given that the national model that was established is highly generic. It's trying to deal with everything from the west coast to the east coast and everything in between. Therefore, under the national agreement, we did have to put up our model for distribution and the Commonwealth needed to be happy with that but we are able to redistribute the funding against our model.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can I go to a different question? I understand what you're saying and I can see the sense.

**CHAIR** - One size does not fit all.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's right. I have been given some questions in this regard and I would like to follow up with some of those.

What is the current policy on reaching and maintaining the full 100 per cent level of the SRS for our government schools - one that naturally includes the six additional needs-based loadings to address disadvantage?

How many of our schools are funded at or above the 100 per cent level to which they are entitled? And if this is not the case, what percentage of the SRS has actually been achieved across our government schools?

And how many of our non-government schools are funded at or above the level of government funding to which they are entitled?

**CHAIR** - I think that's probably enough for the minister to respond to in one question.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - There's a disjunction between what public schools and private schools are receiving. When you compare the level of socio-economic disadvantage of schools, it's stark in terms of how much funding the private schools and the public schools are receiving.

**Mr WILLIE** - There's additional funding for them in the Budget too.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There is additional funding in the Budget. In fact, it goes up quite significantly in the Budget in the out year, 2025 26, doesn't it?

**CHAIR** - I think the minister has a bit of an understanding of what the member is seeking.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There are a range of things in this so I will start at the top.

In December 2018, Tasmania signed the National School Reform Agreement and a bilateral agreement which committed the state and the Commonwealth to progressively increasing our funding against the nominal SRS. For the state, our commitment is to build our funding up to 75 per cent of the SRS by 2027. And we are on track to do that. We are putting more state money in every year as our part of that bargain, as is the Commonwealth. We are ahead of many other states in our percentage of the SRS that we're contributing.

We have a new federal government now. Prior to the election, they talked about a pathway to 100 per cent of the SRS being achieved. I have written to my federal counterpart expressing our interest in getting into that conversation as soon as possible. Our view would be more federal funding for Tasmanian schools sooner.

Within that funding model and the growth that we're investing in year on year inside Tasmania for government schools - these figures and percentages all apply to government schools; independent schools is a separate deal -we apply the Fairer Funding Model within Tasmania, which then ensures that funding is applied to priorities across our system but also according to need within our system. I might ask Mr Bullard if he wants to follow up on later parts of your question around what happens once that money is in Tasmania.

**Mr BULLARD** - I think your other question may have been about funding for non-government schools.

**Mr VALENTINE** - How many of our non-government schools are funded at or above the level of government funding to which they are entitled?

**Mr BULLARD** - At the moment the state Government commitment is to fund 20 per cent of the total funding envelope for the Catholic and Independent system. You will see that there is an additional \$3.9 million in 2022-23, with \$19.4 million across the forward Estimates to meet that commitment. We are actually continuing with a stage transition to bring that down to 20 per cent. Due to conditions made by previous governments, we were running above. We therefore fund them lower than indexation.

By next year we will have brought that back to the 20 per cent share that we are obliged to spend under the bilateral funding agreement.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - The reason those questions are asked, there is a particular example here, if I can run through the example.

**CHAIR** - Can we make it fairly sharp?

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's a complex -

**CHAIR** - I know but we have people down the other end of the table.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am happy for you to come back to me.

**CHAIR** - No, I think we need to finish this so we that we can get other questions asked and if we have more time we will come back to some of those longer questions.

**Mr VALENTINE** - If we look at the most recent data published on the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority's My School website with reference to two high schools in the Mersey electorate:

St Brendan Shaw College, a Catholic year 7-12 with an index of community socio-economic advantage (ICSEA) value of \$1011 and combined government funding of \$18 693 a student. Latrobe High School, a public year 7-12 school with an ICSEA value of \$938 and combined government funding of \$16 759 a student. This is in terms of the national average ICSEA value of \$1000 - we have a non-government school in the top 50 per cent of advantage that is receiving considerably more government funding per student than a government school that is in the bottom 20 per cent of advantage.

How is the funding provision calculated for these two schools on the basis of a nationally consistent needs-based funding model? And what are the reasons for the apparent disparity?

**CHAIR** - I guess the question is, is the minister aware that's the situation?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask Mr Salter if he can assist with the answer to that.

**Mr SALTER** - In terms of the data you are referring to, there is an extrapolation process in terms of how that funding is then applied to schools because there is direct funding that schools have and there is funding across the system. So, an example you referred to earlier, the school health nurses, which then you have to do calculations to apply it to the individual school. It's probably pertinent to know that in terms of how the calculations are undertaken.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The other question here is how will this be addressed in regard to this state Budget and the bilateral National School Reform Agreement signed four years ago, in 2018.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Without deeper knowledge of that particular case -

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's pretty clear that the socio-economic disadvantage is quite different and it's pretty clear that one school is receiving roughly \$1800 more per student than the other and yet its less disadvantaged. It just does not seem reasonable.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know if this is an artefact of that correcting to our 20 per cent target that Mr Bullard referred to previously, but he's got some more information for us.

**Mr BULLARD** - We're only in control of our state government component. St Brendan Shaw is being funded 80 per cent by the Commonwealth and 20 per cent by the state. In terms of the state government funding and acknowledging that gap, we are growing to close that gap. Government schools were at an average of 4.14 per cent and state funding for non-government schools was only growing at an average of 3.2 per cent. Over time, if we continued on that trajectory, we would close that gap. The second part to note is the point that you've made, which is about the way the funding model is currently set up so that there is a longer trajectory for state government schools to reach 100 per cent than there is for non-government schools. As the minister has said, he's written to the new federal minister and asked for early engagement on that 5 per cent gap that exists. The other pertinent point to note is that the bilateral agreement is up for negotiation next year and so we'll certainly be having those discussions in that forum. At the moment, we are in a funding model which was agreed in 2018 and we've stuck to that.

**CHAIR** - Is the member fine if I come back to him?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Minister, we know that the quality learning experiences for children in their early years has a positive impact on their education and whole-of-life outcomes. Could you outline the key initiatives that this Government is supporting in the early learning years?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, Ms Howlett, for your question. First, I take the opportunity to extend my thanks and recognition to the early-years workforce - the entire workforce including education and care sectors - for their tireless, incredibly important work supporting our youngest Tasmanians and their families. You're right, that's where we need to get it right, to set them up to learn for life. Within our Department of Education, we continue to build safe and inclusive learning environments, creating the right conditions for learning and wellbeing so we can deliver high-quality evidence-based programs to support our young children and their families. We support our families by providing access to a range of quality early learning opportunities, including the Great Start website for families; Child and Family Learning Centres; Launching into Learning, which includes some guest star performances by people like the secretary of the department and the minister; the kindergartens -

**CHAIR** - I haven't been asked yet.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Obviously - there's one. I'll write that down. Thank you, that fills a gap.

Learning in Families Together; Libraries Tasmania - can you sing?

**CHAIR** - No.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Singing helps. Tim can sing. He's very good at it.

**CHAIR** - I can read.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - Libraries Tasmania; Rock and Rhyme storytime programs - there's another opening; Working Together - supporting early learning.

The department's Education and Care Unit supports early childhood education and care providers by regulation and compliance with legislation, quality assessment through the national quality standard, provision of grants to support continuous improvement in service quality, professional learning support and staff education, and collaboration and partnerships to support children, including successful transitions to school. Currently, there are 12 Child and Family Learning Centres operating across Tasmania, with six new centres in the design and build phase. Increasing to 18 Child and Family Learning Centres means that we're increasing access to place-based services that support the health and wellbeing of children and their families, pregnancy to age five. In 2021, the Tasmanian Government committed new funding to provide additional specialist services in Child and Family Learning Centres from the beginning of 2022. These services are providing young children and their families with free access to speech and language pathologists, school psychologists and social workers.

The Early Childhood Intervention Service continues to provide high-quality evidence-informed support to families with children who have developmental delays or disabilities from birth to four years of age.

The B4 Early Years Coalition continues to connect people and organisations from across the Tasmanian community who are committed to supporting children - pregnancy to age four - and their families. B4 supports long-term cultural change that will benefit all Tasmanians.

We are continuing to invest in the early years and our Government remains committed to building on and embedding key strategies that ensure our youngest children have the best possible start in life.

I thank you again for your question.

**CHAIR** - Ms Armitage, and the minister will know this question because you ask it regularly.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I do, but before I go to that question, I would like to ask a question regarding something I read in the *Mercury* this morning.

**CHAIR** - It would have to be right.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It is right. It is about a young girl called Olivia Earl, aged 10, who had emergency training at school. That emergency training certainly helped her mother survive when she had to call 000. It was mentioned in that article about the training she had at school and how that really was of assistance I don't know the school she went to - I can't get the picture up big enough to read the printing on her top whether it was a public or a private school - but do our schools teach such things? I can remember years ago, they used to have firemen come who would teach them to drop and roll and things like that for safety. Do we have in our schools' emergency training? This little 10-year-old girl learnt what to do when she was faced with an emergency. She knew to ring 000, she gave them the gate code, told them about her mum and was able to advise the ambulance officers until they arrived.



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**Mr JAENSCH** - Was it doing CPR or something like that?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I don't believe she did CPR but it was emergency training on what to do - first responding when something happens. She knew how to go about calling, what to do, what procedures were in place. I wondered whether we do teach that in our schools because it seems very important.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Absolutely, they are important life skills, aren't they?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr BULLARD** - There is a range of safety programs. We don't endorse one particular program but, in every context, there are programs based around keeping yourself safe and what to do in an emergency, as the minister said. That can be applied to water safety; certainly fire safety is popular in terms of many schools and the firemen coming and talking about fire safety planning et cetera. There would be some that did basic first aid, but there isn't a universal requirement that that occurs.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It is not a universal requirement but, minister, do you think it would be worth looking at something? I am just reading here, it said what she did. She knew to check her mum's breathing, to roll her on her side, to make sure that she put a pillow under her head and a blanket on her feet. She had learnt some basic skills. Would you not consider it would be worthwhile in our schools?

I understand we have the curriculum of reading, writing and arithmetic, but something like this for young children could hold them in good stead - it certainly has for this little girl.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't disagree that those skills are valuable skills for our kids. We provide our schools, our principals and the teams in our schools with considerable latitude. There are lots of things that they are offered and that are brought to them, asking for time in their day and in their school year. They have a high degree of autonomy about how they juggle those and manage them in their school community. Yes, I would agree that valuable life skills like that are something we should seek to make available, or at least as an option for all of our schools to be able to fit in.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Minister, would you advise or at least pursue that matter with the schools?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will certainly get some more advice on it from the department about what we do offer now, what we could and how we allow the schools to reflect the needs and interests of their students and their school communities because there is so much stuff being pushed on them to do in our schools and we need to get that balance right.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I appreciate that, but this is something that is useful for everyone. It is certainly not across suburbs or demographics.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I will go to my normal question now. On page 66, minister, I noticed the Year 7 to 12 implementation plan and the capital works just about completed, because the

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budget is down in 2022-23 to \$1.5 million and then in the forward Estimates there is no budget there. I am assuming some of this would be builds in years 11 and 12, capacity for classrooms.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can you tell me how many schools across our public high schools have taken up years 11 and 12?

**Mr BULLARD** - All of them.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Every school now?

**Mr BULLARD** - All schools are now offering that senior secondary band.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Do all schools now have capacity classroom-wise?

**Mr BULLARD** - That is what that program refers to - yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Did they have to build on or did they take other classrooms in the majority of cases?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I expect every school would be different from what it started with and what it needed to add and how they have gone about that but maybe the secretary can add some detail.

**Mr BULLARD** - It is site-by-site specific, so some schools where they were already at capacity with 7-10 have new builds; for example, Queechy was one of those with a new building. Others, such as Montrose Bay, was a refurb of an area of the school that was no longer used to accommodate contemporary years 11 and 12 learning areas. Every site is being looked at differently and audited in terms of requirements and enrolments but also the courses the school intends to provide and adjustments they made to the infrastructure accordingly.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Specialty teachers, how is that being managed? I know there has always been a problem getting speciality teachers in the schools, the private schools and the colleges. Many times we have heard in the past that sometimes people might have been trained in physical education but they're teaching science because of the lack of specialty teachers. How are you managing when all of a sudden every high school now has years 11 and 12? How are we accommodating specialty teachers in such important subjects?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask the secretary to respond.

**Mr BULLARD** - There are multiple ways in which we ensure that there are quality teachers in the 11 and 12 space. The most simplistic of those is that you recruit someone who can teach that subject. Probably what is proving more effective is the regional partnerships. Every college is now in a regional collective of schools that have extended to years 11 and 12 and they share their resources and expertise across that region through shared enrolments. That might be students physically moving from the 7 to 10 site to the college for part of their enrolment, but also really effective is the out-teaching, using technology and blended learning to ensure that students can receive high-quality education.

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I was reminded of the effectiveness of this recently when I was contacted by the principal of Mountain Heights. They have a student who is taking Maths Methods 3 from Hellyer College and that is being done for the cost of a headset and an additional screen and also some mentoring of staff on the ground at Mountain Heights to make sure that student is well supported.

One option involves moving to a site or having a teacher, in the middle there is the blended learning and the out-teaching and at the other end is our Virtual Learning Tasmania which is offered through the eSchool so it is online years 11 and 12 and you can enrol up to 50 per cent of your full-time enrolment in this virtual school. It has proved to be an effective way that students, especially in really remote areas, can engage in quality teaching from the VLT.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You mentioned recruiting. Obviously that is a sensible option if there are teachers available, but do we have the necessary teachers coming out of the system to recruit or where are they? Is it a bit like nurses? It is all very well to recruit. It is like here at the hospital there are spaces available and they're recruiting, but they can't get the people to fill the positions, so are there the people when you are recruiting to actually fill the positions?

**Mr BULLARD** - Every year we run a large recruitment drive and a recruitment centre. We haven't had issues to date of having high-quality applicants applying for positions, and they have been promoted as rural and remote-only jobs so people come into that knowing their first placement will be in a rural or remote area. We have also used other strategies other as Teach For Australia, and you might be aware they are individuals who already have a degree in an area of speciality, it might be science or engineering or pure maths, and they are placed in schools at the same time as they undertake a Master of Education, and that has been an effective strategy in our rural and remote areas to get really high-quality teachers.

So certainly the pipeline, as we see it at the moment, is not an issue and the recruitment centres are being well subscribed to. I think one thing that we want to ensure, and that we are working with the University of Tasmania on, is that the initial teacher education offering the university provides ensures that every single person graduating is a graduate that we would want in our system. At the moment there is still a disconnect and we are exploring that with UTAS about people who graduate, and then who we pick up. We do not pick up 100 per cent.

What we want to do is get that strike rate up with UTAS so that not only do the people have the skills and knowledge that we expect to see, but we are also measuring those preservice graduates against dispositions, and that is one area that we really want to work on UTAS on. How do you build the dispositions in an individual to make sure that they are going to be the most effective and appropriate teacher in our system?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are we taking teachers from interstate and overseas?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, we'll take them from anywhere.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I understand that, but do they have the necessary qualifications when they arrive? Are they up to the same standard that we want in Tasmania?

**Mr BULLARD** - We are seeing an increase in interstate applications and they are measured against our assessment standards before they can enter our system. We have run a

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large nationwide Teach, Learn, Live in Tasmania campaign and that has been effective in getting those interstate applications up. One of the benefits of COVID-19 has been people wanting to move out of the large cities and come to somewhere that has a better lifestyle, so we have seen the applications go up.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So do we have a waiting list or do we have positions not filled at this time? Could I have that on notice, the number of positions that are unfilled?

**Mr BULLARD** - Certainly, but as you would appreciate, with 10 500 staff and about 5300 of those as teachers, there is constant entry and exit out of our system. What we try to do through the assessment centre is not only identify those people we want to recruit permanently but also identify people who might need a little bit more development fixed term, and we run that as a waiting list so through the course of the year we can go back to those people.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - My last question in this area, if you could also take on notice as well, is about the numbers for the last three years of the uptake in years 11 and 12 in our high schools, just to see how it is trending and whether people are continuing to stay on it at our local high schools? As the Chair has mentioned, I have a concern with extension of 11 and 12 in city schools where there is a college within two or three kilometres. I think that is to the detriment of the college, so it would be interesting to see. If you have got it, if you want to table it, or I am happy to take it on notice.

**CHAIR** - You can table it but you can't have it incorporated into *Hansard*.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It would be good to have it incorporated into *Hansard*, wouldn't it?

**Mr BULLARD** - We can table that. Can I just make an observation on the concern around colleges? I think that, as a system, we have matured now to see those collectives as being shared responsibilities for the students in a larger catchment. I don't think the idea of a college being robbed of enrolments because young people are staying in their high school applies anymore. Working together, they can see that they can work for the benefit of students and ensure they are in the place and space, an enrolment that works best for them. I absolutely accept that traditionally, as I did, you came out of high school and went to a college. I also know that did not suit a number of young people, even though, I went to Riverside, and I only have to walk in the other direction to go to Launceston college.

We are seeing, even in those urban centres that some young people, because of a range of issues around anxiety, or having strong relationships with their teachers, or even wanting to try year 11 in a high school context to see how they go, that is benefiting the young people, which has to be the focus.

**CHAIR** - Again, we are happy to write and you can just provide us with numbers. A big document like that is not very helpful for us. We will ask in writing just for the schools and the numbers.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can we add to that the attendance rates for the extension schools and colleges for this year to date.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That would be very good, yes.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - Thank you, also the attendance rates for term one.

**Mr WILLIE** - I could not let talk about recruitment go without bringing up the workforce audit and database around skills. Probably the focus has changed from last year. I am just trying to get bodies in front of classes, let alone knowing what the workforce looks like in targeting particular skill sets. Last year, the secretary said the system was up and running and they were working with the TRP and UTAS around refining some of the qualifications side of it and they could look at the workforce and see where the recruitments were needed. Has that work now been finished and whether we can get data sets from that system?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That sounds like there is an ongoing conversation between you and the secretary.

**Mr WILLIE** - Five years I have asked this question, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am happy for the secretary to follow up, thank you.

**Mr BULLARD** - I can assure you Mr Willie I am as keen as you are to have this data available to us, so we can be making informed decisions that do not sit 12-months out. As you have said, it was an election commitment in 2018, and as you would remember, we did have an interim tool in 2019 to capture and report on this data. However, it did not do the job, to be honest. The new system solution we now have is referred to as My Career with DoE. It has been progressively configured to meet the Department of Education's requirements to capture, maintain and report on key workforce capability data. Throughout 2021, considerable progress was made to integrate My Career with DoE at DoE with existing source systems to bring together those previous incompatible datasets we talked about last year.

We now have initial data on teacher qualifications and teaching experience and is aligned to learning areas. I like this, we have got to go a bit tricky and are able to go into the subjects taught, in terms of the timetabling that schools hold and then we can make an assessment knowing that once a teacher has taught in an area for three plus years, they are really considered as being competent. We are also working with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership on the development of the Australian teacher workforce data strategy which will really give us a national picture.

Getting to is it complete? No, it still is not complete. You referred to worked with the TRB, I am pleased to say we have now entered into a MOU with the TRB. And this is going to enable the sharing of teacher qualification information. It is available for the majority of the department's teaching staff. However, there are areas where it is qualifications are not still recorded and we had to do more work. That is on those teachers that have mutual recognition, that are held, but also where teachers have gone onto doing other qualifications, after their initial qualification, they will not always provide that to the TRB. A good solution for us would be that the TRB requires that information to be updated from the teachers so they are holding a complete dataset.

That is a very collaborative process going on and we hope we should reach a solution there.

## PUBLIC

Experienced teaching in the specific learning areas, as I said is drawn from the timetabling data. The future focus is where we need to fill those gaps which do remain and this is by getting information from the employer themselves.

My career at Department of Education is obviously a backend, which will push data out to employees, but it will also have the opportunity, over the next year or two, where we will be working with the workforce to make sure that data is absolutely up to date and they are also registering their professional learning in there and we get a complete picture of the work they have undertaken.

That is a very long answer to a very short question. I want to assure you is we are still working through getting that complete dataset. It is not complete as yet, but we do have a plan of working with our staff.

**CHAIR** - For a number of years, we have asked on students that attend schools out of their catchment area. There was a concerted effort or a program put in place where students were identified they needed to go to the school in their catchment, not one of their choice.

How is that is going and has that presented any challenges? I have always been fearful, if students tend to go outside of their immediate school, it might well undermine the sustainability of a school where they could be going to. I am interested in that program, thank you? Is that clear enough?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, absolutely. Each government primary and district school has a geographic intake area, as you referred, from which it accepts enrolments. The idea is that every child can access a local school where they live.

Schools need intake areas so they can plan for expected student enrolments and ensure their facilities and staff are provided to best support learning.

Some government schools are experiencing unsustainable capacity issues, caused by an uneven distribution of enrolments across the system. That has been caused by inconsistencies in the current intake area arrangements and students enrolling in schools outside their area, in large numbers.

Reviewing intake areas every five years, is a requirement of the Education Act. A project is currently underway to support the review of high school intake areas. The project is an opportunity to set the conditions for a shift to a more equitable and evenly distributed system which works for the benefit of all of our learners.

**CHAIR** - Every five years is a long time between actually focusing on this issue, because, in the meantime, a school might become unviable while you have students not attending their local school.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, and you end up with some schools being under capacity and some over. We need to be able to respond to that.

**CHAIR** - Are there any in that situation with viability issues while they have students attending other schools.

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - Well known issue at Primrose Sands, Dodges Ferry and Dunalley and raised a lot with your office and mine.

**Mr BULLARD** - There are two points there. The first is the major review needs to be undertaken every five years, but every year. It is my role as secretary to make a determination about those schools that are at capacity. We say if you are at 85 percent enrolment, you are at capacity.

That actually stops any further consideration by that school of out of area enrolments, and basically managing the upper end, where we are putting pressure on infrastructure. We are always looking at small schools, or extra small schools and making determinations about how they can be better supported and understanding where the students may be going in the alternative.

Yes, there are schools in that category. I do not have those to hand.

**CHAIR** - Is it possible to have those provided.

**Mr BULLARD** - Are you asking for schools, extra small schools. What would you call extra small? Under ten students?

**CHAIR** - At one stage, a school with less than one hundred students, was considered no longer viable. A previous minister, and I know this one would not dare do that, but Ringarooma School have less than a hundred students, and were put on a closure list. There was almost a war, minister, and I suggest there will be war again. The minister didn't last very long, by the way. I'm always interested in that because I represent a number of those small schools. They are so important to their communities.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes, certainly. I have just been reminded that liabilities, enrolments, plus our square metreage of the school; so you have got a small building and school, it is full, so we can look at that.

**CHAIR** - There are no plans to amalgamate any schools? Recently, Avoca School has completely closed now, with some thoughts about what might happen. Fingal is also completely closed now, I understand.

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is a little bit like local government; no forced amalgamations. If you had a school community that said here is what is best for our kids, we would need to work with them on that.

**CHAIR** - Who made the decision.

**Mr BULLARD** - Avoca was in that category. The school association requested that the school close and that we put in place transport arrangements, and we worked with the school. Fingal is not closed; it is actually a campus.

**CHAIR** - I thought they had moved to St Marys.

**Mr BULLARD** - Sorry, the campus is closed, but it was not a school, it was at St Marys.

## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - The campus is closed, yes. I was going to say, I do know my communities quite well. Thank you, and Mr Willie, you have some questions around numbers, and then I will go to Mr Valentine.

**Mr JAENSCH** - If this is an appropriate time, I have an update to some information that I provided earlier. Can I get that on to the record?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - In part of a response to a question from Mr Willie, regarding professional support staff for schools - psychologists, and social workers - I informed the committee that the Budget includes \$3.8 million for professional support staff as part of our safeguarding package, and I referred to that employing eight psychologists and social workers.

I want to be clear, as per the budget papers, that is eight psychologists plus eight social workers; 16 in total.

**CHAIR** - So, eight people aren't receiving \$3.8 million - otherwise they will be retiring fairly soon.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, and it is not all in one year. This is eight psychologists and eight social workers.

**CHAIR** - You wouldn't be in private practice, would you? Thank you for that clarification. Mr Willie, then I will go to Mr Valentine, and then head back up the table.

**Mr WILLIE** - It did concern me when you first took over the portfolio, I think you made a comment that rising suspension rates was a good thing because you were keeping students and staff safe; probably without knowing that it was an indicator of disengagement.

You did take some advice and you are reviewing schools that manage this issue well and I think, in your words, you were going to try and replicate that across the system. I'm interested in how that work is going and what further support is being given to our schools on this issue. I'd also like to have the suspension data for term one of this year, for K-12, totals across grades.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm not entirely sure where you are quoting me from in terms of suspensions being a good thing,

**Mr WILLIE** - It was in *The Examiner*, I think.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's where you get your material? Ok, now we know.

**Mr WILLIE** - I read all three papers every morning.

**CHAIR** - What about *The Advocate*, don't forget them!

**Mr VALENTINE** - If it's in *The Examiner* or the *Mercury*, it's the truth!

**Mr JAENSCH** - There used to be a newspaper called *The Truth* when I was growing up.



## PUBLIC

**CHAIR** - It didn't have much about education in it, I can assure you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think that may have been in the context of bullying in our schools, and our concerted effort to drive down bullying and the significant improvements made in instances of bullying in schools. It was also about needing to ensure that our schools are safe places and that we intend to act on bullying and assaults or attacks in our schools.

Violence and harassment of any kind are not tolerated in our schools, and should not be tolerated anywhere. Our schools need to be safe places. We're committed to ensuring consistency, and preventing, responding to and reporting on bullying, including the introduction of minimum standards. To meet our commitment the department's in the process of updating the Respectful Student Behaviour Policy and Process for 2022, and refreshing and strengthening educator resources relating to bullying and respectful relationship education.

There's also been additional investment, as I expect we'll discuss further on, around trauma and trauma-informed ways of teaching. As I've learned, young people who have experienced trauma can sometimes be more vulnerable to bullying and sometimes they can be perpetrators of bullying, such are the differing range of effects of trauma on young people's lives.

In terms of suspension data, I might ask the secretary to provide the update. I'm happy for you to do that.

**Mr BULLARD** - I think you asked, Mr Willie, about are we doing additional work to understand suspensions and the answer to that is yes, we are. We've established an internal working group so that we can understand the reasons behind the increase in suspensions, and if we can see patterns in where that's occurring, or schools where that's occurring.

More importantly, we want to understand where it's not occurring. I was very fortunate the other day to be at the presentation from Sorell School where they outlined their strategies to ensure that suspensions were absolutely a last resort for those students, by flipping the narrative. Instead of having a 're-entry' meeting, having a 'why shouldn't we exit' meeting with parents, to see whether there couldn't be a joint agreement between the students, the parents and carers and the schools to ensure that student remains in school and remains safe. Like you, we are seeing increased suspensions and we are concerned about it. We are trying to understand what that pattern is. As you know, they should be a last resort. They should be only used where it is necessary to keep the student safe or the other students or teachers safe.

In terms of the data, the early work of that internal working group has shown shifts in the suspension profile, which we need to explore. Male students account for nearly 75 per cent of suspension incidents, however, the rate of increase in suspension rates for female students was more than double that of male. A lot of the additional suspensions are females. Again, they occur in relatively low SES, however, we are seeing the suspensions in higher SES schools rising at a higher rate than the lower SES schools. We are also looking at the link to parental education to see whether there's a pattern.

Moving on to the final part of your question which was about suspension rates. Do you want me to give those to you in terms of proportion?

**Mr WILLIE** - No, I'd prefer totals for each grade from K to 12, for term one.

## PUBLIC

**Mr BULLARD** - I can do them in blocks. Overall suspensions in term one 2022 were 1323, which is 2.2 per cent of students. That's on a par with the suspension rates in term one last year. Kinder to year 6 accounted for 277 students suspended, that's 0.8 per cent. Again, that accords with term one in 2021. In years 7 to 10 in term one, 2022, there were 994 students suspended, which is similar to term one last year, and that's 5.9 per cent in terms of the proportion of students. In years 11 and 12 for term one in 2022, there were 52 students suspended, that's 0.7 per cent. That's lower than the 1.1 per cent that was reported in term one of last year.

**Mr WILLIE** - I am happy for you take this on notice, because the department has provided K-12 by grade in the past, so I'm happy for the department to -

**Mr BULLARD** - That is available for last year and the key dataset, but not available yet until the key dataset is provided.

**Mr WILLIE** - Which I will ask when the census is finished. I have some attendance rates here for first term for schools - I won't name the schools - but there are some concerning areas here where schools have attendance rates in the 60s - low 60s in some instances. One particular school here was at 86 per cent the previous year and down to 62 per cent this year. Obviously, COVID-19 has had an impact but I am interested in how this data is recorded. If a student or a parent notifies that the student has COVID-19, that's an explained absence. Does that go into this data?

**Mr BULLARD** - This data is showing all absences both explained and unauthorised so it is the real figure for students not at school.

**Mr WILLIE** - As a follow-up, I asked this in the Legislative Council - I am happy to wait for it there - the attendance data for each grade across the system. In previous years, you have had a campaign, Anything Can Happen, which was about improving attendance rates. COVID-19 has changed a lot of that, but I am interested in the impact that, if any, given the external factors?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The impact of the previous campaigns?

**CHAIR** - I have four more questions at least to be asked before morning tea so we need to really get focused on our responses.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask the secretary to comment on the effectiveness of previous year's campaigns but you would be aware of a campaign that has been run this year in the lead-up to commencement of Term Two.

**Mr WILLIE** - The Don't Cross the Line one?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, the Getting Back to School, which was focused on bringing awareness in people's minds at the end of the school break period that whilst there had been good reasons why, and encouragement for, anyone with symptoms or who was protecting maybe vulnerable people at home to be cautious about attending school and reaching out and accessing learning from supports that are available.

## PUBLIC

Going into Term Two it's time to refocus on getting back to face-to-face learning, because that's where our kids need to be. That's where education works best, so we have been undertaking advertising on TV, radio and social regarding that message in an attempt to get people out of their COVID-19 mode of school -

**CHAIR** – Get them out of their trackies and back into their uniforms.

**Mr JAENSCH** – That's one aspect of it, but also to reassure people that schools are safe places for them to come to, and that the normal requirements for children to be at school do apply still. Some gentle messaging there with the reassurance that our schools are safe places for kids but also the reasons for not attending are reducing. By law, our kids need to be in our schools and learning so that's another campaign that's been running.

If Mr Bullard has any data regarding last year's campaigns, or previous campaigns.

**Mr BULLARD** - The previous campaign Anything Can Happen was actually about staying at school until Year 12, which in terms of retention you can see there is a lift and that is about changing that community narrative that Year 12 is the year you finish school.

The minister has spoken to the new campaign in promoting the importance of school. The attendance rates that you quote are concerning and the suspension working group that I spoke to earlier is also looking at attendance and unpacking the data to understand what the driver may be for those students not turning up.

We do know that COVID-19 has played a part and we also know that after a period of illness and absence greater than five days that it does sometimes take some learners considerable effort to return to school for a range of reasons. Part of this is recognising that it is something that the department and schools need to do in partnership with parents and carers. We cannot do it by ourselves.

We can certainly provide encouragement and support and schools know that that is what they need to do. Sometimes we can provide a stronger message. It is important to note that it is only this week that we turned the alerts back on - oh, that was last week - that we turned the alerts back on that run the attendance letters for parents and provide a stronger message. We were very empathetic to the views of parents and absolutely put energy and effort in Term One into alternative learning and learning at home. Now it is time to come back so that is a stronger message. We have multiple strategies, but really it does need to be focused on community understanding of the importance of school, agency of students to get themselves there and really strong partnerships.

**Ms HOWLETT** - I have a follow-on from Josh's question.

**Mr WILLIE** - I have two quick questions.

**CHAIR** - See, they are eager as -

**Mr JAENSCH** - So many seagulls, so few chips.

**Members laughing**

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - The other side to this - and obviously COVID-19 has had an impact - what is the current number of relief teachers in that relief teaching pool? Yesterday you were asked a question about teachers who have been stood down by the education system on full-pay working in the Catholic and private sector. Have you had time to seek advice on that question and is that occurring?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The first question had to do with the pool of relief teachers. The latest advice that I bring to mind is that the available pool is over 2000 suitably qualified and willing to participate.

**Mr WILLIE** - Has that been audited?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask the secretary to go to how that number is established. I also point to Term One, and I am advised there were more than 1000 relief teachers from the pool available.

**Mr BULLARD** - I think that is individuals who have been used, is that right Kane?

**CHAIR** - Somebody quickly give me the answer.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will go with the secretary.

**Mr BULLARD** - So, unique relief teachers, that is individuals who have been retained, 781 relief teachers have been retained and 911 part-time staff have been retained - as you know, sometimes they are part-time and they work the rest of the week as relief. That is 1692 individuals who have been employed for relief in Term One of 2022.

**Mr WILLIE** - Some of them have limited capacity obviously because they are engaged through the week.

**Mr BULLARD** - That is right. Just very quickly, it is important that that is one of multiple strategies that we are deploying, recognising that there is additional pressure on schools because of COVID-19 absences. We monitor very closely, by school, the number of absences. We have released staff in corporate areas with teaching qualifications to go and provide relief.

We meet with principals every single week online to seek their feedback around how they are going with COVID-19. Operations in Learning Services, as you would be aware, in the north-west, north and south are absolutely working hard to ensure that schools are staffed as best they can.

**Mr WILLIE** - Are you monitoring collapsed classes in schools and how disruptive that is, as an indicator of -

**CHAIR** - I hope they are not physically collapsed.

**Mr WILLIE** - No, it where the school can't find enough staff on the day so they have to combine classes, which is quite disruptive to student learning.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't have data with me to refer to on that but I will ask if the department does.

**Mr WILLIE** - I don't want to forget the really important question from yesterday, whether you have had advice on that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I haven't had specific advice on that but I have asked the department to look into it.

**Mr WILLIE** - Perhaps you could take this on notice for me. What is the number of teachers who have been stood down because of their vaccination status on full pay?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That wasn't the first question you asked before that.

**Mr WILLIE** - No. I said I didn't want to forget that question, so we will come back to it.

**CHAIR** - In the Catholic education system.

**Ms BURGESS** - They don't have a vaccination policy.

**Mr WILLIE** - That's right, so there are potentially teachers receiving full pay from the department and working in the other systems.

**CHAIR** - How would that work?

**Mr BULLARD** - The Catholic sector doesn't have a vaccination policy like the State Service.

**CHAIR** - And they get paid twice?

**Mr WILLIE** - We'll get to that in a minute.

**CHAIR** - Right. Is somebody answering a question or do we move on?

**Ms BURGESS** - That is the question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Where we left it, Chair, was that I was asking the department whether they had advice regarding collapsed classes?

**Mr BULLARD** - My advice is that we don't allow collapsed classes except in exceptional circumstances. In terms of managing staffing in schools, we have an escalation matrix from level 1 to level 4. At the lower levels, which we would track as normal absences in pre-COVID times, we absolutely require the school to be managing that within their internal staffing and making adjustments. Once we get to level 3, which is where you might look at more serious concerns in schools, our schools are required to seek the support of the regional HR team, who will deploy staff from other schools or staff from the relief register or the central relief pool to ensure the schools continue to operate. It should only be in exceptional circumstances that classes are collapsed because there is a range of supports that they should be accessing.

## PUBLIC

**Mr WILLIE** - Anecdotally, I do hear it happening quite a lot.

**CHAIR** - You might like to inform the minister through direct channel to his office if there are specifics. I need to go elsewhere.

**Mr WILLIE** - Could we come back to the teacher vaccination question, the number of teachers who have been stood down by the department on full pay who are working in the Catholic and independent sector?

**Mr JAENSCH** - My advice is that there are currently 22 teaching staff who have not complied with the lawful and reasonable direction to confirm their vaccination status. These staff have been suspended from duties with pay and are subject to a code of conduct investigation under Employment Direction No. 5. The majority of these investigations are expected to conclude this month. As to the question or suggestion regarding those staff members having paid employment elsewhere, I don't have specific advice on that but I have asked the department to look into that.

**Mr BULLARD** - I don't know that we would be able to get that advice, Mr Willie, because that would be asking us to seek advice from the Catholic Education Office about particular teachers and that is personal information.

**Mr WILLIE** - I guess the question for you, minister, is does it concern you that you have staff on full pay still employed with the department, working in other systems?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't think the community would expect that was appropriate. I share a general concern with that but I don't know if that is happening. I have asked for some more advice on it because I don't know what restrictions there are or should be on people who are subject to those stand-down on pay arrangements.

**Mr WILLIE** - I guess there is procedural fairness, which is important.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, we have a question from Ms Armitage, then Ms Howlett, one from Mr Valentine and then we are going to have a cup of tea. That depends on how quickly the answers are provided and how quick the questions are.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I will try to be quick, Chair. My first question is a supplementary to the truancy one, and I guess it's a bit hard with truancy when people are studying at home. Obviously that has been impacted with the truancy, because I was going to ask about how many conciliatory conferences have been held with truants. Have we still been doing that during the COVID-19 period?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We know that during COVID-19 in particular a large proportion of our student body at different times needed to be at home because they were positives or close contacts in various forms. We have also asked students to stay at home if they are symptomatic, even if they are testing negative. We have extended our virtual learning centre supports to them so that they can continue to participate in learning from home and we have made available things like additional electronic devices and internet connectivity to enable them to do that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But it has made it easier for truants.

## PUBLIC

**Mr JAENSCH** - That has always been an arrangement that is short-term, due to illness et cetera, so that there can be some continuity. For those who have longer-term reasons, medical or otherwise, for needing to be learning from home, that is where eSchool kicks in, and there is a process of enrolment formally in that so that we can build their learning through that as a longer-term arrangement. I don't have firm numbers on this, but as we are moving out of COVID-19 and as the case numbers come down, there are fewer and fewer reasons for young people to be absent from school. We believe that there is a factor there where learning from home or being absent from school was a bit more normal and acceptable than previously, but now is the time we need to turn that around again. The secretary referred to the turning back on of those notifications that your child is meant to be at school. That is now occurring again and letters have started going out to families regarding that. In terms of the conferencing that you mentioned, I would ask if Mr Bullard has a comment on that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Whether that has been occurring over the last couple of years or whether it went into a little bit of a hiatus with COVID-19.

**Mr BULLARD** - I think Ms O'Donnell - who magically has just appeared in the room - the Education Registrar, would be best placed to answer that question, as she runs the conferences.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, welcome. My question was with regard to truancy - and I wasn't sure whether it was impacted by COVID-19 and people studying from home - whether there were still conciliatory conferences occurring and if they were, how many days does someone have to miss to have a conference, and how many conferences have been held? I do appreciate with COVID-19 things have changed somewhat to the previous norm.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - Yes, we have still been holding conferences. We had some requests for conferences from the end of last year which were held over because we don't run conferences during the school holidays. Last year we held 234 conferences and this year up until the end of March we had held 14 conferences. We have also carried out 40 what we call reconvenes, where there had been an initial conference and things may have started to improve but then fallen off track a little bit, so we bring the parties back and have a further conference to get things back on track again. We see it as very iterative process, so we just keep going until we see the improvement that we need and keep supporting people through it.

In terms of what schools need to do, they need to follow the department's attendance processes, so when the letters are being sent out, send the letters out. While the letters haven't been sent out, we have worked with schools and with principals who know their students and know their families, and if they come to us and say, 'We think there's an issue here and we'd like to bring this to conference', then we have a conversation with them and if we agree it is ready to come to conference then we do that. In making that decision, we talk about what is being done so far. Has the school exhausted all of its ability to get traction with the family? Or, often with external agencies, we have more ability to involve other people in conferences to try and get assistance for families than schools might have. Whether that is transport, housing, support for parents, those kinds of things, we can bring those people to the table and work out who needs to do what to work together to get the child back to school.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Is it 15 days?

## PUBLIC

**Ms O'DONNELL** - That would be the minimum, usually, except in circumstances where something has clearly happened. We say to schools as part of our policy, if you have a child who has been attending really well and then all of a sudden, they stop coming, it is clear that something has happened. There's been an incident or perhaps something has happened at home, then we try and get those in really quickly so we can deal with that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am looking after the teachers here. How many teachers would be on workers compensation at this time? How many are subjects to stress, obviously, struggling with extra work load, burnout, the difficulties with COVID-19? That is also teacher's aides, because they are in the classrooms and they are obviously coping with a lot of extra stress. Just numbers.

**Mr JAENSCH** - For the period 1 April 2021 - 31 March 2022, there was a small increase in the number of claims - an increase of 22, from 413 from the previous year to 435 for the current year. Both of those years are lower than 2020 in which there were 497 claims. 435 claims for 2022 - workers compensation and stress related.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are these all stress related?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Workers compensation and stress related.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Or including stress related?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Are the both in the same bracket? We will get correction if needed.

Four per cent of total staff workers comp related to stress. Those number you have are they what you wanted?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I have got those, but are they all related to stress? How many of those are related to stress?

**Mr JAENSCH** - In terms of workers compensation related to stress. 84 stress claims were made out of a total of 435 total claims for the year ending 31 March 2022.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We do not want to identify people and that is always a difficulty. But do we have any over 12 months, over two years or many? I am conscious we do not identify people.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I do not think we have that data here.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I will take that on notice to know the length of time some people are on, because it impacts on relief teachers when there coming back and there are a lot of aspects to it.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Minister, in its seventh year, the Department of Education today released its key data report in line with the Tasmanian Government's open data policy as part of our commitment to transparency and openness. Can you please provide an update on the key data report?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I can. This is what it looks like and I have been using it.



**CHAIR** - I do hope the minister is not going to read it all.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We will table a copy for everyone. I will make a couple of brief remarks about it. Through the release of the report our Government recognises quality data is critical to improving education outcomes for Tasmanian students and ensuring funding is distributed according to student needs. It is also pivotal to ensuring programs and policies are developed and implemented appropriately to support the learning requirements of our students, the public and through the parliament to be informed scrutiny of delivery.

We are delivery this report in line with our Government's open data policy as part of our commitment to transparency and openness. Highlights from this year's data include, overall funding provided to schools continues to increase year on year with an additional \$14.8 million provided to schools this year.

Funding to support students with disability equated to \$137.2 million, up by nearly \$10 million from 2021 including \$39.3 million for support services and \$97.9 million targeted towards students, 95 per cent of students reported they had good relationships and support from their teachers. The number of professional support FTE increased following a 2021-22 election commitment with an additional 8.6 FTE psychologists, 7.4 FTE social workers and 6.2 FTE speech pathologists employed.

An increase in the number of school nurses following the 2021-22 election commitment to employ an additional 11.4 full time grade 4 nurses and additional grade 6 critical nurse educator. The report includes a data from across the department including student enrolments, attendance, funding allocations, staff and student wellbeing rates, assistance schemes, educator workforce and Libraries Tasmania. I encourage you to use it frequently throughout the year and it is a good basis for preparations for discussions like those we are having today. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Is that the information the member was seeking?

**Ms HOWLETT** - That is great and I will look through this in more detail this evening.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Public school funding across four years is up by 16.5 per cent across the years. Private non-government school grants in key deliverables is up 83.4 per cent. Overall public funding to private/non-government schools across the four years is 21.3 per cent. In the key deliverables in the Budget, page 55, non-government schools general education grants increased by 83.4 per cent across the Budget, as I just said. If you take 2022-23 as the base year it increases by 73.54 per cent between 2024-25 and 2025-26, that is a huge jump in that particular year.

What are the projected enrolment increases that justify these increases in public funding to private schools and how do they compare to projections for public schools? You can see it 4251 up to 7098, 2025-2026 and that is on the non-government schools, general education grants line, page 55. There has got to be a reason why there is such a huge jump \$2.847 million and if you 2022-23 as the 100 per cent line it is a 73.54 per cent jump in one year. What are the projected enrolment increases that justify these increases in public funding?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Salter is able to shed some light on that one for you, Mr Valentine.

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

**CHAIR** - Let's hope it's a spotlight.

**Mr SALTER** - In looking at those figures in the key deliverables table you really need to take those and then look at the overall net increases in the grants and subsidies line. Whilst that shows a big increase for that year, there is also a base element in that because it is the forward Estimate year that has come in. The figures that the secretary referred to earlier in terms of showing greater growth for the state funding to public schools, the non-government schools over the forward Estimates are a better comparison of where state funding is going.

When you look at the totals against the output lines they also include Australian Government funding which would be influencing the increase for non-government schools.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Together, it's still a five per cent gap - 16.5 per cent as compared with 21.3 per cent. When these allocations are made, do they look at enrolment numbers for those private schools and it's decided on that if there's going to be a significant increase you get a per student funding, I presume? How does it work?

**Mr SALTER** - For the non-government funding, yes, in accordance with the bilateral National School Reform Agreement it is driven by enrolments and other factors such as the number of students -

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's the 2018 agreement?

**Mr SALTER** - Yes. The number of students with disability, SRS measures, et cetera. For the non-government schools, it does reflect the estimate of those movements over the forward Estimates.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. It's an interesting circumstance. I will let others delve deeper into that.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much and certainly when you get the pressure put on, everyone delivers.

The time being 11.15 a.m. I will suspend the broadcast, invite everyone to have a cup of tea and we shall recommence before 11.30 a.m. so would everyone be back ready before 11.30 a.m. so that we're ready to go.

**The committee suspended from 11.12 a.m. to 11.38 a.m.**

**CHAIR** - I welcome you back and I believe that there is a clarification that Mr Salter has in regard to a question from Mr Valentine.

**Mr SALTER** - Mr Valentine was referring to the increases in the key deliverables table for non-government. Those figures flow into table 3.10 on page 72 of the budget chapter in the line non-government schools state funded general education grants.

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When you look at that table you can see that from 2024-25 to 2025-26 it moves from \$95.6 million to \$98.5 million, a net movement of \$2.9 million. The figures in the key deliverables table for that last out year includes a correction element as well as then the growth element, so net movement being \$2.9 million, not the \$7 million.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. Minister, I want to alert you that we will need to be at Children's Services 1.1 by 12.15 p.m. so we have quite a few line items to get through to get there, so let's get started. Members, more questions in 1.1 because we do need to go to 1.2.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, since the 2019 Budget, the reasonable adjustments model progressed from \$4 million to \$8 million in 2021 then to \$14 million recurrent over the forward Estimates. Is this still the case, because that line item has gone now? I know you said it was \$137 million for disability education as a total. But I'm interested in what is allocated to the reasonable adjustments model each year over the forward Estimates.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Funding to support students with disability in 2022 equates to \$137.2 million, an increase of nearly \$10 million from 2021. This includes \$39.3 million for support services and \$97.9 million targeted to individual students. This data is available in the key data set document that we tabled recently. An additional 433 FTE students have been funded for disability support in 2022 compared to 2021. And since the new model was implemented in 2020, it is supporting an additional 2663 students, as well as supporting inclusive teaching practice more broadly.

In terms of the budget papers and forward allocations, I understand there's a needs-based model. What we do is we report what was spent in the year we've just had, rather than have an allocation based on classifications of disability for the year ahead. But I'd ask the secretary to qualify that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Do you index that?

**Mr BULLARD** - It is indexed and that is correct, minister. In one respect it's retrospective in terms of what we report. I think the point that you go to is a good one, in terms of 'are you holding funding into the forward Estimates to ensure that that allocation remains?' and the answer to that is yes. So, in our operational budget planning, we hold aside that capacity for the adjustments.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, you talked about the additional students in the reasonable adjustments model since its inception. I'm interested in how many students are anticipated to be funded next year, 2023, if the department knows that yet and what increase that may be on the current year?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I anticipate that's a similar answer to the provision for funding for the year ahead because it would be based on assessments of need. I'd asked the secretary to qualify again.

**Mr BULLARD** - Yes, that's correct. So, we haven't made that assessment for 2023 as yet. What we can see in the data, though, is that year on year those numbers have grown.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can we get those growth in numbers since its inception?

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**Mr BULLARD** - I think we provided those to the lower House committee. Do you want me to read those in?

**Mr WILLIE** - No, if that's the case, I'll just go back and look at the *Hansard*.

The other question I've got in this area is the number of students in the different categories, so supplementary, substantial and extensive. And the number of students that may not be requiring additional funding but a differentiation in teaching practice?

**Mr BULLARD** - For 2022, Mr Willie?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, please.

**Mr BULLARD** - In terms of the number of students - this is FTE, so it's not actual students if that makes sense - being funded by different levels of adjustment in 2022: extensive 668.25; in the substantial, 2309.45; in the supplementary, 2311.53; and in the quality differentiated teaching practice, which I think goes to the general adjustments made in a class, 1651.73. The total students who are receiving funding is 5289.23.

**Mr WILLIE** - I know it's not a deficit model, minister, but it might be interesting to understand the number of students who are funded in the model without a formal disability diagnosis, if you have that data available. In the current year is fine.

**Mr BULLARD** - The model does not rely on a formal diagnosis at all. That is not what you need to get into the model. It is that your learning adjustments have been moderated against the model and an assessment made about the level of funding required to fund the adjustments you require.

**Mr WILLIE** - So, perhaps a better question would be the number of students in the system that have a disability diagnosis?

**Mr BULLARD** - I don't know that we would have that in a data set that we could provide. It is obviously a factor in the moderation process that feeds into that. But we would need to go back and interrogate every learning plan.

**Mr WILLIE** - Right.

The last question - I don't think you have this data but I will ask it anyway - is how many students with a disability were suspended in the last 12 months?

**Mr BULLARD** - Just to clarify, your question is the number of students suspended in 2021 from K to year 12 who received disability funding? It is 2820.

**Mr WILLIE** - Wow.

**Mr BULLARD** - Wow. That is 5.1 per cent as a proportion of students.

**Mr WILLIE** - Wow, I am quite shocked by that. That is a lot of students with a disability being suspended, minister. Is that a sign that the adjustment model is not catering for these students' needs? That is a lot of students being suspended.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. I would be happy for the secretary or deputy secretaries to provide more context to that.

**Mr BULLARD** - Just seeking some clarity on that data, it might be better if we take it on notice because I have provided two figures that don't make sense to me and I imagine won't make sense to you regarding the number of students by number, but then with the proportion of students being 5.1 per cent. I would just appreciate the opportunity to clarify that table and provide the correct information to the committee.

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

**Mr WILLIE** - Ok, so, total number and proportion of students with a disability.

**CHAIR** - Supplementary, Ms Armitage?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The figures seem quite high. What would encompass a disability? Would it be something like attention deficit disorder? Would that be classed as a disability or not? I am just wondering the range.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would be happy for the secretary to comment if he can.

**Mr BULLARD** - In terms of the number of students with a disability?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, what is classed as a disability? Would something like attention deficit disorder, which seems to be fairly common these days, be classed as a disability or not?

**Mr BULLARD** - Just to go back one step, the starting point is not that you are diagnosed with a disability; it's that you display characteristics that require adjustments to be put in place. So, it is a much broader model than we may have used to in the past, where you may have come and said, 'Look, my child has Down syndrome', and that got a figure of, say, \$12 000.

That is where the moderation is really important - it does capture a broad range of children and young people because it is looking at areas where they are not able to fully engage in learning. It may be attention deficit disorder if that is displaying in ways that are having a large impact on your ability to learn. One thing that has always stuck with me to help me understand this is, again, taking the Down syndrome example. That would, as I said, have received a dollar amount, no matter whether you were at the extreme end of your disability or you are very high-functioning. Now you would be assessed on the basis on what you can do and therefore the dollar amount would vary.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, I appreciate the explanation.

**Mr JAENSCH** - For clarification, to ensure we're going to bring data regarding students with disabilities.

**CHAIR** - You are going to confirm those figures and the percentage that was provided to Mr Willie.

**Mr WILLIE** - If possible, broken down by grade, K to 12.

**Mr JAENSCH** - In whatever detail we can, yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - A quick supplementary on that issue. How often is the adjustments process reviewed for individual students?

**Mr BULLARD** - The moderation should be undertaken every 12 months for individual students. I will put a caveat in there though that, in the way that was undertaken, we did make adjustments during COVID-19 to ensure that there was not too much pressure on schools so we did rollover the moderation that had existed in the year previous. We were also very diligent to pick up new students that had been identified.

In a perfect world where we are running at capacity, every 12 months there is a moderation process.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I have this question that has been handed to me. The Latrobe municipality, like many others, has seen extraordinary levels of residential development and new subdivisions at a rate that appears to have accelerated in the last few years, from which Latrobe High School has been seeing student numbers grow on average by approximately 50 students a year to a record high of 630 at the end of last term, with the further potential of 800-plus students within the next five years.

Given its recent redevelopment and expansion, it is now at or over capacity. When might schools such as Latrobe High and others with surging enrolments expect further capital investment to cope with the growth in student numbers?

**CHAIR** - I think you are a bit early; we are not at capital investment yet.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is about assessment. How is this assessed and what strategies are in place to ensure that our thriving public schools, their students and staff are not disadvantaged by capacity issues with their ongoing success?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I visited Latrobe High School recently.

**CHAIR** - It is on your doorstep, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is magnificent. I have seen it before and after its most recent makeover and reinvestment to be a very successful school and, you are right, in a growing area. However, we know that we need to keep investing in our capital investment for our school infrastructure and our learning spaces. That is why there is \$250 million over the Budget and forward Estimates and added to that, a further \$19.8 million committed in 2026-27 as well.

There is a continuous program of assessing need and prioritising of investment. I wonder if the secretary might care to comment further on that capacity issue as a driver of prioritisation and capital updates.

**Mr BULLARD** - Certainly in very general terms, if we look at two major drivers for prioritisation of capital upgrades, one is the matter you have alluded to and that is in terms of capacity and the other is in terms of condition.

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We've described the out-of-area enrolments and our very close eye on schools reaching capacity. That is driving forward planning and prioritisation. We want avoid a situation where we go off a cliff because we haven't properly invested in infrastructure.

The other, condition data, just for information, is that we now have an asset management system which does have data on every single site and it is allowing us to make much better decisions about where we need to make investment before things go wrong on particular sites.

**Mr VALENTINE** - My final question is: in note 2 of table 3.1 - that is the key deliverables - on page 55, there are lots of lines with note 4 and four or five lines with note 2. Note 2 says, 'This is a new initiative funded from within the department's existing resources.' Presumably, this means no new money has been allocated for any of these initiatives. Do I take that as a given?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No. Don't take that as a given. This was a subject that was exercised a fair bit yesterday and over the last week or so. It includes - as you'll see in that same table - the reference to the safeguarding initiative that we have announced most recently.

In the table and the footnote that Treasury has included there, what they are calling 'existing resources' includes growth funding under the bilateral funding agreement that we were discussing earlier, whereby each year our state and federal governments are investing more to get up to our target funding towards the SRS, and each year the state government makes decisions about how to allocate that new money that is coming online over the forward Estimates period and what priorities that is allocated to.

Whilst from a Treasury accounting perspective they see that as known future new money and therefore an existing known resource - that is what footnote two applies to - it is in fact new money that includes state and federal additional commitments that are being applied to these new initiatives.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Nothing is taking a dive so these things can go ahead.

**Mr WILLIE** - It is already budgeted money from the agreement.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is money that we are budgeted to provide and receive, and the budget table shows how it is going to be applied.

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

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, can you update the committee on the provision of period products in schools and how that is rolled out. How much is being spent on that initiative and how do schools distribute them? Are there vending machines or do students have to ask their teachers or go to the office?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We had this question yesterday. There is a figure in the papers which will someone will bring to us regarding the spending. There is a total allocation per annum of \$120 000 as I understand it, there is funding provided to schools to spend on the procurement and distribution of those products.

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We ask schools to ensure that is done in the most appropriate ways for that school, for those students and their needs, whether that be vending machines or direct distribution through a school nurse or other staff.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Under 1.2 Early Learning you have already answered a significant part of this area at an earlier time. We often wander into the other areas. My question is about the construction of the six new Child and Family Learning Centres; it says in our notes East Tamar, Waratah and Wynyard. Where are the other four? What is the future plan for those, or is that the end of that project? I don't think I found any further funding.

**Mr JAENSCH** - They are included in the \$250 million capital provision in the Budget and forward Estimates. The six new Child and Family Learning Centres will be operational by 2024; the first of the two new ones will open in the East Tamar in November this year followed by Wynyard in February 2023. I will just double check the balance of the new centres:

East Tamar, Waratah, Wynyard, Glenorchy, Kingborough, West Ulverstone and Sorell. This will bring the total number of Child and Family Learning Centres to 18.

**CHAIR** - Is that the end of the program or are there more to come?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That is the next stage of the program.

**CHAIR** - Once those other four are completed is that the end of the establishing and building -

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's the end of the current program and extension, however, as before I would not rule out that there will never be any others or different types of things if they are found to meet needs in the future.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, only 71 per cent of Tasmanian early learning and childcare services meet the National Quality Standards - I know you have a regulatory role, but what is the Tasmanian Government doing to lift the quality across the sector? It does concern the Tasmanian Government because we want kids coming to school prepared for learning and play-based learning we know is evidence based.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Indeed. I will ask the secretary to respond, please.

**Mr BULLARD** - There are a couple of things to note - one is that, yes, we are the regulator and we could go around with clipboards and be ticking boxes and putting crosses, but actually we have put significant work in, especially through COVID-19 and since, to look at how we provide to raise the standard of all early learning education and care centres in Tasmania. That is being done through providing funding support through grants, but also professional learning support and education. During COVID-19 a very successful model of providing advice to centres about the strategies in place around COVID-19.

We know the workforce issues are impacting on the sector and we are actively working and advocating with the Commonwealth and other states and territories through the National Workforce Strategy to address those. Finally, looking at The Working Together for 3 Year Olds program which we are rolling out across centres, using that as a way to support education



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and care environments to support lower SES children and young people is modelling ways of working on that to build quality pedagogy and practice in those centres.

**Mr WILLIE** - The Working Together for 3 Year Olds program - are we at a place now where we can remove the cap and cater for all children or are there children still being turned away? I have spoken to some providers who advised they could take on extra children. Why wouldn't we be opening that up? We are in the fourth year. We should be extending that to every Tasmanian child who is eligible. Why do we still have a cap in place on the Working Together initiative?

**Mr BULLARD** - When we had the pilot independently evaluated, the evaluator found the program as it was being rolled had integrity and benefit, but we needed to ensure we did it at a pace that we could sustain the quality in the centres. We have not rested on our laurels, in terms of places; we have kept that at 120 places. We have changed a major parameter which is the number of hours that provision is provided. I understand that has gone up to 900 plus hours now for every individual child. That was on really strong feedback from both the sector and parents that there be a higher dose of early learning, thank you to Jenny. We have gone from 400 to 960 hours over 50 weeks. That is approximately two full days per week, up from two half days. It was parent and service feedback regarding the need to provide greater flexibility for families to access the service and support more opportunities for children to build lasting relationships with their peers and educators.

It's important to note we are providing a range of other supports that go into support those children and young people such as the Early Childhood Intervention Service. That is proving to really be beneficial in building much stronger partnerships with the sector.

We are moving now towards a model we can bring to scale. One thing we need to keep an eye on is the willingness of the sector to take on more places. It is a balancing act between quality, our services that wish to take on the program and ensuring we are providing a number of places we can support. Certainly, there are plans in place to ramp that up.

**Mr WILLIE** - A follow up question from that minister is are you collecting data on how many children are turned away in the past 12 months from that program?

**Mr BULLARD** - I will ask the department if we have that data. We could look at that. I do not think we do have it.

**Mr WILLIE** - Will you take that on notice?

**Mr BULLARD** - We will take that on notice. I do not know that we hold that data.

**Mr WILLIE** - Anecdotally minister, there are some bigger providers in this sector that are telling me they could take more places so it might be something you want to look at, because the original commitment was to not have a cap.

**CHAIR** - I suggest that is a lunch meeting between the member and the minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am happy to take that advice.

## **2.1 Libraries**

**Mr BULLARD** - For Libraries we will bring Liz Jack and Sue McKerracher to the table. Liz Jack is currently the Executive Director of Safeguarding. She is coming in her capacity as Executive Director of Libraries which she was for part of the financial year being examined and I would like to welcome Sue McKerracher who is the current incumbent of the Executive Director, Libraries.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you to Mrs Burgess who is leaving the table.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Minister, with the high number of e-library loans and resources being used now, obviously after the library closures, do you consider Libraries Tasmania adequately funded and resourced to handle continued high use of online borrowing?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for the question.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I notice there is a slight increase in libraries and the continuation of contemporary library resources.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There is and that is the number I was reaching for.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am wondering about the difference.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We are continuing that investment because our libraries, because they are like oxygen for our communities, a source of information and services and social interaction for young and old people throughout their lives and I am a huge supporter. \$750 000 per annum continuing to ensure we can keep and improve the Tasmania library user experience in line with other states and with what Tasmanians need. I would be happy to ask Ms McKerracher to provide further comment.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - I would say e-resources now are 25 per cent of our loans and that compares with 10 per cent in 2017-18. It is clear that the Tasmania people do want e-resources. We were delighted to see the state Government had awarded us for contemporary library resources funding for the next three years and in the Budget.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It obviously makes the demands different on libraries and you feel you are in a good position to cope with the changes?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - Yes, we are happy with that, thank you. What is happening with e-books is that we are required now to offer the same title in multiple formats. We have the e-audio book, the e-book and the hard copy. It has simply added to our cost but thankfully, the state government has come to the table with this extra funding.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The percentage of people with libraries obviously is very high. Can you explain how the client satisfaction is surveyed? I have never received a survey and how is that assessed?

**CHAIR** - No complaints?

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**Mr JAENSCH** - I do not have direct line of sight as to how that is surveyed. How do we measure? I am happy for Sue or Liz?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - What factors typically contribute to client dissatisfaction and how are they being addressed?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - We do ask people who use our service whether they're satisfied with it, so it's very much a survey of people who are the 20 per cent members and the 41 per cent of people who use the services. The things we ask include if they found what they were looking for the first time, and obviously if people do not find it the first time but they find it the second or third time, then that's a little less satisfactory than the original. I think anything above 90 per cent is an extraordinary satisfaction level and I don't think we need to be too concerned about that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Sorry, just a clarification - what percentage are surveyed?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - We survey all of our library users.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I have never received and I am a library user, so there you go.

**Mr JAENSCH** - How did you find your experience of using the library?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, I'm very unhappy that my car doesn't have a CD-DVD player because I used to get audiobooks, so I'm most disappointed about that, but apart from that, the library was great.

I want to ask about volunteers. Pre-COVID-19 obviously the numbers were greater but can you give me an indication of where we are with volunteers or how many we may have lost? When the library wasn't open and the volunteers weren't needed sometimes they didn't come back and I appreciate that older volunteers possibly didn't want to be in the library at that time when it was open with the possibility of COVID-19. Can I get an indication of pre-COVID-19 numbers and now current volunteer numbers and how that may have affected the library?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - In March 2022 we had 626 volunteers volunteering 32 325 hours in that nine-month period. In 2021 we had 716, so we have seen a decline but in December we appointed a statewide volunteer coordinator to work with our libraries really to support our volunteers, because we couldn't do what we do without them, and they have done an exceptional job during this period. As you say, many of them are more vulnerable to COVID-19 and they have kept going with us, so we are very grateful for that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'm not sure whether we are allowed to ask questions about age, but do you find that the majority of volunteers are of an older age, which obviously impacted more greatly?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - The majority of our volunteers would be of an older age so that did have an impact, but I am pleased to say that by comparison with other states and territories there is actually a good age spread across our volunteers and they're doing things like the home library service, they're literacy tutors, they're transcribing some of our archive documents. As I said, they are things we could not do without our volunteers.

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**Ms ARMITAGE** - There are no fines now for late books, so I just wonder whether you have found there has been an impact on resources to the library and also the number of lost books now. If people don't have to return a book within a certain time I guess it's more likely that they may misplace the book and forget all about it and then they get a letter, I am assuming, to pay the replacement cost of the book, so have lost books gone up?

**Ms MCKERRACHER** - No. I did enquire about this specifically. In May 2022 we wrote off \$56 000 which was the value of the books -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Fines?

**Ms MCKERRACHER** - That wasn't the fines, that was the lost books, and in 2018 that figure was \$157 000 but that was made up of a lot of very small fines of \$1 or \$2 which were never recoverable, so actually it's been much more efficient for us as a system, and it means that people who have got those very small fines who have put off returning now can come back and borrow books without that reticence you have when you know you owe money.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I hope these hearings are not being broadcast in our libraries at the moment with all the people who are there with their arms full of books.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'm sure they would be very pleased they have an armful of books.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I am sure they are pleased with their armful of books, we just want them to bring them back, please.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It was only the fines that were written off, not the cost of the books. Some of the lost books would be quite a considerable cost, I would imagine, so do they go to MPES as many fines do from government?

**Ms MCKERRACHER** - We're finding that we're not getting a significant increase in lost books. The lost books are written off over three years, so some of the books that we are writing off are quite old and wouldn't have a high value. Others of course are newer and would. The cost of writing off those books versus the value of having people coming into our libraries feeling free to borrow, in a state where literacy is an issue we would rather the books were out there being used and being read.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I understand, I am just a little confused. We are writing off the fines but we are sending out accounts to the people who don't return books. If they do not return a book, after a certain period that can get written off, but when those people come back, that will be on their record and they will be asked to pay for the book? I'm just trying to understand this because it is a considerable cost for some of your books. It is not like your \$1 or \$2 fine.

**Ms MCKERRACHER** - I am going to take advice on that.

**CHAIR** - At this rate, we will be into the lunch hour. Just letting you know.

**Ms JACK** - We don't have fines for late returns, so people can be late. If a book is lost or damaged we do ask that person to replace the book. Usually that is by payment for the value of the book, as it was lost, so it may not be that you're paying \$50 for a book anymore, because it has been on the shelves for four or five years and it is only worth \$5. I don't have the numbers

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and we would have to take it on notice. There are times when someone might, for whatever reason, refuse to pay, but generally people are really happy to replace the book.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Particularly if they've lost the book and can't remember where it is.

**Ms JACK** - They will come in feeling quite bad that they can't find it and we will give them an extended period of time because they know it's somewhere at home, perhaps the kids have shoved it under a bed with half their toys. We're just not being so strict, and as Ms McKerracher said, it is really much more important to encourage people to use books and read them than pay if they have been lost or damaged.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's good. Minister, do we know how many book lockers we have now and where they are?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't know but I would very happy for Ms McKerracher to inform all of us if she has that information.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - I'm afraid to say that I don't either. I apologise for that, and I am going to turn to Liz.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And Liz, there's nobody else for you to refer to down that end of the table.

Members laughing.

**Ms JACK** - I could ask the secretary. His children might have used it. There is only one book locker that has been put in place at this stage. That was put in at one of our child and family centres, but we have found that it has not been as successful as we would have liked, largely because it is a huge amount of staff time to go and replace the books in the lockers each time they are used. Libraries Tasmania is now looking at other options to provide pop-up libraries -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Street libraries.

**Ms JACK** - maybe street libraries, maybe mobile libraries. There are lots of other opportunities, and at the time we put the one book locker into the Child and Family Centre it was to be as a pilot because we thought it might encourage more use and might be a valuable way of getting more people reading. It has had limited success, but we don't believe it is justified to put in other places.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - What prompted the establishment of the staff wellbeing reference group and what outcomes has it had so far?

**Ms JACK** - There is no Libraries Tasmania staff wellbeing reference group that I am aware of, and I don't believe Ms McKerracher would be aware.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Interesting. I'll have to chase that up with the person who raised it with me, and I will put it on notice on the parliamentary floor, if that is case. My last question, Chair. The DoE 2021 annual report indicates that approximately 20.3 per cent of Tasmanians are active library members; and 63.7 per cent of those are women. Are there any plans to

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increase the numbers of Tasmanians accessing the library and encouraging more males? I don't know what you can do, but I'm sure these some good brains here.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We want to ensure that all members of our community see the library as a place for them. One of the things I've seen has been with some of our newer library developments like the library at Devonport, which is co-located in the Paranaple Centre with Service Tasmania, a café, the council offices as well as the entertainment and function precinct. There's always something on in that space. There's a whole lot of ways of tricking people to find themselves in a library when they didn't necessarily intend to be there, and they see things that are going on there that hook them and get them in.

That's an approach that we're seeing in our newer library settings and maybe it's going to be adopted in more or them. I will ask Ms McKerracher to answer.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Maybe get little boys more engaged.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - We do want to get more boys and men reading. We're going to run a campaign called Tasmania Reads Week, from 5-11 March next year. We're going to approach sporting heroes and male role models to try and get more men visibly reading, because it's so encouraging for young boys. There is a risk at that period where people transition from primary to senior school, where boys drop off from reading more than girls do.

May I just do a supplementary. I've just had a text to tell me that the survey of our library users is promoted through the member newsletter and it's an opt-in survey. It's available to all, and please join us.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There's a couple of takers up this end of the table.

**CHAIR** - We know that men do like biographies about themselves, so that might work.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you, Chair. The 26Ten program was really valuable. I remember being at a dinner and handing somebody the menu and saying, 'here you go'. And he said to me, 'no, I can't read it'. That blew me away a bit because they were managing a significant business at the time, with 15 employees. He was open and honest with me. I was able to point him to 26Ten.

Is that still going, and what are the results? I don't see anything in the papers here, unless I'm overlooking it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I have some detail I can provide you and then I'd welcome any top up from people closer to it.

When you talk about the impact of 26Ten. A midpoint review of the 26Ten strategy in 2020 evaluated progress through statistics and stories, qualitative and quantitative data and independent research. It found that for every dollar invested in the 26Ten strategy by Government, industry, community groups and individuals, at least \$5.20 in benefits flowed to the Tasmanian community. About 90 per cent of adult learner's surveyed, reported that literacy support had improved their quality of life and opportunities for employment and education. Awareness of the challenge of adult literacy has been gradually increasing over time from 21 per cent of the population in 2015 to 28 per cent in 2020.

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26Ten employer grants have consistently supported business to boost skills in their organisations and improve efficiency and wellbeing. Many of these have led to cultural change within organisations, with ongoing support provided to employees to keep improving their reading, writing and maths.

This links back to our earlier conversations about the early years of education, as well - the ability for parents and extended family members to be able to participate in reading with their kids, and improving their vocabulary . That again sows the seeds for the literacy of those youngest people who are critically important as well.

Is there anyone who wants to add some more detail for Mr Valentine?

**CHAIR** - Is Mr Valentine comfortable with what he received?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Willie, you had a question in libraries?

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. Last year, there was talk about the Hobart Library and the ageing infrastructure there, but breaking that project or potential development up into smaller spaces. I think the entrance was mentioned as a space that could be more welcoming. Has that work progressed at all?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - It is progressing now. Our plan is to have an \$800 000 development of the ground floor. We're seeing it as a much more welcoming entrance for people who want you use not only the public library on the first floor but also the State Library and archives reference room on the second. We're very excited by the design opportunities; we are looking at what has happened around Australia and internationally to pick some of the best design features, and we should have the building work underway and - according to our current schedule - completed by April next year.

**Mr WILLIE** - That \$800 000 is in the budget somewhere? If you are going to have that completed by next year.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - We have that available, yes.

**CHAIR** - Mr Valentine has a supplementary on his question, and so does Ms Armitage, and then we will be leaving this area.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With respect to the numbers accessing that service in the last 12 months, in the last two years, by year?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - There were 67 literacy awareness workshops in 2021; in 2020 there were 35; and in 2019 there were 88.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Armitage.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - This is very unfortunate, actually, that I need to advise you of something in your annual report about libraries.

**CHAIR** - This is for you, Minister.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - For everyone at the table, I think. The 2021 DoE Annual Report, under libraries notes that a staff wellbeing reference group was established; though it's very disappointing that no-one knows about it. Its role is:

to support the wellbeing of staff across all aspects of work and participation in the organisation, and coordinate existing efforts, support of staff to continue their journey to increase knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture through the core cultural learning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australia Foundation Course, delivered a professional development package to staff during library and information week to explore the role of libraries in media and information literacy.

You actually do have a staff wellbeing reference group, and it's unfortunate that no-one within libraries knows about it. It was in your annual report.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The questions had detail to hand, but clearly our library team are very efficient at identifying a need, coming up with a strategy, and fulfilling it.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - I must apologise; I've had an email from one of my team saying "how could you not know that, Sue?"

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They will get a gold star.

**Ms McKERRACHER** - Can I let you know that all of the elements that you have spoken about are very well known across the piece. What I was not aware of, and I do apologise, is that it was through the work of the staff reference group.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Does Libraries Tasmania conduct any staff satisfaction surveys?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'll ask the secretary to respond.

**Mr BULLARD** - The staff wellbeing in libraries fits under a broader umbrella. Wellbeing is one of our goals in our strategic plan. In 2021 we released a Department of Education staff wellbeing framework which sets out a three-year roadmap for actions to promote and sustain staff wellbeing. A staff wellbeing and inclusion plan guides the delivery of five key wellbeing actions across the department, and the reference group in libraries is a subset of that work. It continues to recognise the critical role of leaders right across the agency, to ensure that they can thrive and flourish.

One of the subsets of that work is looking at how we can capture meaningful data about staff wellbeing. As you will be aware at the moment, we are subject to participating in the Tasmanian State Service survey that asks very general questions in this area. We want to look at a way that we can gather very meaningful information to judge how well we are tracking against our staff wellbeing framework. We want to put in place a baseline, first of all, to measure staff wellbeing to look at continuous improvement going forward.



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The brief answer to your question is there is not an internal measure at the moment in train.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Have you had any feedback though from staff that Libraries Tasmania needs to address? Is there any currently that needs to be addressed?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - We have directors who work with our teams and bring any issues raised to the director's table, but as the secretary says, we are waiting for that to come through.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - There are no outstanding issues at the moment?

**Ms McKERRACHER** - Not that I am aware of.

### 3.1 Education Regulation

**CHAIR** - We have already touched on this this morning at an earlier time but my questions are regarding home education students. Given that a lot of people were home educating through COVID-19, have people decided to continue on that journey and officially enrolled in home education? Can I have the numbers and a comparison to last year, thank you?

**Mr BULLARD** - Home education is under the education registrar, Katharine O'Donnell.

**CHAIR** - Welcome back.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Katharine.

**CHAIR** - I am looking for the numbers of home education students.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Home education registrations in Tasmania have increased by 25 per cent since the beginning of November 2021. As at 31 March this year there were 1467 students registered from 853 families in Tasmania who home educate. The Office of the Education Registrar experienced an unprecedented increase in new applications from November 2021 to March 2022. Overall, since 1 November 2021 there have been a total of 286 new applications.

**CHAIR** - Obviously, that is an increased workload and are the resources adequate to cover? There is a lot of work working with families when they decide to be home educators.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Maybe we can get some -

**Mr BULLARD** - The resourcing question is probably one for the registrar. I will make a point though in terms of the agency and the registrar's interaction on home education, recognising we believe the steep increase in enrolments or seeking accreditation is due to COVID-19 concerns, has been we do not release students from our enrolment like we would normally when they seek preliminary registration to home educate. Traditionally a parent would signal to a school they wish to move to home education. They would be de-enrolled from our system and passed to Ms O'Donnell. Because we believe the parents may in fact change their mind as we move through the course of this year, we are keeping them enrolled and we are keeping in contact with -

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**CHAIR** - There is a dual enrolment then?

**Mr BULLARD** - It is not a dual enrolment because they are not attending our school. They are still being contacted and supported by our school to ensure home education is the right path.

**CHAIR** - Adequate resources, given the increase?

**Ms O'DONNELL** - I am working closely with the department at the moment in relation -

**CHAIR** - In other words, you are trying to get more resources? Nice way of putting it. Well done.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - It is quite fluid in terms of as Mr Bullard said, families moving in and out of home education. Certainly, at the moment there has been a huge increase in demand. We have strategies in place to manage at the moment but yes, there has been a huge demand. That is why we have been having discussions about potentially the need for some short-term assistance with that. We are having those ongoing discussions about how to manage that.

**CHAIR** - A very polite way of putting it that you have been trying to get more resources. That is one for you, minister, or the secretary. Both. In the past, and this is before the reform that had been put and passed by the parliament, there were some issues around the assessment standards and issuing of results. I want to be assured all those matters have been covered and there are no issues there? I certainly have not had any.

**Mr WILLIE** - In addition to that, if there were any results reissued, how many ATARs, how many VET results and were any TCE certificates needing to be issued after the original date?

**Mr BULLARD** - Minister, Ms Pereira has come to the table who is the Acting Executive Officer of TASC.

**Ms PEREIRA** - In 2021, we had quite a successful result release year. We released the results on time and at the earliest time that we ever have, on the results day. All students had received their results if they had registered an email with us by 9:30 on the results day last year. In relation to re-issuing of any results, those were re-issued if a student had requested an inspection. That process is under taken in the start of January. Specifically, in relation to any re-released because of VET results, sometimes a VET provider nationally has not sent through results for a student. I understand of one particular student who was reissued because the VET provider's data sent to us did not match our student records. That was one particular student who successfully made our top 100, in our results last year.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can we have the figures though? If there were any ATARs re-issued, VET results -

**Ms PEREIRA** - Not any ATARs re-issued.

**Mr WILLIE** - None? That is good to hear.

**Ms PEREIRA** - Some are reissued after our inspection process.

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**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, so how many?

**Ms PEREIRA** - I will get those numbers for you now. We had 162 results queries, so they are the sorts of inquiries come through. We had 72 students inspect their written exams. We had Round 1 in January and Round 2 in February. Nineteen ATAR changes were made after those inspections.

**Mr WILLIE** - And the VET results? You said you know of one, is there any more?

**Ms PEREIRA** - Not that I am aware of, no.

**Mr WILLIE** - That one result, did that impact the TCE at all? Were any TCEs issued after the original release?

**Ms PEREIRA** - Yes. That was resolved in the week that results were released and that student identified that their VET results had not come through at all, so they were reissued.

**Mr WILLIE** - So, it was just the one TCE that was -

**Ms PEREIRA** - That I am aware of, yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, sorry, I think it was 19 ATAR results?

**Ms PEREIRA** - Nineteen ATARs changed as a result of the inspections.

**Mr WILLIE** - Did that impact university applications at all in those 19 cases?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am unaware of the timing and the relation between the two processes, can you -

**Ms PEREIRA** - I would not know, if they did impact.

**CHAIR** - Just for noting, performance measures will be developed for this new output and reported in future publications, is next year's budgets

**Mr JAENSCH** - For next year.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Page 64, education regulation - there is the description of it. How do you drive that quality with the non-government sector? Can somebody explain how we do that? Is that something you do through the non-government sector itself? You have these authorities regulate and drive quality in the Tasmanian education system across all sectors, including government, Catholic, independent schools, et cetera, and it is important to understand how that happens. Does it go down to the level of, for instance, assessing whether or not schools have certain levels of expertise available in their teaching workforce? How do we make that happen?

**Mr BULLARD** - I can speak generally and then Ms O'Donnell can speak specifically.

**CHAIR** - I think we would rather have specifically.

**Mr BULLARD** - The general is the overarching education regulation environment. There are three ways that quality is driven across all sectors. Through TASC and the work that Ms Pereira undertakes, we are certifying and accrediting senior secondary to ensure that it is of a standard and quality that is comparable with the rest of Australia. That is regulated regardless of which sector you are in. The Schools Registration Board is regulating the quality and standard of teachers in all systems, regardless of sector, so they are two general regulatory oversight bodies driving quality. The third is more specific and Ms O'Donnell can speak to that, which is the Non-Government Schools Registration Board, which Ms O'Donnell's office supports.

**Ms O'DONNELL** - Under the act, particularly in the regulations, non-government schools have a series of standards they need to meet. The Non-Government Schools Registration Board, which my office assists, registers those schools for no more than five years. Some are less and some are five years. Each time they come around for a re-registration they are required to submit written documentation as to how they meet those standards. They are then visited by a registration officer -

**Mr VALENTINE** - One of your officers?

**Ms O'DONNELL** - One of my officers, who is usually an experienced ex-principal, either government or non-government. Two of them go together and they run a full audit of the school against each of those standards. Those standards include things like ratios, number of teachers to students, that teachers are generally teaching in areas in which they have expertise, that the school is financially viable, that they have child-safe practices, there are a number of steps, that they are implementing the correct curriculum, that they have appropriate assessment and reporting processes. There are about 10 or 11 standards they assess.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Basically, what the public schools have to deal with as well?

**Ms O'DONNELL** - That's right. The public schools have a similar process. This is just one in legislation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is fine. I have had two children go through the non-government school sector and I have been very pleased with their education. I am not trying to focus and attack them. I just wanted to know what the process was.

**CHAIR** - We are going to try and encompass grants and subsidies, and capital investment all in together, if I might. Thank you very much to those who have just left the table.

## **Grants and Subsidies**

### **Capital Investment Program**

**CHAIR** - I will start with Montello Primary School. This is a reannounced \$7.1 million and it has been suggested by someone who knows that it will not address the issues at the school. The school is no longer fit for purpose. You will possibly know that and it will only be a bandaid and will not address the issues related to accessibility. Putting in a lift will not address the real issues and will potentially create another bullies' haven. And we have heard at various times about the disgusting toilet block.

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What is being proposed through the development of the master plan for the whole site? And is the plan complete? If so, is a copy available?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I visit Montello Primary School from time to time and I would like to commend the school on the innovative way they use the existing and aged facilities they have there, including turning a bitumen netball court into a school garden area complete with a frog pond, which is terrific and was done with the support of members of the community as well as the school itself. They have done it in such a way that, as they upgrade their school, they can also move their school garden around.

**CHAIR** - I missed off some part of that question that talked about how they are an empowered community.

**Mr JAENSCH** - They are a great community and they are doing a great job.

**CHAIR** - I am more interested in the fit for purpose.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We are progressing our 2020-21 election commitment for a \$7.1 million redevelopment of the Montello Primary School. Extensive community, staff and student consultation was undertaken to seek feedback on priorities for redevelopment. Architects have been appointed and are working on the development of the master plan for the school with the project working group, which includes the principal and a representative from the school association. It is expected that a master plan for the redevelopment will be developed in the coming months. This will be shared with the school and local community for further feedback.

The Tasmanian construction industry is currently buoyant and there is strong competition for labour and building materials. We are yet to see how this might require adjustment to the overall project budget and plans. But we are very keenly looking at a master plan with a range of options in it to address the needs of that school.

**CHAIR** - So, time frame? Can I provide some feedback around the time frame?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Coming months is what I have here for the completion of the master plan.

**CHAIR** - We have however many years of coming months. Nothing more concrete than that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Montello is a priority. We have made a commitment to it. It is close to where I live and I will go and visit regularly to make sure they are making progress.

**CHAIR** - My second question around capital investment, on page 65 there is a significant list. I might add that there is nothing in the electorate of McIntyre on that significant list, but that is another matter for another day.

But I noticed that when I do the sums, when it says estimated costs and the allocated funds, and particularly ones that have no future allocated funds, do not add up to the cost of the project, the estimated cost. Does that mean that there will just be the additional monies funded?

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For example, the revitalising of the Cosgrove High School: the budget only adds up to \$19 million but the cost is estimated at \$20 million. K-12 Sorell School, there is no forward Estimates and the money is \$3.5 million short. I could go on. I am just interested in how those other figures are supposed to add up to the estimated cost, and what happens with the shortfall?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Madame Chair. As I am advised, on that list there will be projects that have already had money spent in years that aren't shown in the columns. So, there might have been work undertaken in 2021-22. There is a total project cost but it is not showing the value of work allocated or done in the years prior to those being reported. There might also be projects where there is a year of expenditure that sits out the other end.

**CHAIR** - The couple I referred to don't have any figures sitting out on the forward Estimates. So, can I suggest that next year there be the previous year's column, if the money has been spent, so that at least they add up to the estimated cost? I think that would be useful.

**Mr JAENSCH** - For example, with Cosgrove, the suggestion there is that there is money that has already been spent which is not showing up in the Budget and forward Estimates window to make up the total.

**CHAIR** - Right, so, that is the explanation around all of those that don't add up?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Could I suggest that rather than adding another column, we footnote where there is an out year or pre-year expenditure already, just to make sure that they can add up. I understand that need. I am happy to take that advice.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Regarding the Hadspen area, obviously there is no school at Hadspen. I am just wondering whether the Government has any thoughts. Back in 2011, there was a Hadspen outline development plan and one of the wish lists of that time was for a school and a recreation area. Hadspen is a growing area. If I look back to 2016, at that time there were 305 children between 0 and 9. There were 452 children between 0 and 14. It is certainly a lot of young children and that was back in 2016. A lot of development has been happening. I guess it is similar, in some ways, to Legana, a little behind in population, but it is proceeding with development. Is there any possibility of a school at Hadspen to take pressure off some of the Launceston schools that are near capacity that would be taking the children now?

**CHAIR** - With a wing called the Armitage Wing?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No, I don't think so, Chair. The road is quite dangerous. You are probably aware of the Meander Valley Highway coming in, particularly Beams Hollow at some of the nastier times in winter. It would be much better if the children could stay in Hadspen. It would be easier for parents, I am sure.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We touched on this a bit earlier in the context of that discussion about out-of-area enrolments and schools being at capacity or vice versa.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - For capital investment, it is a good spot for a Hadspen school.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is a demand-based analysis that is undertaken, taking into account demographic projections et cetera. I might ask the secretary if he can speak to that.

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**Mr BULLARD** - When we looked at the intake areas, we made adjustments to the boundaries to ensure that we were driving enrolments into schools with capacity. I don't believe this area came up as an area for which there wasn't capacity in surrounding schools. I understand that there might be an argument around having a more local school, but I don't know that we have any evidence that -

**CHAIR** - Can that be confirmed for the member?

**Mr BULLARD** - We could confirm that, yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I noticed Summerdale Primary School at the moment has 516 students. I am not sure what the capacity would be, but that seems quite a lot of students at a primary school.

**Mr BULLARD** - That school is a very large primary school and 600 is not a large number of enrolments for the square metreage of that school. It has had a lot more enrolments in the past.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You are using your key data though, which is very good to see.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Absolutely, it was so opportune that the member asked you that question and we received this in time. Thank you so much, but I will ask further questions in the future.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, I have been back through the annual reports and, since coming to government in 2014, there has been an underspend in education infrastructure by nearly \$100 million. This year you promise to deliver \$50 million of capital upgrades. How are you tracking against that and will there be another underspend?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am advised, Mr Willie, that current projections are that expenditure will be around 80 per cent.

**Mr WILLIE** - On average, it is about \$13 million since you came to government. What is causing these consistent delays across the state? It is not one particular project; it seems to be across the state where we are seeing these delays. I can go through a whole lot of examples in a minute.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am sure you have your examples ready to go. None of us could deny that Tasmania has never had more building and construction activity underway before. Anyone who has tried to build anything - an extension to your house, let alone a new school or significant public infrastructure - is facing the fact that our building and construction sector has never been busier. Our councils are processing more development applications than ever before. There are constraints in the workforce and also in key supply chains, some of them associated with international events that we don't control at all.

They are some of the factors which contribute to delays in capital works programs but, at the same time, our continuing investment in capital - in public works in particular - is also driving continuity of demand in our economy and jobs for Tasmanians.

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We will continue to monitor our work programs and priorities to ensure that we are delivering the highest priority projects with the available resources. We accept that from time to time we will need to make adjustments, particularly when commitments have been made at points in time where cost structures have been different and availability of our workforce has been different as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - It probably explains some of the delays in recent times, but I am going back to 2014.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I have been the minister since April.

**Mr WILLIE** - Some of the projects I would like to highlight include the Brighton High School project in the 2018-19 Budget, due for completion in 2024. In this Budget, it is now saying 2025. Since that time, there has been a cost blowout of \$20 million. What was the land acquisition cost?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Supplementary to my previous response, the other thing we find with all public infrastructure, but schools in particular, is that consultation with local communities and the school community are critically important. We take that very seriously and we need to ensure that we're bringing communities with us and reflecting their expectations in our projects. Sometimes that adds more time to the process than it might for other projects of comparable value.

**Mr WILLIE** - You have to be more conservative in your commitment time frames.

**Mr JAENSCH** - With regard to the new Brighton High School, you asked for the land purchase price. I don't appear to have that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Is it finalised yet? Last year, I asked and the secretary said it was a matter for Crown Land Services. If it isn't finalised, you won't know the cost, which I find extraordinary.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We anticipate those costs are going to increase from previous estimates. We remain committed to the project and will remain engaged with Treasury for the resourcing required to deliver it.

**Mr WILLIE** - Is the land acquisition cost finalised? No, it is still in negotiation. Wow.

**Mr BULLARD** - Just a reminder, Mr Willie, that's a statutory process that's set out under the Land Acquisition Act and as you quite rightly indicated, not a matter within the department's control once it goes to the Valuer-General to negotiate.

**Mr WILLIE** - Just a couple more projects: The Sorell High School project - it's good to actually see some construction happening there. That community has been waiting a long time. I don't think it is necessarily meeting their expectations of what was originally promised either. In the 2018-19 Budget, the Sorell K-12 project was due for completion in 2020-21; in this year's Budget it's saying 2024. What is the status of that project?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I understand there has been an extensive consultation process required and undertaken to provide opportunity for community feedback on the concept masterplan and



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that staging of construction will be required, which has also impacted on the estimated completion time for that project. The project is well progressed. The contractor, Fairbrother, commenced construction on site in September 2021. My advice is that works are due to be completed in 2024.

Is there any update on that?

**Mr WILLIE** - Another one that's not in the budget papers but I get contacted about - and I am sure you do - is the South Hobart Primary School capacity constraints and the loss of its library space. I have heard of teaching occurring outdoors in the cold because there is no space. There are two kindergarten classes in one room and I think there are now classes in the hall. What is the Government's plan to address that issue? It sounds very problematic.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I raised that last year.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We discussed this also at the House of Assembly Estimates yesterday. The Government invested \$3.6 million in an upgrade at South Hobart Primary School in 2017, providing additional learning areas there and also more than \$700 000 for stormwater-related civil works in 2020-21. We recognise the need for more learning areas for the school due to unprecedented growth in the area. As an interim measure, the department is in the process of acquiring and installing two modular units on the school site which will be in place, I am advised, at the end of term 2 for extension of the learning areas. There is also a long-term master plan process underway, informed by extensive consultation with students, staff and the broader community in 2021. The master plan provides six additional general learning areas increasing the capacity from 425 to 575 students, a purpose-built library space and improved accessibility and connectivity.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Why is there a significant difference in last year's budget papers for this item 2022-23, 2023-24? It has taken a dive, probably about \$6.5 million, something like that, when you compare the two budget papers. Something has changed from last year to this for the 2023-24 year for the total capital investment for education.

Can you give us some understanding as to why that's the case? For 2023-24 you've got \$101 600 000 that's last year and for 2023-24 this year on page 66 you've got \$95 200 000, so it's taken a bit of a dive.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Salter might be able to provide an answer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It might be projects that have been dropped.

**Mr SALTER** - As we go through each annual process we look at the cash flows for each project to try to provide the most realistic estimate we've got at each updated point in time. That would reflect changes to several projects.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Does this go back to what was being said earlier about certain things being spent?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Sometimes when there's delays in the delivery of a project, what we need to do is to move out to the out years to rephrase them. I think that has been the reflection.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - There might be some that are behind the eight ball and some that are ahead of them. Is that right?

**Mr JAENCH** - That's right. So, from year to year the same raft of projects, some can accelerate and some are delayed and the columns have to shift to it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's just an adjustment issue.

**CHAIR** - Minister, we were to conclude for lunch at 1 p.m. I'm mindful that we still have Education, Children and Youth. Would you like to continue until we finish that which I would say would be no longer than 1.30 p.m. and then we come back a bit later and start on Environment and Climate Change, rather than have to bring people back after lunch?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think that's a good idea.

**CHAIR** - That would suit this committee. I trust that works for everyone.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Can I thank my secretary, deputy secretaries and staff who have persisted with the hearing so far on education.

**CHAIR** - Thank you all for the work that you do. We acknowledge that its significant and you only have to look at the number of folders and paper that comes with that. Whoever said we were going to have a paperless society, didn't know about Estimates.

I envisage that we will be no longer than 1.30 p.m. and instead of coming back at 2 p.m. we will come back at 2.30 p.m. People need a break.

### **Education, Children and Youth**

**CHAIR** - Thank you, and if you could introduce the people at the table, and as I have indicated, we have 32 minutes to do the next three-line items, plus capital investment.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you very much, and Madam Chair. I introduce to the table, Professor Mike Pervan Secretary of the Department of Communities Tasmania, Narelle Butt; and Claire Lovell. I would ask Narelle and Claire, just for the record, to read in their formal titles.

**Ms BUTT** - Acting Deputy Secretary, Children, Youth and Family Services.

**Ms LOVELL** - I am Claire Lovell, Executive Director, Children and Family Services.

**CHAIR** - Children Services, and I will invite Mr Willie to start the questions.

**Mr WILLIE** - I have a series of questions here regarding kids in active transition, so I do not know if the minister wants to take them all on notice to speed things up. I will read them out.

Do you have a current figure for the number of children in active transition? What is the longest period of time children have been in active transition? Can you confirm how many

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children have had an initial assessment by response teams and are awaiting allocation to case management? How many children subject to care and protection orders are without an allocated case worker currently? How many are allocated to a case worker, but not actively managed,? How many have been allocated to a practice leader rather than a case worker? How many children are allocated to child safety officers who are currently on leave from work or off-work due to workers compensation? How long before children are reallocated to another CSO?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. Now, you have asked for a range of statistics there, I assume that you are asking for them as at today's date. To the extent that we can provide that data as current as possible I think our best option would be to take those on notice, Mike.

However, given the range of issues that you have spoken about, I will take the opportunity to ensure that there is a good understanding of what they relate to and the process of cases being raised with our department through the advice and referral line, assessed, referred, if possible, to supports, and then passed through into the child safety system so that there is meaning to the numbers that Mr Willie is talking about.

The reforms that our department and our Government have undertaken since 2018, planned before and implemented from December 2018, regarding the Strong Families, Safe Kids redesign of our Child Safety System has radically changed the way that our system operates and makes it different to the way that other systems operate in other states that we are often compared to in things like the Report on Government Services data.

Our advice and referral line in particular is designed to ensure that we are hearing from families or people who are concerned about families or children far earlier and that we are getting them at a point when they can reach out for help and assistance rather than reporting a situation that may require a statutory intervention and a removal of a child. That has been the whole aim of the reform that we have undertaken. On the whole, it has been successful.

What we are seeing is far more families receiving help and assistance and support to be safe places for their kids before those family settings deteriorate to the point that child safety needs to be engaged. By far, the greatest proportion of the people we come across are people who need help and support to be good families and good households looking after their kids. That's what we should be aiming to do. Earlier intervention, more support to keep families being safe places for our kids.

When any case presents itself, the first assessment that is made is to whether the child is in imminent danger or at risk of harm. In any of those cases that child is seen within 24 hours. The vast majority of cases require a longer assessment of complex needs and referral to a range services and supports that may not involves the child's safety system formally at all.

What we have seen as a result of those changes is more families receiving support earlier to be safe places for their kids to grow up in, fewer young people entering the out-of-home care system, fewer children being removed from their families. That is a good result because we know that the act of removing a child from a family is deeply traumatic for that child and that family and adds to their already complex needs once they get to that level.

I am very proud of the reforms that have been undertaken by this department. The numbers that Mr Willie was asking about, active in transition, refers to cases that have been

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referred from the advice and referral line, as I understand it, into the front end of the child safety system for assessment. The context of the way those numbers have been used by critics of the Government and the Government's systems has been that that can take quite a while. It is characterised as children not being assigned appropriate supervision from our child safety system. Sometimes those time frames reflect very complex cases where a lot of assessment and assistance is required to try to resolve the issues that those families have before a statutory intervention.

Often we are asked to present numbers and asked to explain numbers and why they are good or bad or acceptable or not, inferring that the longer those time frames the worse it can be, the longer those time frames better because we are taking our time to understand a family's and a child's needs and ensuring the appropriate supports are in place.

**Mr WILLIE** - A follow up question, as of today, how many [inaudible] conversations have been allocated to practice leaders? Could I have the number of conversations that have been referred to practice leaders over the past month?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We will take that on notice, Mr Willie.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Minister, can you provide more detail on the additional money that has been provided for the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People in this year's Budget?

**CHAIR** - We haven't got there yet. That is the next line item thanks Ms Howlett. We might just hold that one until we completely get out of this area. Thank you, Mr Valentine.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you give us an update on transition to independence?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Numbers for that?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes numbers, and your activity. Capital investment is happening. I'd like an idea on how successful that is.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The Transition To Independence program provides a range of additional supports to young people, particularly those who are reaching the end of their time in out-of-home care. The supports include extending carer payments to enable and support young people to remain with their carers until the age of 21, if that is what they need.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Are we talking about fostering situations or grandparents raising grandchildren and that sort of thing?

**Mr JAENSCH** - In this case, formal placements for children on orders. They can be in foster care, out of home care or kinship care arrangements. We are talking mainly about children on formal orders not informal kinship care arrangements.

What this reflects is that some kids are ready at 18 to strike out on their own and to live independent lives. We want to ensure that they are ready and that they are supported to do it. Some kids require a little bit more care before leaving the nest.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - One of mine stayed until he was 26, but there you go.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well exactly. We're not looking at 26 just yet, but at least until 21. Just reflecting what happens in the broader community in households and in families. We're enabling the households that we support through out-of-home care to also extend that support further for young people.

There are learning incentives, regional after-care support advisors to provide direct support to young people between the ages of 18-21, particularly those who might be vulnerable. Since July 2018, 139 individual young people have taken up that option to remain with their carers longer. Foster carers, formal kinship carers and third-party guardians of young people on care and protection orders can all apply for extended carer payments to continue that support and T2I (Transition to Independence) advisor service is providing dedicated support to these most vulnerable and least resourced care leavers through three advisor positions located across the state.

**Mr VALENTINE** - So third party might be what? Kennerley and those sorts of services?

**Mr JAENSCH** - One of the foster care providers, yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you, you have given me the answer I needed.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Armitage?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you Chair. I believe the Government is looking to have accommodation throughout the state for vulnerable young people. Where are you up to with that? How many facilities are planned for these young people?

**CHAIR** - Are they the youth castles?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well there is a range of different initiatives. The ones I will speak mostly about are the ones that I have direct -

**CHAIR** - Oh you do not look after youth castles?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well I think the current version of youth castles that you may be referring to has to do with the backyard units that are being rolled out to extended -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am not referring to youth castles. I am referring to the accommodation that is being set aside, I believe, with a full-time person living in for vulnerable youth that may have come out of Ashley, that may be on the streets, that may not have somewhere to live. My understanding is they're going to be in several regions in the state. How are they proceeding?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The Tasmanian Government is committed to working with the non-government sector to improve services for young people at risk of homelessness in our community. In order to effectively progress the recommendations of the Under 16 Youth Homelessness Taskforce, a cross-sectoral homelessness working group was established in June 2020. The immediate actions associated with that taskforce's recommendations have been progressed through the working group. The working group has provided advice on potential

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collaboration opportunities to achieve better outcomes for people under 16 at risk of homelessness or experiencing it, and we have continued our commitments to provide outcomes for young people through an additional \$15.3 million of election commitments to provide \$10 million for a three-year Under 16 Lighthouse Pilot Project to assist young people under 16 who are unable to live at home, \$5.3 million for a new youth housing initiative to deliver more supported accommodation for vulnerable young people aged 16-24 who are experiencing or face homelessness.

The working group has also provided oversight on the Under 16 Lighthouse Project - in particular, the pilot early intervention residential model, which may be what you are referring to. This will focus on therapeutic trauma recovery and family restoration for unaccompanied young people under 16 at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Is there one of these, in each region or maybe more than one?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Well, there are a few different initiatives, and I am just trying to zoom in on the ones that you are looking for.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think the ones I am looking at probably accommodate eight to ten young people of mixed gender, with someone living in 24/7?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That is the one. Yep. Again, the one that I will refer to now is the one that the housing minister is responsible for delivering, but we take a particular interest in. So, \$5.3 million over four years for new youth housing initiatives, \$4.3 million to deliver modular youth housing for young people transitioning to independence from a variety of contexts, including exiting Ashley Youth Detention Centre, out of home care, or shelters.

The initiative will provide 20 modular youth homes across four sites around the state. Funding will also be provided for new youth coaches, who will provide readiness for independence and support across key life domains including education, employment, health and wellbeing, and community participation. There has also been \$1 million to provide a dispersed youth foyer initiative that will identify 10 Housing Tasmania properties suitable for conversion into three- to four-bedroom share-housing properties for young people.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes, we discussed those with the housing minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You did? Good, so you have an update on the delivery of those?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes. You did mention, and we've read it in the paper, that it is proposed that 10-13-year-olds will not be going to Ashley, so where do you propose they will go? They are not going into these other places, I assume. The accommodation we have just listed is for at-risk youth or people who have maybe come out of Ashley, but for offenders aged 10-13 that we are not going to send to Ashley, will they be under some type of home detention? You must have some idea of what you are going to do, because otherwise you would not have made the announcement.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, that is right. The answer is yes and yes. We have an idea of some of the things, but we also want to accelerate the work on those diversion and alternative sentencing and therapeutic options as well. One way to do that is to say that, in 2024, we would

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like to be able to turn off detention as an option for those young people and drive our efforts towards ensuring that, by then, we have appropriate alternatives in place.

Because it is very clear, from the evidence, while putting those very youngest of children in detention may solve someone's problem over here, it does not do any good for those kids in terms of their future engagement with the law et cetera.

It's less about an accommodation need, but certainly what we have identified, particularly for young people who might or have been ending up in Ashley - not necessarily because they've been sentenced there, but because they're on remand - we need a suitable place for them to be placed, held, supervised or otherwise. That might be another area of accommodation that we are looking at, of a different form to what we have now, not as part of our detention system, but as a place where young people can receive care and support and wraparound services. There is some crossover, but the initiative you first asked about is more about children who are at risk of homelessness.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Just one last question about education in these facilities, and obviously we have Ashley at the moment. Do you have any figures on the teaching to students turnout, what the situation is in Ashley now regarding education, an overview just to give an idea of what's happening?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Education participation in detention? In the youth justice system? I will ask the department to see what data we might have.

**Mr PERVAN** - We do not actually have the data with us. We will talk to our colleagues in education about that. Education in Ashley is delivered entirely by the Department of Education. I am aware that Education are looking at alternatives to the Ashley school in terms of online and other supports, given the range of ages of kids and young men going to Ashley, as well as their specific educational needs.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - With COVID-19 and the online, I was wondering how education was going in the justice system, if I could have that on notice.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We will get the numbers you're looking for, to the extent that we have them. I am certainly happy to take that on notice. The point that you raise is a really important one, because, as part of the development of the new Department of Education, Children and Young people, that's actually the type of interface that we need to make more seamless, so that when we have more people in our care, in out-of-home care, in our youth justice system, in detention, that education is part of their care, and should be a constant through their different phases of care - whether they come into and out of our youth justice system, for example, or different placements for accommodation. Their education should go with them and be integrated in our overall care for them.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - In the youth systems, where you have your seven, eight young people under 16, and the carer, is there a set time that they can be there? Obviously, some of them would be really quite happy there, but then all of sudden they have to go back to family but they don't have family to go back to. Is it 12 months, six months? Is that set yet - a limited time that they would be able to be in these homes when they are homeless or vulnerable, because they might continue to be vulnerable? I'm just wondering if there is a set period that they have to move out or be moved on.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - With the accommodation types that we talked about before, there's youth coaches there and other supports, particularly for those younger people, to ensure they're supported to re-engage and reunify with their family and community and other supports, and if not, to make their way through to other forms of independent-living supported accommodation and others.

**Mr WILLIE** - Could you please provide the number of staff who are subject to ED5 processes within Children and Youth Services, and how many have been stood down?

**Mr JAENSCH** - In any particular context?

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm just interested in the Children and Youth Services portfolio and given some of the things that have been in the media, I think it's a valid question.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Okay. If this is in the context of staff stood down in relation to allegations of child sexual assault- as per yesterday's hearings, I've referred to our continuous proactive disclosure of data across the public service on the DPAC website; and I've also refused to provide breakdowns by department or division or location around the state. I've also referred another Estimates committee to an undertaking that the Premier gave, to identify any further information that we're able to provide.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, this is different to yesterday's question. because I'm talking about children and youth services generally.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Just to add, I won't be providing a breakdown of numbers regarding ED5s -Employment Direction No. 5 - Procedures for investigation and determination of alleged breaches of the code of conduct]for any particular work group within Communities Tasmania. What I can put on the record for the committee is that we have a robust governance arrangement and detailed processes that are in place when allegations against employees are received.

The governance process ensures that: the safety of a child or young person is the primary consideration at all times; when responding to an allegation, support is made available to a complainant who makes a direct disclosure of abuse to the department; affording fair and due process to state service employees against whom allegations have been made; and notifying Tasmania Police and the Registrar for Working with Vulnerable People of any and all allegations of child sexual abuse.

So, people who are engaged with these services, particularly who may be employees, who may be families of young people involved with our child safety system and our youth justice system can be assured that we have a zero-tolerance approach. We have robust governance arrangements and detailed processes to ensure that any allegations are taken seriously. Beyond that, the public service routinely discloses information on the DPAC website regarding action that's being taken to stand staff down pending investigations.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, you know the Government has an active disclosure policy. It shouldn't take members of parliament having to use the Right to Information Act to get this sort of information.



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**Mr JAENSCH** - There's public disclosure of staff stood down pending investigation on the DPAC website. You don't need RTI for that.

**Mr WILLIE** - For children and youth services specifically, or just generally across -

**Mr JAENSCH** - For the public service.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, that's right. I don't know why you can't provide the figure for children and youth services and why, as members of parliament, we have to resort to the Right to Information Act. It should be actively disclosing this information to committees of parliament.

**CHAIR** - Question? Will you consider -

**Mr WILLIE** - He's not going to do it, so I'll move on. How many young people are currently detained in Ashley Youth Detention Centre and how many people have been detained over the last financial year?

**Mr JAENSCH** - My advice is that as of yesterday there are 8 young people currently in Ashley Youth Detention Centre. In terms of data over the last year - how many young people in total in the past financial year?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, in the last financial year.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have lots of numbers but maybe not that one. There are eight, as of yesterday; 8.9 young people in detention on an average day during 2021-22 up to 30 April; and 39 distinct young people, total, in detention during 2021-22 up to 30 April. That's the advice I have today.

**Mr WILLIE** - Do the young people at Ashley have access to psychologists and clinical consultants onsite, not by video link? If so, when did this last occur?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Psychologists and?

**Mr WILLIE** - Clinical consultants, onsite; and when did that last occur if that is the case?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask Ms Butt to reply.

**Ms BUTT** - I can't give an exact date of the last time they were onsite but we do have a number of services that occur through the telehealth components. We've just worked with Forensic Mental Health Services to develop quite a robust system around that, so that the young people can get those supports through telehealth and so they can continue outside of that when they are discharged. Like all health services, we have some challenges with recruitment of allied health professionals.

We look to bringing in some alternate options there and they are also very experienced practitioners that we have engaged through that process. We do also have the Correctional Primary Health Services and they do have good supports in there too through probably what I would class as more primary mental health; and I am looking at the links there.

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**Mr WILLIE** - There would be a record of the last time there were psychologists and clinical consultants onsite so I am happy got you to take that on notice if you could provide that to us. When they last occurred.

**Mr JAENSCH** - you would be happy. Just let me check if I would be happy. I'm happy to provide the information you have requested, Mr Willie.

**CHAIR** - In fairness to the member for Prosser, she had a question in regard to the allocation of additional funds to the Office of the Commissioner for Children and Young People. We will put that on notice and have that information provided to the committee through our system, because we do not have any more time. There are more people to consider than just you and I and members of the committee. We shall suspend the broadcast and return at 2.30 p.m. for the Minister for Environment and Climate Change.

Thank you to all those who attended this morning.

**The Committee suspended from 1.30 p.m to 2.28 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - I invite you back, minister, to the table, in your responsibility as the Minister for Environment and Climate Change. We are going to start with the output group of 7.1, which is an environmental management. You might be good enough to introduce your team at the table and then I expect that you probably have a brief overview.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would offer to forego my brief overview today, given the material we have to cover, I am already on the record yesterday.

**CHAIR** - It did not change from yesterday? You have not got any significant announcements?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will give an update through the session. Thank you very much, Madam Chair and committee. I introduce to my right Mr Wes Ford, the director of the EPA and to my left, Louise Wilson, deputy secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, very much. Welcome to both of you, we did see Louise for a brief time yesterday and certainly always appreciate Wes's time, a 21-year campaigner, minister, for budget Estimates.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Not his first rodeo, as they say.

**Mr VALENTINE** - He has just come of age, by the sound of it.

**CHAIR** - He has just come of age and I am not far behind him, 19. I am going to invite Mr Valentine to commence the line of questioning on 7.1.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am interested in the arrangements going forward as to how the EPA will interact with you, minister, when it comes to the important matters that the EPA deals with. Obviously, it is a different ball game, going forward. If you could give us some understanding as to how that will occur, so that our environment is front and centre.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Mr Valentine. We have gone to considerable lengths and we have a couple of lengths still to be gone to through amendments to legislation to finalise the formal separation of the Environment Protection Authority from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and establish that fully independent look and feel for the authority, which has always existed in the legislation, but which we have physically separated from the department now and will be making some amendments to ensure that that is reflected in all the connections through our legislation to the EPA.

My interaction with the director and the board is defined in the legislation and through an instrument called a letter or statement of expectations, which is due now to be updated and tabled in both houses of parliament as I understand. That letter of expectations is not a direction from me as minister or from the Government to the independent authority, but provides some context to the operations of the EPA in terms of the Government's other policies and priorities that might be relevant to its operations. The examples that I would use right now would be our commitments regarding climate change, emissions reduction, a circular economy, waste management. They are all areas where we have strong policy agendas which intersect with the EPA, and it is important that they are cognisant of them because they will need to interact with them and that would be the principle mechanism of interaction between us.

However, I would also intend to maintain a regular meeting calendar with the director, and also from time to time with the board, just so we know who each other are and we are up to date with current developments. Mr Ford may have further comment?

**Mr FORD** - Thank you, minister. It is probably worth noting there is also a formal service level agreement between the Department of Natural Resources and Environment in Tasmania and the EPA for provision of administrative support, that was part of the separation process. We are also in the process of developing memorandums of understanding for matters associated with advice on threatened species and natural values, because the EPA takes its expert advice from a number of sources, and the department is the custodian of the scientific advice for threatened species and natural values. There will also be some sort of memorandum of understanding about emergency response sharing of resources. In an oil spill response, the wildlife support people in the environment area support us, and similarly in a biosecurity emergency response we have capacity to support the department too. As another government agency involved in emergency management, there will be some sharing of functions across those sorts of things.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We have just recently finished a fin fish farming inquiry, I will not go into that because we have got to yet deal with that on the floor of the Legislative Council, and the findings and recommendations in relation to that. One of the things that we were cognisant of is that the with amount of scrutiny or measurements that the EPA have to take when it comes to matters environmental, quite clearly their resourcing is really important for them to do their job. I am keen to understand what level of resourcing we are likely to see going forward - as far as the EPA is concerned - to make sure that they have the capacity to be able to do the monitoring they need to do to protect our environment.

**CHAIR** - You probably haven't had a chance to read the finfish report yet. You might like to take a look the voluminous size of it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I take great interest in it and it's been going for quite some time.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - It's been going for almost three years but of course there have been three prorogations of parliament during that time. As you say, we won't go into the details of that at this point because I think we need to deal with it on the Floor and get a government response back on that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Our Government is committed to an independent and appropriately resourced Environment Protection Authority. It's a good point that you raise. We believe that independent and robust environmental assessment and regulation is an essential part of our planning and approval system and also reputationally for our industries and us as a state and a destination for investment and a source of quality products that the world values.

The Government is increasing the operating budget for the EPA by \$2.5 million, from \$13.4 million to \$15.9 million per annum. This Budget provides the first full-year budget for the independent EPA operating as an agency in its own right as a state authority under the State Service Act 2000. The Government has provided an additional \$2 million per annum to allow an additional 16 staff to be employed across key areas of the EPA. It is also providing an additional \$500 000 per annum to allow the EPA to move out of home and set up its own office accommodation, so being physically separated as well as operationally.

**CHAIR** - Of those 16 additional staff, are they going to be around the state or be all domiciled in Hobart town?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I've got a breakdown of the broad roles of those jobs but not their locations so I will defer to Mr Ford on that.

**Mr FORD** - Thank you, minister. They have gone to a number of locations. As a result of our recruitment process, which is not quite finished yet, a couple of additional positions have gone into Launceston and two additional positions have gone into the Ulverstone area as well. We are a statewide organisation.

**CHAIR** - Always good to hear.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Minister, I want to give you an opportunity to respond to something that was in the newspaper and I think it's probably worth getting your opinion. How do you respond to the notion that there's been \$33.75 million in cuts to waste initiatives over the next four years?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Cuts to waste initiatives?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It was published on 31 May 2022 by Dr Rosalie Woodruff and she writes:

The Minister for Environment is responsible for the devastating cuts of over \$33.75 million in waste initiatives across the next four years. As waste pollution balloons and endangered species -

and it goes on. I'm just giving you the opportunity to give us the other side of the story. Is it fact or not?

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**Mr JAENSCH** - No. The great news is I can set Dr Woodruff's nerves back, not on edge, about this and she should be very pleased. Claims that funding for environmental management in Tasmania drops significantly over the forward Estimates is simply not true. It is obviously based on a misunderstanding. In fact, our 2022-23 Budget and forward Estimates contain an additional \$16 million more in funding for environmental management and protection and regulation compared to last year's budget and forward Estimates.

What's happened is that the EPAs funds have been relocated. As it is now an independent state authority it no longer falls under Environmental Management in the budget papers. Instead it is in budget paper 2, number 2. You saw the footnote, but obviously Dr Woodruff, in her haste, did not.

We are investing \$2 million a year in additional resources for the EPA and \$500 000 a year as well to ensure they can set up their own shop and have their own front door, as is appropriate, to reflect their independence from government's normal agency operations.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you for that because I was a bit confused, but then I read the footnote and I just thought an explanation would be handy.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, you were on the right track and if only there was a footnote every time Dr Woodruff made a sensational claim.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Do you consider the EPA is adequately resourced to fulfil its growing list of obligations such as the waste action plan?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Certainly the EPA will have an additional \$10 million over the forward Estimates to conduct its roles and it will also have the capacity to raise some revenue through its operations as well and when the new landfill levy is in operation we anticipate that the Waste and Resource Recovery Board will be providing a contribution also to the EPA in regulatory materials related to waste management, including illegal dumping. They've got a little dowry they have been provided on leaving the family home, so to speak, and we will continue to monitor their requirements over future budgets.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I understand that \$2 million a year will be provided to increase the environmental regulations staff. What sorts of duties will the staff be undertaking and will they be employed on a permanent ongoing basis or are they contracted for a certain term?

**Mr JAENSCH** - In relation to staffing matters for the EPA I will defer to Mr Ford.

**CHAIR** - We do not mind if it suits you, Wes, if you leave your mask off when you are trying to answer questions on a regular basis because it interferes with a lot of other things that go on up here.

**Mr FORD** - Like my hearing aid?

**CHAIR** - That is what I was thinking, and your glasses and anything else you need to function.

**Mr FORD** - Sign of my age.

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**CHAIR** - No comment.

**Mr FORD** - Thank you for the question. All 16 positions are permanent and I can take you through the breakdown of those positions. There are two additional senior executive positions, one as Director of Environmental Regulation and one as Director of Finfish Compliance. That has allowed me to establish three operational divisions - an environmental assessments division, an environmental regulation division and a salmon environmental management division. Of those staff there are six new environmental assessment positions and those are the people who are undertaking and are going to help drive the state's growth agenda.

There was a risk identified through the PESRAC response that there was not enough funding for environmental assessment and there was a risk that were becoming a bottleneck in the assessment process and the Government has recognised that. Things like the Bridgewater bridge, which has the board has just done, and the whole hydrogen growth area - there are lots of things the EPA is involved in and we need to be able to assess those.

There are three additional regulatory positions and they support environmental regulation across the broader industrial sector, the waste sector and the salmon sector. We have a manager of environmental engagement which is very much about helping engage the community from a point of view of our transparency, our roles and our responsibilities and being a conduit back into the community and particularly local government because we have a strong relationship with local government.

There is an additional senior investigator. We have reorganised and separated our compliance and incident response functions into an incident response function and an enforcement and investigation function on the back of the comments the minister has made about the need for investing in compliance resources associated with illegal dumping. Those staff undertake a range of functions and they are all permanent and we have nearly completed the recruitment process.

**CHAIR** - How many environmental protection notices have been issued, if you can give me a figure to date? And a specific question on notices issued to VDL Farms, Moon Lake or Mr Lu, the owner of Moon Lake who owns the farms and how many outstanding notices remain in place?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am happy for Mr Ford to answer those directly.

**Mr FORD** - There are a variety of answers around the question about environment protection notices. The highest-level information is covered in the budget papers as part of the performance process. Notices issued, the total number of notices issued in the 2020-21 financial year was 166. A breakdown to the type of those notices I would take it on notice.

**CHAIR** - A breakdown of EPN notices, thank you secretary.

**Mr FORD** - We issue notices for a number of purposes under different sections of the legislation and would you like me to respond specifically on Van Dairy?

**CHAIR** - Yes.

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**Mr FORD** - In relation to Van Dairy, the Circular Head Council issued a number of environment protection notices in March -April last year. Those notices were issued under the Environmental Management Pollution Control Act by the council and so they were council matters. The council asked the EPA to undertake an audit of those notices and since that time I have now used a different provision of the act to require Van Dairy to provide dairy effluent management plans for 11 farms. We received those some weeks ago and they are currently being finalised and we will be meeting with Van Dairy in the coming weeks in relation to implementing those. They have made substantive improvements in their effluent management, largely because there are less farms they are managing. As you are aware, through this process they had two sales, firstly the Togari Farms and then farms on the eastern side of the property, so things are improving.

**CHAIR** - You are comfortable they are moving in the right direction when it comes to addressing those issues?

**Mr FORD** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - In the situation with regard to the accident at Devonport with the ship ramming the tugs. I know you probably cannot say too much if it is still before the court. I am not sure of the circumstances. Do you care to comment on that, how it was dealt with and some of the issues may have arisen and how it was handled, if you can?

**Mr JAENSCH** - If I can provide an initial comment. In my view and that of a lot of others who have commented on it, this incident has been extraordinarily well managed. The cooperation between Tas Ports and the EPA and some of the other users of the port who were very quickly to the scene and worked closely together with each other over an extended period has been extraordinary. To the point where, whilst it was of great interest what was going on, there was never a sense in my community on the north-west coast, there was no community fear of catastrophe or outrage at how it had been managed. There was a great level of interest in what was happening day to day. One of the most news worthy reports was some time into the management of the incident when the EPA issued a notice to warn locals not to consume king fish caught in the Mersey River who had been observed in the vicinity of where oil was still being retrieved and everyone was very excited because we never knew we had kingfish in the Mersey River. That was the most remarkable headline out of it for a lot of people who were observing locally. I will just take the opportunity again to congratulate the EPA, the department and all involved with this incident. I understand there has been a follow-up process to also debrief and understand what worked really well, what do we capture for the future regarding that interoperability of the services in places like our ports, dealing with marine pollution hazards.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am sure it has had its lessons. I was wanting to hear from the EPA.

**Mr FORD** - Very quickly, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau investigation has been largely completed and that has identified the cause. There seems to be a range of failures on the bridge. From an EPA point of view, we are conducting our own investigation from a marine pollution point of view under the Environmental Management Pollution Control Act. In accordance with the response, I stepped in as the state marine pollution controller and I took control of the estuary outside of the boomed area of TasPorts. I directed TasPorts had to be responsible for the area inside the vessels, or inside the boom. I took responsibility for the

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broader estuary and we established an emergency response process very quickly, we had staff and equipment on site by five o'clock in the afternoon.

TasPorts and the EPA worked extremely well together over the period, by about 15 February it was clear the environmental response outside the boomed area was finished and I handed the control back to TasPorts. At the moment, we are now going through all the legal processes. There are at least five separate legal claims currently being progressed, one of which is the cost recovery process for EPA and TasPorts was acting under my authority, so they then bill me.

Our costs currently look like about \$1.8 million. As part of my powers under the marine pollution legislation, I detained the *Goliath* until they provided me with a \$2 million financial security, this is one of the first times this has occurred in Australia. The insurers have paid a financial security to the Crown, which we are currently holding, pending, for the legal settlement arrangements for the insurer.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You cannot properly go into the impact it has caused in the wider estuary?

**Mr FORD** - I would be happy to be able to talk in general terms about that.

**CHAIR** - Can it be quite specific and brief? We have an hour for this entire output area.

**Mr FORD** - We have undertaken a report into the environmental impact, which we will be making publicly available shortly. It is identified that basically the measurable impact has only been in the vicinity of the wharf itself.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - How will the progress of circular economy and plastic-free policies be benchmarked?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have specific targets around the phasing out and the banning of problematic single-use plastics in 2023 and 2025, which are targets we have set ourselves as policy targets as a Government, and we will be reporting to the parliament against those. In terms of a circular economy, there are not any committed benchmarks on that, but, we have a rolling program of investment that is assisted by the introduction of the landfill levy, and assisted by the introduction of the container refund scheme, both of which will deliver more streams of resources away from the environment, away from landfill and into reprocessing to produce new products, hence circular economy.

We will keep driving at circular economy-related initiatives and reporting on them, and so far that can be counted of our investment and the other investment we have been able to secure from the federal government and from private investors, commercial investment in businesses in that sector.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Irrigation is becoming a very significant way of life for a lot of farmers in Tasmania, and that can bring with its nutrient problems for rivers and the like. Can



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we get an update on the testing of rivers and streams around the irrigation sites that are happening across the state these days. How can we be assured that our rivers and streams are in good health?

**Mr FORD** - Measuring water quality is done by a number of agencies. The Environment Protection Agency (EPA), does some monitoring for activities we are responsible for and Tasmanian Irrigation undertakes monitoring for irrigation systems -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Wouldn't you have oversight of that, being the main authority?

**Mr FORD** - No, we do not have oversight. We are responsible for activities under the Environmental Management Pollution Control Act. Water quality impacts across a number of pieces of legislation, and this matter was probably dealt with fairly extensively by the minister, Ms Palmer from a water quality point of view. As the Water minister, primarily, it sits there.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Okay. You have got a lot of answers on *Hansard*, by the sound of it. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Sounds like it, I expect from yesterday afternoon into the evening.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. If I want to know any more, I will go there.

## 7.2 Analytical services

**CHAIR** - If I take you to the performance information on page 197. A significant number of analyses was performed, and I note that the reporting is 281 000, and yet, the targets moving forward actually go down. Does that mean we are not going to be doing as much testing? Can I have some explanation on that performance information? It is an important feature of the EPA's role.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is going to take a little while through things like Estimates, to be splitting off which is now separated into EPA and Environment.

**CHAIR** - So this does not belong to you?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It does, but in the department rather than in the EPA. I will ask Ms Wilson if she is able to answer, or I am happy for her to take the question on notice to provide more advice.

We are happy to take that one on notice.

**CHAIR** - Take that on notice. To the secretary, additional detail from the performance information table regarding the actual information to the future targets.

You do have a slightly reduced budget. Is that something to do with the pay? No. It is about \$200 000 less than the previous year. Is that a moving of -

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am happy for the deputy secretary to answer that one.

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**Ms WILSON** - The slight decrease from 2022-23 of \$158 000 is primarily due to redistribution of corporate overheads. That does not impact on service delivery or staff.

**CHAIR** - I thought there would be a very simple explanation for that.

## 7.4 Threatened Species

**Mr JAENSCH** - Could I bring Rachael Alderman to the table.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Rachael.

**Mr WILLIE** - On page 211 of Budget Paper 2, volume 1, it has a footnote that says:

The increase in threatened species in 2022-23 reflects a reallocation of funding for threatened species activities from within the output group.

Can you explain that further please, minister? What are the activities?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Footnote 14 on page 211, mask off, glasses on. Threatened species activities.

**Ms WILSON** - This is a minor change because of the restructure for the output group due to the EPA splitting. It's just a reallocation of funding for threatened species related activities from within the output group.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay. So, there is nearly a million dollars more than last year and that's due to the reallocation. Then it flatlines over the forward Estimates. Is there any reason for that? There's no growth in the funding over the forward Estimates?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There is between 2022-23 to the following year and to the year after that.

**Mr WILLIE** - And then it goes down again.

**Mr JAENSCH** - But it's not flatlining, Mr Willie.

**Mr WILLIE** - Within \$100 000 or two.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's growing. Would that have to do with the projected out-year expenditure on existing activities that have their own allocations?

**CHAIR** - Technology, and we still need a few pieces of paper, minister.

**Ms WILSON** - That decrease, sorry, is the completion of the Swift Parrot Recovery Plan. It's the cessation of a couple of initiatives and the threatened species strategy. They are fixed-term positions that end then.

**Mr JAENSCH** - When we've got specific initiatives that have a limited time frame they will boost the amount while they're in play and it will be recorded when they drop out.

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**Mr WILLIE** - Are the swift parrot numbers increasing for the funding to decrease in the final year?

**Ms WILSON** - No, the swift parrot initiative was to develop a suite of swift parrot actions. It was a budget commitment -

**Mr JAENSCH** - A commitment of \$1 million.

**Ms WILSON** - Yes, over four years. So, that one will finish. We've got a dedicated project officer on board for that and then that position will finish when that work is completed.

**Mr WILLIE** - Will that be re-evaluated if the swift parrot population isn't responding to those initiatives?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The project's aim was to take the recovery plan priority actions and to develop them into a suite of activities. Some of those may be funded in their own right beyond that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay.

**CHAIR** - Have any threatened species been added to the list since we asked the question last year?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Since we asked the question yesterday?

**CHAIR** - I don't have time to listen or read from the other place.

**Mr JAENSCH** - No and I don't recommend it either. Ms Alderman, would you care to report?

**Ms ALDERMAN** - So, not since yesterday, no, but since the last budget Estimates committee there have been four species that have gone through the formal process with the minister agreeing to the recommendation to change their status. There's a final tweak that needs them to be amended on the schedule. That's in process and there's another two recommendations that the Scientific Advisory Committee have made to the minister, that's in relation to a handfish species and a live-bearing seastar. The minister is currently receiving advice from the department on that.

**CHAIR** - And there are no others waiting for assessment other than those two?

**Ms ALDERMAN** - Our scientific advisory committee. I guess the purpose of this particular measure is to demonstrate that we are providing administrative support to ensure the effective function of the Scientific Advisory Committee. We schedule three to four meetings a year and they have a very packed schedule. I am not entirely sure what is on the next meeting agenda but they are constantly considering and assessing.

**Mr JAENSCH** - For the record, Ms Alderman referred to recommended changes that I have agreed to. There have been no recommended changes that I haven't agreed to, if that makes any difference.

### **Capital Investment Program**

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Minister, can you please provide more detail on the capital purchases of equipment for Tasmania's environmental and analytical testing laboratory, and will there be any ongoing expenses associated with this?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will ask Ms Wilson to respond in a moment, but I want to note that over the last couple of years in particular, the role of Analytical Services Tasmania has ramped up very strongly, particularly in the context of COVID-19.

**CHAIR** - Hence my question about why their targets are less than what we have already been achieving. Somebody is going to provide that answer to me.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Through that and a range of other commitments that they have in providing services, a need for capital equipment has clearly been identified. I will ask Ms Wilson to update us.

**Ms WILSON** - In 2021-22, \$1 million was allocated for equipment to Analytical Services Tasmania and about \$600 000 to \$700 000 has been expended, but around \$300 000 as it needs to be carried forward. That is largely relating to COVID-19 impacts, so there are a lot of orders that have been put in but haven't been paid for yet.

**CHAIR** - Because everything has been delayed in purchasing?

**Ms WILSON** - Yes, we can purchase them but the delivery is delayed. I am advised that there is one large piece of equipment, which I can't pronounce what it is - that is the outstanding piece.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No-one has asked the crumbed tyres - the crumbed rubber facility in Tasmania? The notable activity under the output group is the development of a crumbed rubber facility in Tasmania in partnership with a commercial organisation. Over the forward Estimates, \$4 million has been appropriated for this development. Minister, can you outline progress for the development of a crumbed rubber facility in Tasmania? How will the Government ensure that road construction and maintenance contractors engaged by the Department of State Growth will use the output from this facility in preference to other sources of crumbed rubber or perhaps not incorporate crumbed rubber into their activities at all?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We are working very closely with many different parts of the Department of State Growth on this initiative. The main work so far has been to formulate a request for expressions of interest process and State Growth has been assisting with that because expressions of interest is something that it does all the time.

It has involved also a fair bit of work with the industry, both in the waste management sector and in the civil construction and road building areas of Government, to try to get a bit of an idea about what the full scope of this tender needs to include; that is, understanding what the volumes of used tyres are likely to be; what their sources are, being car, truck and bus tyres versus industrial, say, mining equipment tyres, which are quite a different type of thing.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - There is a lot more steel in those.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Or less, actually, because there are a lot of them that are massive rubber blocks and not belted because they are not designed for speed and those sorts of things. There is a whole range of different types of products we've had to account for and to understand a range of possible applications in the market so that we can frame this.

There has been a great deal of work done. We are very close to having a brief ready to take to market. When we announced this at the last election, part of it was that we were committed to ensuring the use of crumbed rubber in our road resurfacing program over a number of years. Indeed, we recognise that the viability of a commercial-scale tyre-rubber crumbing plant may be based on some guaranteed offtake into the roads program in the longer term. We are now also aware that there are a range of other possible uses, in a circular economy sense, for crumbed rubber or rubber - end-of-life tyre-derived - products in Tasmania, including in aggregate for construction and other parts of road-building, not only in resurfacing, and potentially in some cases as a substitute fuel.

**Mr VALENTINE** - When it comes to the road side of it, have there been any trials of this in other parts of the country, or the world for that matter, that indicate this is a viable industry? Could you apprise us of that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Crumbed rubber is being used in road resurfacing and in some hot mix-type applications by councils around Tasmania and by our state Government to the point where crumbed rubber is being brought into Tasmania for that role so we are confident that it has a use here in our programs. What this will come down to is the viability of a commercial operation and the costs and volumes of the inputs and the sales to different users.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I can understand there are a lot of arms to this.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. That's why we have put \$3 million aside for the EOI. We are prepared to co-invest with the right partner to make the deal work, in terms of the establishment costs, and then to look at our roads program beyond that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The money is fair and reasonable to be spent; it is not going to be wasted. I presume ground glass has been used in road aggregate; is there a capacity to even look at that aspect together with the crumbed tyres?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, definitely, as well as what is already happening with recycling of demolition waste and reprocessing it into road-based materials - into sands, gravels and aggregates that can be used again in construction. There is a demolition site only a couple of block from here that is coming down right now, and 98 per cent of the material recovered from that site is going to be recycled and go back to civil construction.

Madam Chair and I, being on the Public Works Committee, notice roads from time to time, and we notice how easily they strip off and we notice how we, as a state, really need to get our act into gear. I just hope the trials that they are conducting don't see us end up with worse roads.

**CHAIR** - And the question is, would you agree, Minister? Because we have questions, not statements.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Absolutely.

We have some supplementary information to respond to an earlier question. Could we do that?

**Ms WILSON** - In relation to the Analytical Services Tasmania performance measure regarding a drop in the number of analyses, the number of samples received is variable from year to year, with many of these ad hoc, making it difficult to predict. In 2021, we saw an increase. The reduction in the target reflects a reduction in the forward testing anticipated from one of the clients of Analytical Services Tasmania provided.

**CHAIR** - Who would that be? Do we know who that is?

**Ms WILSON** - No, sorry.

**CHAIR** - That is fine. Thank you for that. We can scrap that question. That will not have to go to the minister now. Do you need to add anyone at the table for Climate Change?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I need to change the whole crew.

#### 5.1 Climate Change

**CHAIR** - Minister, you might like to introduce your new people at the table.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am very pleased to welcome Anton Voss, the chief executive officer of ReCFIT and Sarah Russell, acting director of Climate Change.

I will forgo an opening statement in the interests of time.

**CHAIR** - It is available on the other place's *Hansard*?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Minister, can you please outline progress with the actions being undertaken with respect to Climate Action 21 and the benefits such actions are providing to industries and communities across Tasmania? Now, that sounds like a Dorothy Dixier, but I think it is important that we hear that.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, indeed. Climate Action 21 is our previous action plan on climate change, which was released on 1 June 2017. It included a commitment to publish a report card each year on the progress of the 37 actions outlined in the plan.

The four report cards providing updates on the implementation of the plan have been publicly released since 2018. The fourth and final report card was released in August 2021. There were 37 actions, as I said before. Key achievements under Climate Action 21 include:

- Grant funding of \$600 000 through the first Electric Vehicle ChargeSmart Grants Program to support the installation of charging infrastructure around the state.

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- 12 workshops held around the state to support over 130 financial counsellors to better assist vulnerable clients to manage their energy use and power bills.
- Supported government and heavy vehicle fleets to improve fleet efficiency and prepare for electric vehicle uptake.
- Implemented whole-of-government software to monitor and report energy use and greenhouse gas emissions from the Tasmanian government's buildings, facilities and vehicles.
- Supported 16 priority research projects with the Climate Research Grants Program.
- Conducted energy-efficiency audits for 28 Tasmanian small and medium-sized businesses through the PowerSmart Business Program.
- Held three Tasmanian climate symposiums, bringing together representatives from business, government and the scientific community.
- Supported 11 businesses across a range of sectors to improve productivity and resource efficiency through the Business Resource Efficiency Program.
- Partnered with organisations on local climate change initiatives -and there is a long list of them.

We are pleased with that program of work completed under Climate Action 21.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you advise what skills have been included within this output group to make sure there is meaningful and engaged consultation with industries and communities likely to be impacted by the plans proposed to be developed under this output group? Quite clearly, we are talking about a significant body of work here and it is important that those undertaking the consultation have the necessary 'smarts'. I don't think I am being derogatory to anyone when I say that. Obviously there needs to be a very good understanding of climate change when they're engaging with industry and the like.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We do have a team of people with great knowledge and skills in climate change itself. As we go into our next phase, however, particularly if the parliament gives us the authority to proceed with the amendments to the legislation that we have proposed -

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's not that far away, I believe.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I hope it's very close that we receive that agreement to proceed.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Sorry, I meant the bill coming to the House. I didn't say we were going to agree with it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Certainly, we need to be able to consult with sectors and we need to know the emissions targets and their importance. But many of the skills we need to actually avoid emissions, reduce emissions and make the transition to new technologies and practices, particularly in industry, are going to come from outside of government. They are going to come from industries themselves and from the research communities and the participants in those sectors.

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I will give you one example. We have here in Tasmania a remarkable group of people who have been working on internationally-significant technology with the development of seaweed-based extract which, introduced to grazing animals in livestock, has been able to significantly reduce their production of -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Fantastic.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. The challenge is how do you get that stuff into animals that graze in the open-pasture settings as opposed to eating pellets out of a bucket every day? There is considerable scientific work being done there to prove that concept. Turning it into something which can be used in broadscale agriculture as we know it, across the board, is another step.

That's the sort of thing where the expertise is not necessarily going to be climate science expertise but a range of other spheres will have to be brought to bear on that. So, I think our most important mission, if we are going to be tracking down those emissions at their source, working with those who own those emissions, is to bring around them whatever we need to make a dent in them. We have already invested heavily in knowing what the problem is. Now it's the solutions we need to be investing in and whatever skills are needed for that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. We certainly have a lot of scientists in this area.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We do.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you advise when the next statewide climate change risk assessment will be completed, how it will be used and how it relates to the already-proposed Climate Action 26?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Work on the next risk assessment will be undertaken after the bill passes through the parliament. It will be an important priority for us because I would like that risk assessment to be informing our next five-year climate action plan. But I might defer to Mr Voss as well to update that.

**Mr VOSS** - Scoping has commenced on that. It is still early days and, as you well know, the bill hasn't passed through the parliament yet. But we have commenced scoping on that so we are pretty much ready to go, assuming it passes the parliament.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. Electric vehicles - that's a pretty important area because of the gains that can be made. The Government has made a commitment to becoming net zero by 2030. To achieve that goal, we need to tackle emissions across the transport sector. I realise that in the long run we are working towards hydrogen, particularly for larger vehicles such as trucks, which would be a real game-changer. But transitioning to electric vehicles is a major part of decarbonising our economy. Given transport is the second-largest CO2 emitter by sector here, it is really important, as the Government's fleet vision indicates. Yet uptake is really quite slow, with only one per cent of passenger vehicles being electric. Despite this, it appears the ChargeSmart grants program for EVs seems to be unfunded. More worrying, the stamp duty waiver for electric vehicles has been discontinued. Why have those funding incentives been removed, minister, given the opportunity they present to really bite into decarbonising through electric vehicle uptake?



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**Mr JAENSCH** - The 2022-23 Budget continues to provide a two-year stamp duty waiver and two-year registration waiver for car hire companies for EVs.

**Mr VALENTINE** - In the rest of the Estimates?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The first ChargeSmart grants program delivered grants totalling \$600 000 to deliver 14 fast chargers and 23 destination and workplace charging stations around the state. The second ChargeSmart grants program has allocated \$773 000 to support the installation of 20 additional fast charging stations and 23 destination chargers across regional areas and tourism hotspots. Has that roll out concluded yet, Sarah? Or is it still underway? It is still underway.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's still continuing through to the out-years? Is that what you're telling me?

**Mr JAENSCH** - There are grants that are paid and committed. The actual physical network of charging points is still rolling out. Regarding the stamp duty waiver and the registration waiver, I will ask if someone can update me on that. The second year of the waiver is 2022-23. They are continuing.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What about 2023-24 and 2024-25?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It was 2021-22 and then 2022-23, so we are half way through. We'll continue to monitor the uptake and make decisions in further budgets as we do.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The number of passenger vehicles that are electric is still very small, so clearly it is needed.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There are some numbers here on what the uptake has been, which is an impressive set of numbers.

**Ms RUSSELL** - As at May 2022 electric vehicle registrations are up to 994 EVs. That information is publicly available now on the State Growth website.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What percentage of the total vehicle fleet is that? Do you have any idea of that?

**Ms RUSSELL** - I don't think I calculated that. That is only battery electric vehicles.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am not going to hold us up.

**CHAIR** - Do we have a supplementary to this question?

**Mr WILLIE** - I am going to talk about heavy transport.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Talking earlier about the Government's EV fleet vision of 100 per cent by 2030. The budget papers say the Government is expected to have 75 electric vehicles by 30 June 2023, that is in this year's budget papers, out of a car fleet of 2500. Can you tell me how many electric vehicles are currently in the fleet, hybrid and non-hybrid in

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separate categories? Can you please provide the expected profile of full electric vehicle adoption out to 30 June 2030 for the Government to meet that 100 per cent target?

**CHAIR** - Considering you cannot get a vehicle.

**Mr JAENSCH** - As at 31 March there were 2599 vehicles in the government vehicle fleet that included 14 battery electric vehicles, 13 plug-in hybrid vehicles, 421 hybrid vehicles with a further seven battery electric vehicles, eight plug-in hybrids and 262 hybrids currently on order at that time. As the Chair said, I understand that lead times for delivery of orders from sources around the globe are very long at the moment, not just for electrics.

**CHAIR** - Anything.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, exactly. Treasury's challenge is to work out how our commitment is going to be met, which we expect to accelerate to its target year-by-year, as more of the conventional vehicles reach the end of their life and are replaced with electric vehicles of various kinds, and as the availability and affordability of those vehicles increases in the market.

Given that Tasmania's private passenger vehicle fleet is one of the oldest in Australia, our aggressive participation in building our fleet up and passing those vehicles into the second-hand or used car market in Tasmania is going to be a really important way of making these vehicles more available to more Tasmanians.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You talk about the government fleet, but you are not talking about GBEs there as well, are you?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Not at this stage, but I remain ambitious regarding GBEs and local government, as well, in the future. I note that some of our GBEs already have their own programs and targets for electric vehicles, particularly our electricity companies.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Would you commit to actually getting a whole picture of government vehicles from GBEs, as well as the government fleet to give us a whole picture of electric vehicles across the whole State Service, which incorporates the GBEs? As a climate change office it would be something that would be very valuable.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It would be excellent, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Do you want to include TasWater, as well? They have hundreds of vehicles.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We need the proper picture. That would be worth having. I am not suggesting that you have to provide it now, but I think it is something that we ought to work towards. Quite clearly, it would be good.

**Ms HOWLETT** - Can you please update the committee on Tasmania's nation-leading emission profile, and whole-of-government action on climate change?

**Mr JAENSCH** - As we know, and as I am very proud to state as Climate Change minister here, Tasmania's emissions profile is the envy of our nation. We have achieved our net zero emissions target for the last seven years in a row. Tasmania was the only jurisdiction in Australia to achieve a net zero emissions in 2020, which is what our latest data is for. Our net

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emissions were -3.7 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalent, which is 120 per cent lower than in 1990.

This globally significant achievement is due to a combination of our long-term renewable energy investments and our managed forest estate, along with emissions reduction in our waste sector in particular. Specifically, between 1990 and 2020, emissions in the electricity generation sector are 0.43 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalence, or 74.8 per cent lower. Direct combustion emissions in the direct combustions sector are 0.05 megatons of CO2 equivalence or three per cent lower, and emissions in the waste sector are 0.2 megatons of CO2 equivalence or 35 per cent lower.

Furthermore, between 1990 and 2019, the land use, land use change, and forestry sector saw emissions reductions an increased sequestration of 21.2 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalence. However, a number of sectors and energy sub-sectors have seen an increase in emissions over this period, including industrial processes and product-use, which are up 0.08 megatons of CO2 equivalence or 5.9 per cent higher, transport emissions are up 0.13 megatons of CO2 equivalence or 8.2 per cent higher, and agriculture sector is 0.08 megatons of CO2 equivalence or 5.9 per cent higher. Emissions modelling shows that as our economy and population grows the risk of severe bush fires increases, and we will need to do more to reduce emissions across all our sectors to maintain our net zero emission status.

That's why in response to the independent review of our climate change legislation, detailed emissions and economic modelling and extensive consultation with industry, business and the community, we are planning to legislate a target of net zero emissions or lower from 2030. This will be the most ambitious legislated target in the country and one of the most ambitious in the world. I understand you've all been briefed on the Climate Change (State Action) Amendment Bill which includes the 2030 target and the Government's nation-leading framework on climate change.

We are absolutely focused on working across our economy and going to the source, supporting our industries and businesses to reduce emissions. The 2022-23 Budget includes significant key deliverable funding to reduce emissions, including: \$10 million over four years to deliver our next Climate Change Action Plan; \$10 million over four years to replace the Government's ageing fleet of fossil fuel boilers; and we have increased our investment to transition the Government fleet to 100 per cent electric vehicles by 2030 by bringing it up to \$4.6 million in our commitments.

**Mr WILLIE** - Back on the government fleet, why doesn't the Government take a more proactive approach in just making electric and hybrid vehicles available for the government fleet; at the risk of ostracising myself to some of my colleagues. The Government could have a policy to only provide hybrid and electric vehicles in the future. Is that something the Government would look at?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is a position taken in terms of replacement vehicles now. I will ask Mr Voss to speak to that.

**CHAIR** - Considering that not everybody can function on an electric vehicle.

**Mr WILLIE** - Hybrids are very good.

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**Mr VOSS** - Quite a lot of this discussion also happened with the Treasurer, who looks after the fleet, and with Treasury, in previous days. As the secretary of Treasury indicated, the Government fleet turns over about every three years. One of the real challenges, which was talked about earlier, is the supply of vehicles. They are difficult to get. We have increased the number of vehicles available for people to choose on the list but mandating it right now for example, would be problematic. It would be difficult to get the supply of vehicles in the timeframes you need it, and also maybe for the use that people have.

The reality is, as we turn over the fleet over time, and as more of the vehicles become available in the market place, the price will also drop. It's pretty clear that will also happen. Once we get towards 2030, the Government's target is very achievable.

**Mr JAENSCH** - What you will see in the vehicles next time you go to replace your vehicle as an MP -

**Mr WILLIE** - I am about to.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Have you received the list?

**Mr WILLIE** - There are a lot more hybrids on there.

**Mr JAENSCH** - More hybrids and far fewer vehicles with higher emissions. There has been a scaling back, and the list has been altered to make it a lower emissions fleet and menu for you to choose from. Our ambition would be that we are adding more hybrids, plug-in hybrids and electrics as they become available and as Treasury becomes comfortable with the different cost structure of their purchase and life cycle as well. We can then start to bleed them into the fleet.

**Mr WILLIE** - UTAS has done reports, and I am sure you have read them too, about where we can move first in terms of maybe zero emissions. The transport fleet is probably one of the easier ones. I went to the Bus Association conference the weekend before. It makes sense to electrify and to turn to hydrogen in a heavy transport fleet, but the sheer scale of moving in that direction, the market and technology aren't going to solve that alone. I'm interested in what the Government is going to do to work with that sector - electrifying depots and the sheer upfront costs to that sector. A lot of them are family operators.

**CHAIR** - With only one bus.

**Mr WILLIE** - There is going to be a role for Government to assist to electrify the Tasmanian transport fleet for Government and private use and heavy transport.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's right. That's why we've invested \$6 million in Metro Tasmania over two years to deliver an electric bus trial. Funding has also been made available through the Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Industry Development Funding program to Metro for a hydrogen bus trial, with funding for up to three buses for a period of up to five years.

The trial will include three battery electric buses in Launceston and three hydro fuel cell electric buses in Hobart for up to three years. Metro has released a request for expressions of interest for the supply of busses and associated recharging and refuelling equipment and

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specialist maintenance services. The REOI closed on 30 May and shortlisted suppliers who are invited to participate in a tender process for the supply.

In some ways, we're doing with the public transport fleet and the bus fleet, what we're doing with the government fleet. We're using a government-owned provider here to test the available technology under Tasmanian conditions and work out on what types of routes and what types of economics they work best. That will also give us an idea of what the supporting infrastructure or refuelling infrastructure, in the case of the hydro fuel cell buses, needs to look like here. That will be of benefit to the whole bus fleet and bus transport sector in Tasmania and I'm sure they'll be watching closely; as will those who are the road freight sector. I understand there's also work with the Transport Division, working with the road freight sector on their lower emissions technology options as well.

**Mr WILLIE** - Again, minister, we're talking about the government fleet here, not the private fleet and with respect, we are behind other states. Queensland, New South Wales have significant trials in place. My question is, how are you going to assist the private sector in this space? It's a huge challenge.

**Mr JAENSCH** - To some extent in this case what we're doing, as we are with the Government's own passenger vehicle fleet, is de-risking, by being first part of this.

**Mr WILLIE** - Some of them already are. The SkyBus is already operating an electric vehicle.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We've provided assistance to SkyBus to be able to do that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Very minimal assistance, I believe. The Government's tried to claim that, but I think it is very minimal.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think they gladly accepted it.

**Mr WILLIE** - I think it might have been registration of the vehicle, or something like that.

**CHAIR** - One last question. We're already an hour behind.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I'm sorry about that.

**CHAIR** - No, don't be sorry. It's just a fact. There will be an opportunity in the parliament before the Climate Change bill passes to ask as many questions as you like and you won't have to pass the bill until they're answered.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That's probably not a bad idea. I might actually keep the majority of them but perhaps this one. Will the Government commit to reducing the carbon emission of Government departments?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Department by department?

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**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And what will the target be?

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is something that my predecessor in the role has previously spoken about as well, about how we could move to a carbon-neutral target for government operations. Our intention is to create an emissions reduction and resilience plan, one of many, for government operations, in particular. The advice we've had is that the first step to working out the feasibility or the trajectory to carbon-neutral for government operations is to commission a baseline audit, in effect, of current government operations, and I think that's in development.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Of current government emissions per agency?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, the emissions from current government operations so that we know what the challenge is before we go and set a target for getting there. That is very much within the scope of what we are aiming to do, and one of those emissions reduction and resilience plans that will be developed is around government operations, and we intend to keep leading by example.

**CHAIR** - As I said, no doubt we will see Sarah and Anton when the bill presents before the House and we get to debate it, thank you. We will now move to environment assessment 1.2, so thank you very much Anton, and thank you Sarah.

**Committee suspended from 3.45 p.m. to 3.47 p.m.**

**CHAIR** - By explanation in this environmental regulation and assessment, I have chosen not to ask any questions. It is very clear from the note why there is a significant increase. Obviously, this is an appropriation for the first full year of budget allocation for the EPA funding, there are no further questions, we have already talked about that.

1.2 Environmental assessment, thank you, Ms Armitage.

**1.2 Environmental Assessment.**

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, and I do have a couple of quick questions, minister. Table 14.3 on page 15 in Budget Paper No. 2 Volume 2. My question is, table 14.3, what was the reason for the percentage of assessments undertaken within the statutory time frames only being 93.34 in the 2021 year, and what issues were identified that resulted in this reduction in number from the previous year, and then what plans are in place to ensure that subsequent targets will actually be met? I noticed it was 100, and the target is 100, but for some reason, it was 93.34.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am happy for Mr Ford to answer this question, but just to test my memory of our discussions on this, it had in some part to do with restrictions on people's movement and access to site during COVID-19 conditions.

**Mr FORD** - Yes, Ms Armitage, it was a COVID-19 response, principally around things like consultants and our own staff being able to get to sites, but there was an additional and important reallocation of resources. EPA as it was at that point in time as part of the department

was also part of the government's broader COVID-19 response, so we had key staff actually in the COVID-19 response and that delayed some of our statutory tasks. It was broader across all government agencies.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The other question I have about the environmental protection notices being a lot less in 2019-20 would be a similar answer?

**Mr FORD** - Yes it was, and if we bring back on notice a response that will break down those notices, but some of those notices result from site investigations, which of course did not occur, some of them also result from activities where operators seek to vary their permits and some of that wasn't occurring either.

### **1.3 Finfish Regulation**

**CHAIR** - Mr Valentine, anything on finfish regulation?

**Mr VALENTINE** - To be quite honest, we haven't even dealt with the finfish farming inquiry in the House and I am disinclined to go to that space until we do. I'm a bit reluctant to do that at this particular point in time, Chair.

**CHAIR** - That's fine. This output implements the policy and regulatory framework, so can I have some indication of where that process is?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Our Government has committed to preparing an environmental standard for finfish farming and a position paper outlining our approach is currently out for public consultation. The position paper outlines the proposed focus areas and content to be included in an environmental standard for marine finfish farming in Tasmania. The standard will build on existing requirements to ensure a contemporary monitoring and environmental management framework that is clear, robust and fosters environmentally sustainable finfish farming practices.

The Government is proposing amendments to the Environment Management and Pollution Control Act 1994 to enable the making of environmental standards. The changes also allow the director to make technical standards detailing how to implement the environmental standard. The EPA as the regulator of finfish farming has been involved in the preparation of a draft of the environmental standard, however the work is being led by my department since the separation of the EPA into a standalone independent state authority. The EPA will be consulted as the standard is developed further following the legislative amendment. In line with the EMPCA amendment bill, it is proposed that a detailed draft environmental standard for marine finfish farming will be released for statutory public consultation following the passing of the bill.

Importantly, we have also sought to have the draft standard internationally peer-reviewed and feedback received during the process will be considered prior to the standard being finalised. Once finalised, the standard will be implemented by the independent EPA and supported by technical standards made by the director.

Our Government is committed to the protection of our marine environment and adoption of international best practice in marine environmental management and development of a finfish environmental standard will be a key piece delivering on this commitment.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Will you commit to reading this, minister?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, definitely, it is an important body of information.

**Mr FORD** - We're waiting for the film.

**CHAIR** - As you indicated, it took three years to produce.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It will take that long to read.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I hope it doesn't but I can tell you there was a lot of work in it.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I appreciate that, absolutely.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister, and again, thank you, Wes, for your time.

### **Skills, Training and Workforce Growth**

**CHAIR** - Minister, you might like to introduce your team at the table and then pick out those key points of that overview that you shared yesterday in another place.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, I am very happy to welcome to the table Mark Bowles, Deputy Secretary of Business and Jobs; Alex Paterson, Acting General Manager of Skills Tasmania; and Stuart Hollingsworth, Director of Jobs Tasmania.

**CHAIR** - Welcome to you all and thank you, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is around a year since the Government delivered on our commitment to establish Jobs Tasmania working alongside Skills Tasmania as part of the Department of State Growth. I am happy to report that in this time the Jobs Tasmania team has been busy making a real difference for Tasmanian jobseekers right across the state. Its priority is the expansion of both the reach and services of the regional Jobs Hub network to bring together industry employers and workers and it is already providing opportunities for people to work in the area they live and giving jobseekers easier access to services and supports to help address barriers to employment, education and training.

Through Jobs Tasmania and the regional Jobs Hub network we can roll out a range of funding and support programs and these are progressing well. The most significant reform outside of that we have been progressing for the Tasmanian skills and training system is of course the TasTAFE transition. Is that something you would like to hear about now?

**CHAIR** - You can touch on it because we won't do an overview for TasTAFE.

**Mr JAENSCH** - TasTAFE is the biggest of these reforms we have been progressing for the skills and training system in Tasmania, re-establishing TasTAFE as a publicly owned not-for-profit government business so it has the flexibility to make sure more students, including apprentices and trainees, are getting the education and training they need to get a job and to also ensure industry has access to the trained workforce it relies on.



The transition is progressing well and is on track for the 1 July commencement date of the new model, ably led by its chair Tim Gardner. The TasTAFE transition is backed by our investment and commitment to recruit 100 extra teachers over four years, provide millions of dollars for critical facility and equipment upgrades as well as to construct new buildings and accommodation on top of the \$16 million we are providing to increase access for rural and regional students.

Lastly, I would like to mention industry compacts, which will be agreements between the Government and priority industries to ensure that the VET investment is better meeting current and future workforce needs and that urgent and emerging challenges are identified and addressed. It is not just about what government or the training sector does for industry, it is also about what industry can bring to the table and what they can contribute to ensuring that their future staff are trained and skilled to the levels they expect and need. This could come in a range of forms such as access to industry facilities and projects for skills development, the provision of career information in schools assisting with career pathways, and promoting the benefits of what a job in their industry can provide.

We have already been engaging with industry on the industry compacts and I hosted a very productive workshop with industry and business stakeholders in May. While the industry compacts will provide for tactical responses to current challenges, I am also working on setting longer-term strategic objective for the skills and training system through updated ministerial priorities.

**CHAIR** – I will direct you to page 282 where this is a performance information output group three table. The figures are obviously, percentages presented for VET graduates employed after training, VET graduates with improved employment status after training and apprentice/trainee in training which there is a number for those yet, I have got percentages for the other two important areas. Can I have the figures relating to those percentages, because I note that both the percentages have been reduced and whether that is COVID-19, I expect they still went about their VET courses and would have done them online, so some indication of the numbers relating to those percentages.

**Mr JAENSCH** – With their employment status after training?

**CHAIR** – There is graduates employed after training and the actual figure for 2020-21 is 72.8 per cent of the total, but I do not know what the figure is and what I am looking for.

**Mr JAENSCH** – I think we do not have them with us, we may have also taken this on notice yesterday.

**CHAIR** – We have the numbers from apprentices/trainee in training and so the actual 11 549, I am just surprised we have some percentage for some and a number for another area.

**Mr JAENSCH** – For those others you are talking about as a percentage, because we are talking about the proportion of graduates with improved employment status after training and the proportion. Whereas, the number in training is the straight number sand think that explains the different types of information.

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In terms of those proportions and their employment status we will take that on notice I think there was a similar question yesterday, if, it aligns we will probably do it once but make it available to both.

**Mr WILLIE** – I think the answer was that they were still in training and they were not employment outcomes yet.

**CHAIR** – Well, how did they reach a percentage then.

**Mr JAENSCH** – That was to do with job training. Again, we will take that on notice, but happy for Mr Bowles to make some general comments.

**Mr BOWLES** – This data is nationally collected data that comes from NCVIS we will have to just confirm the absolute figures are available from that national source.

**CHAIR** – If that is the answer I am quite comfortable with it, but if I got some performance information, but I have no idea how to break it down for information of my usefulness then it is not necessarily that useful.

Can I have some indication of the areas then of VET graduates? Is there one particular area more prominent than another or are they just so varied that you do not necessarily have to provide me with a list.

**Mr JAENSCH** – I will see what Mr Bowles can extract.

**Mr VALENTINE** – By region.

**CHAIR** – That is a really good one, by region would be good. Thank you, member.

**Mr BOWLES** – We do have a VET sector performance report for last year that is available online that can provide a range of data for Government subsidised enrolments by industry. Broadly speaking, the enrolments for the larger sector is healthcare and social assistance with 5000 enrolments, with around 49000 enrolments, we have got construction next, third is agriculture forestry and fishing with around 2500 enrolments. Fourth is manufacturing with about 2000 enrolments.

**CHAIR** - Is it possible to have it by region? A regional breakdown?

Thank you, secretary, we are going to receive the regional breakdown of those figures that were just being provided by the minister.

**Mr VALENTINE** - With the huge demand on trades at the moment, with the housing initiatives, do we have any idea whether the number of people doing courses in the construction area are going to be able to satisfy those sectors?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have been working with our building and construction sector very closely. You would have heard of our High-Vis Army initiative? That is based on the reality. Their estimate is that there is, over the next decade, a \$16 billion pipeline of work that they need to do.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - Are you talking about here, in Tassie?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. A 25 per cent increase in their skilled workforce to be able to deliver that. That is the challenge ahead of us.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Do you have targets that you are working towards?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Absolutely. We have our own \$5.6 billion infrastructure program over the next four years. Over the next 10 years the industry is talking about \$16 billion worth of work to do. They are targeting a 25 per cent increase in the building and construction workforce, which is about 2500.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There are people that leave the workforce because they are retiring. It's not just getting new people on the ground to fill that void.

**Mr JAENSCH** - That is right. We have to grow our own, and we have to keep them coming. We need a pipeline of new recruits all the time.

We have an MOU with Keystone which is the former Building and Construction Industry Training Board, Master Builders Tasmania, Housing Industry Association, and Civil Contractors Federation. It commits the parties to working together in a co-ordinated way to support the growth and productivity of the workforce.

We have \$4 million allocated in that to the Master Builders Association and \$4 million to the Civil Contractors Federation to encourage more Tasmanians to pursue careers in the industry. There is also \$1 million for the Housing Industry Association to increase apprenticeships by establishing a new group training organisation in Tasmania. We're also working closely with Keystone.

The additional \$1 million in this current Budget, added to that other \$9 million, to make it a \$10 million investment in the High-Vis Army Program, provides for us to be opportunistic and to roll out some initiatives to get a trained workforce from other places to come and work here, in the short term, to meet immediate demand.

We also have a building and construction training policy which assists in opening up local training opportunities. The policy requires that a minimum of 20 per cent of the total labour hours worked in government-funded building and construction projects is undertaken by apprentices and trainees where the project value is more than \$250 000. The Government is committed to expand the scope of the policy to include civil infrastructure projects as well as government business enterprises. From 1 July this year, 10 per cent of labour hours on civil construction projects valued over \$5 million will support workers undertaking training. We will work with GBEs to develop a model that recognises both the capacity and the responsibility of GBEs like TasNetworks and Hydro to be training grounds for their whole industries.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you, minister. Can you give us a breakdown of the profile of people entering the construction industry? Are they straight out of school or they're mature-age entrants into the industry? Where are we getting people into that industry to fill this void?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I can ask Mr Bowles to see if that information is available.

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**CHAIR** - While you're deciding whether it's available or not, I want to acknowledge that Rachael Matheson, the CEO of Civil Contractors Federation Tasmania, has just announced that she is leaving that organisation. She has been instrumental in bringing those industries together under that peak body.

**Mr JAENSCH** - She has provided great service, hasn't she in her role? We wish her well.

**CHAIR** - We do.

**Mr JAENSCH** - And thank her for her contribution. It's been a really important time. I was talking with her on a site the other day with the Civil Contractors Federation. While we've had some traditional entry points and sources of our market, these industries are looking at diversity. They're looking at older and younger; they're looking at far more women entering these traditionally male-dominated workforces; they're looking at an international workforce or people with diverse cultural backgrounds; and working out what they have to do to make the worksite a safe and friendly place for those people. I am really impressed by the effort that is being made in that traditionally blokey sector to attract a different workforce. They're measuring benefits in doing so in terms of productivity and the vibe.

**Mr VALENTINE** - We saw some of that with TasTAFE. The reason I am interested in that profile is because I wonder how much students moving through to years 11 and 12 might be impacting on people going into the apprenticeship area.

**Mr WILLIE** - They can still do an apprenticeship.

**Mr VALENTINE** - They can still do it but I am interested to know if it has slowed or not. Obviously, COVID-19 doesn't help but over a longer term are there figures that show what that profile looks like and where they're coming from, that would be really handy.

**CHAIR** - Is that available?

**Mr JAENSCH** - What do you think we're able to get in terms of answering Mr Valentine's question about the breakdown of apprentices?

**Mr BOWLES** - We will seek to provide data for each of the construction trades - the adult apprentices versus the school-based apprentices - which will give you an indication of those trends.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you. That's good.

**CHAIR** - Is there anything to add before we move on? Just note the yellow paper coming coming by. Those sticky notes are very useful, minister. I know we'll continue to talk about these opportunities when we get to TAFE in a little while.

### 90.2 Rapid Response Skills Initiative

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, could we have a regional breakdown of the enrolments that have accessed the Rapid Response Skills program and the total funds expended, and an explanation

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why it's at 1500 in this financial year, then goes back up to \$3 million in the following. What's the fluctuation for between the three years?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Which table are you looking at, Mr Willie?

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm on page 296. In the last year there were \$3 500 000, this year there's \$1 500 000 and then it goes back up to \$3 150 000. Even things like the age profile of people accessing the program would be useful, if you've got that data on hand.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. Happy to take that on notice. Are you confident we can get it though?

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - Yes, we can get the data out of a database on the regional profile of rapid response applicants.

**Mr WILLIE** - And age profile too, would be good, if you can do that?

**Mr HOLLINGSWORTH** - We can check if we capture age. I think we do, but I'm not sure what level of granularity -

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay. We'll send the question, if you can't answer it.

**CHAIR** - You'll make a note of those questions.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I just want to pick up on that fluctuation across the three years.

**CHAIR** - Obviously, didn't ask these yesterday, minister, or you would 've been able to fly the answers across. This is called scrutiny of the output areas and the line items, that's what we do here

**Mr JAENSCH** - And more power to your arm.

**CHAIR** - Do we have some explanation?

**Mr BOWLES** - All of these relate to training activities. Because these amounts are paid on activity, rather than necessarily commencement or allocation of activity, this was the forecast activity profile at the time.

**Mr WILLIE** - Smaller this year, and then an expected uptake again next year?

**Mr BOWLES** - That's what we expected.

**Mr WILLIE** - Is that based on the state of the economy? How is that determined?

**Mr BOWLES** - We pay on commencement and completion. The forecast level of activity in 2021-22 picks up the bulk of commencements, and then 2023-24 picks up the completions.

**CHAIR** - Can we suggest a note is always very useful on a budget paper like this. Thank you. If there's nothing else here, I'll move to 90.25.

**90.25 Priority Industry Skills Funding - More Teachers at TasTAFE**

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, can we please have the FTEs for the number of TAFE teachers as of May 2021 and also the FTEs for TAFE teachers in May 2022? We are after some establishment figures. Yesterday you said there were 15 new teachers who have started out of 25 to be recruited this year. Some of those are under supervision. My understanding is that a TAFE teacher is someone who has a teaching registration and a supervisor is someone who does not - they might be a trainer. What will their status be under the transition?

**Mr JAENSCH** - My preference would be if Mr Dreher could answer that as CEO of TasTAFE when he is before the committee. Is it okay to defer that?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. My other question, which will probably have to wait too, is where are the shortages? And where are you trying to target to recruit these teachers? We can wait until they are here.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am deferring as TAFE needs to be able to talk about their internal operational matters. I am happy to step over that matter and keep going with others.

**CHAIR** - All right. Let's do 90.26 and then we will do TAFE after a quick tea break.

**90.26 The Expansion of the Apprentices and Trainees Small Business Grant**

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Given how well the Apprentices and Trainee Grants for Small Business have been received and the consequent expansion of the program, will the Government consider having ongoing schemes beyond the 2022-23 financial year?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you for the question. They have been successful. Where we have to something that is working, if the need is still there and it is still fit for purpose, that is one of the things that we would be considering in the lead up to next budget.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can you give any indication of how this grants scheme has addressed any particular skill shortages?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will see if I have any detail on the specific areas of skills that it has been applied to.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can you expand on whether this scheme has addressed things like getting more women into trades?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Women and sectors?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes. Any particular skill shortages that it has addressed and whether it has addressed things like getting more women into trades? I thought I may as well combine them together.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Good idea. We are able to provide a sector breakdown but not the gender breakdown because this is provided through businesses. We are not collecting directly

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data on who they are engaging through the program but we have been very pleased with its performance.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Do we know where the skill shortages are though? Then we would know if it has addressed skill shortages. Are there particular areas where there are skill shortages in business?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We have an emerging picture; it is more detailed in some sectors than others, like in building construction where we have a fairly clear picture, thanks to the work of Keystone and others and the workforce development planning that we have been able to do with that sector. We have also been working with about a dozen different industry sectors, at varying levels on workforce planning and identification of skills, needs and gaps.

That work is going to form the basis of the industry compacts we talked about before.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We know how hard it is to get a tradie or a plumber or an electrician at the moment.

**Mr JAENSCH** - They are all stealing them from each other. I have heard that because the market is so hot at the moment and there is competition for people maybe some people are not completing their apprenticeships and so on; they are going off and working, getting more money working without their full qualifications sometimes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Do you have figures on people who have not completed their qualifications? I thought that was an interesting thing you raised.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We do have figures around non-completions of apprenticeships. Someone at the table might be able to pull up the relevant paper.

Tasmania is doing better than most other states and better than the national average. Our completion rates sit at about 55 or 56 per cent versus a national average of around 48 per cent completions, which to me, being fairly new to this world of training and skills, seems to be remarkably low still. But we are doing better than the rest of Australia together.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - If they leave an apprenticeship in the third year of, maybe, a four-year apprenticeship and they go working in the industry because, as you say, they can earn more money, can they get an accreditation later on for the work they have done in the industry to pick up the fourth year to get their trade? Can they on-skill or on-work training?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is a partial apprenticeship worth anything?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can it become a full apprenticeship because they have worked in the industry? Can it be taken forward?

**CHAIR** - Not without an assessment.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They do assessments after that.

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**Mr BOWLES** - In terms of vocational qualifications generally, you can apply for recognition of prior learner. RTOs are able to do an assessment of someone's competencies, even if they haven't done the formal training.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - All the formal training; they might have done some of it.

**Mr BOWLES** - They can potentially receive RPLs. Having said that, for different trades there are also unique licensing requirements on top of that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am aware of that. I have many trades coming to me with concerns about licences. Thank you for that.

**Ms HOWLETT** - My question is similar to the member for Launceston's. It was noting that there was funding and I wanted an explanation of the funding for the apprentices and trainees' small business grants. I am not sure if you had anything else to add.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am happy to provide that as we didn't get into the amounts.

The Apprentice and Trainee Grant for Small Business Program provided grants to eligible employers who signed on an apprentice or trainee from 1 January 2021, namely providing employers who were not entitled to claim the payroll tax rebate scheme a subsidy of up to \$5000 for each apprentice and trainee they employed as a new worker. It replaced the Targeted Apprentice and Trainee Grant for Small Business Program which closed on 30 December 2020.

Additional funding of almost \$11 million was provided through the 2021-22 state Budget. I can advise that the program has now been fully allocated and closed on the 30 April this year. The program paid in two instalments when the apprentice or trainee had been employed for six and 12 months.

Importantly, employers who have been approved for a grant prior to 30 April will continue to receive grant payments as they fall due at both the six- and 12-month points, so long as their apprentices and trainees are still employed. We have been proud to provide continued support for skills and training as part of our comprehensive response on COVID-19.

This was a small business version of the payroll tax rebate incentive for picking up apprentices and trainees and it sounds like it has been taken up very strongly. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - It certainly is - fully subscribed.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Bowles has some of the data that was being asked for earlier.

**Mr BOWLES** - At a fairly aggregated level completion trends for Tasmania, the most recent data is the 12 months to end September, in 2021 there were 1140 trade apprentice completions and 1910 apprenticeship completions. Compared to the prior year for trade there were 985 trade and 1640 non-trade.

**CHAIR** - Good to see an increase.

**The Committee suspended from 4.30 p.m. to 4.38 p.m.**



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**CHAIR** - Welcome back, and you have a couple of new people in addition to the previous people at the table, so you might like to introduce them.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I am pleased to introduce the CEO of TasTAFE, Grant Dreher and Scott Adams, the Chief Operating Officer of TasTAFE.

**CHAIR** - Welcome to you both. You are known to this committee, and we thank you for your time today. We have a couple of questions left over in the skills, training and workforce growth area, so we will ask the 90.25, which is the priority industry skills funding more teachers at TasTAFE, so thank you, Mr Willie.

**Mr WILLIE** - How many teachers have been employed under this line item?

**Mr DREHER** - As we answered a similar question yesterday, there have been 15 and 15 is part of the 100. So the 100 is 25 a year over four years; we have employed 15. We are in the market for more than that but it is very difficult to recruit teachers, as it is difficult to recruit anybody at the moment.

**Mr WILLIE** - The question I had before was the 15 and some of them are under supervision, what does that mean for them in the transition? Do they become trainers?

**Mr DREHER** - There are no trainers in the new agreement. They will all be TAFE teachers - they are TAFE teachers now but they are under supervision of another teacher because they do not have certificate IV in training and assessment. Once they get that, they will become a TAFE teacher because they started before 1 July and will be under the copied state instrument.

**Mr WILLIE** - That was my misunderstanding. I thought it was because they did not have teachers' registration which will not be required.

**Mr DREHER** - It will not be required, no.

**Mr WILLIE** - Where are the shortages for TAFE teachers?

**Mr DREHER** - If you talk about well-paid booming industries, you will see where the shortages are for TAFE teachers. When the construction trades were having trouble with construction trades maintaining teaching numbers and in health and nursing are probably the main two areas. Construction trades is very broad - builders, plumbers, electricians, tilers.

**Mr WILLIE** - What was the FTE of TasTAFE teachers in May 2021?

**Mr DREHER** - This was the same as the answer yesterday. I have them from March 2021 to March 2022. From March 2021, it was 404.05 and in March 2022, it was 408.71.

**Mr WILLIE** - Do you have a current vacancy?

**Mr DREHER** - No, we have taken that on notice previously and we are happy to do that now.

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**CHAIR** - Vacancy for TasTAFE teachers, thank you.

**Mr WILLIE** - I have other TAFE questions but what will the establishment figure be once the 100 TasTAFE have been employed? You could take it on notice.

**Mr DREHER** - Simplistically, it will be 100 extra teachers but I would have to check what the vacancies are and where positions are before I can answer that.

**Mr WILLIE** - And where the starting point is? You will take that on notice too, minister?

**CHAIR** - The question is?

**Mr WILLIE** - It is, what will the establishment figure for TasTAFE teachers be once the 100 have been employed, and the start date.

**CHAIR** - I am seeking clarification because we have a secretary who composes the questions and we have to make sure they reflect what is being asked.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Are you comfortable to take that on notice?

**Mr DREHER** - Yes, that will be okay. It is not a simple answer, that is the problem.

**Mr JAENSCH** - You will provide what you can.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Apart from the construction sector trainees, what other areas are critically short of students required in terms of the demand TasTAFE is aware of? Can you give a profile of that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would like to check in with the CEO for a moment. I will ask the CEO to respond. There is a good focus emerging on some areas of particular need right now.

**Mr DREHER** - If we exclude the construction industries which have a good voice on their skills needs, the care industries are probably one of the key areas where not so much we are struggling to recruit staff, but we are certainly struggling to get students. That would include aged care, child care and personal care. That is a key one.

Health again. Basically, if you graduate from nursing at TasTAFE you will either get into the degree or you will a job as an EN nurse straight away. There is always a call out for more in those area.

**CHAIR** - Is an EN an enrolled nurse?

**Mr DREHER** - Yes, an enrolled nurse. Those two are the two really obvious ones. It gets a bit flatter and less of an issue if we exclude the trades after that.

For me the emerging thing that is coming at us on digital skills and a greater need for what's being called now is LLND, which is Literacy, Numeracy, Language and Digital skills

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as a key thing that is coming. They are probably the top three. Maybe we will struggle to recruit staff in the digital area.

**Mr VALENTINE** - That is the student side of it. You have just indicated the digital area is difficult to recruit teachers. What others are difficult to recruit, even though the student numbers might be up?

**Mr DREHER** - Again, excluding the traditional trades, nursing and digital will be the two areas where we struggle. Those aside, the offer we have as a future at Tas TAFE is quite attractive in the market.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Under the new structure, do you think that is likely to grow for you compared to the offers that TasTAFE was able to make earlier?

**Mr DREHER** - It is more likely to grow.

**CHAIR** - Now to put your focus to 90.27, which is a funding of key VET courses, JobTrainer.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yesterday, he said they have 7000 people who took that up in the first round. What is the expected take up in the next round, given there has been given an allocation \$42 million and only \$10.9 million expended?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The expectation is the take up of the second round will be about another 3000 positions, is that right?

**Ms PATTERSON** - Yes. The full JobTrainer amount of \$42 million has been allocated and it will be expended in line with the training activity.

**Mr WILLIE** - Paying on commencements and completions?

**Ms PATTERSON** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Total uptake will be around \$10 000 for the whole?

**Ms PATTERSON** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - Where are people undertaking those courses, RTOs, TasTAFE?

**Ms PATTERSON** - Yes, we are required to record that data as part of the program and we can provide that by postcode, I understand.

**CHAIR** - The data to be provided by post code.

**Mr WILLIE** - That is where their located, where are they doing the training?

**Ms PATTERSON** - We should have data on where the RTO is located as well as which regions.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Is that easy to extract?

**Ms PATTERSON** - Yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Are you happy to take that?

**CHAIR** - We will go to TasTAFE proper. Do we say goodbye to a couple of members at the table? Thank you very much. We understand and acknowledge the amount of work that goes into preparing for this process, congratulations.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister on page 125, the decrease in government grants over forward Estimates and also the deficits, and whether there is a correlation between the two?

In 2022-2023 - \$124 527 000 and it goes down to \$113 375, back up to page 125 in Budget Paper No. 2 at the back.

**CHAIR** - The small one, it took me a couple of years to get the hang of them too.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Mr Willie, my understanding is that this reflects the Government's initial injection of funding to assist the transition and the establishment of the new TasTAFE over a period of four years or thereabouts. That boosts the grant income from government to TasTAFE for that period, and it is for a fixed period and a fixed amount. As that comes off, you will see the overall numbers drop.

**Mr ADAMS** - Yes, that includes a range of election commitments in that funding line. You will see it includes the money for transition, it also includes capital works projects including our centres of excellence and campus refurbishments, which is why you see it is not an even spread.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can we expect to see deficits for the foreseeable future? There are deficits too, I am not getting an answer for that. There is grant funding, but we are seeing deficits over the forward Estimates there too.

**Mr ADAMS** - Yes, and you will continue to see the deficits because that includes non-cash items such as depreciation. That is not funded from a cash perspective so it is reflected as a deficit, but from an operating perspective TasTAFE continues to be funded.

**Mr WILLIE** - Are there particular asset liabilities that are causing some of that depreciation more significantly than others?

**Mr ADAMS** - No, it is just depreciation across our asset base. We have about \$140 million of building assets, it is just the depreciation counting.

**CHAIR** - Minister, that is financial speak. They are a breed of their own, and the member for Elwick understands it since he has been on the Public Accounts Committee.

**Mr WILLIE** - Three years. We had a briefing last week - which I appreciated - but it was a private briefing, so some of these questions the CEO will be familiar with, but I think it is important to have this in a public domain. Minister, can you confirm under the TAFE transition there will be teachers doing the same job on different pay and conditions? How will

you manage workplace culture when there are very clear differences for employees doing the same job?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Clearly, there will be two employment frameworks in place in TasTAFE from 1 July this year. One will be covering transitioning employees referencing existing industrial agreements, being the relevant copied state instrument, and another covering those who are appointed beyond or post 1 July that reference the relevant modern award under the Fair Work jurisdiction. In terms of how the culture of that is managed in the workforce, that is a matter for the organisation. I would be happy for the CEO to comment, if he can.

**Mr DREHER** - Firstly, I acknowledge that there will be two sets of conditions, and the Fair Work jurisdiction does not have a cap on teaching hours, and the pay differences will basically be related to that. Certainly, we have an intention at TasTAFE that all staff will be employed under the same industrial instrument as quickly as possible. That will take a little bit longer with teachers because TasTAFE and the Australian Education Union (AEU) have come to an agreement and have a new instrument registered with the Tasmanian Industrial Commission (TIC), but we would be looking at moving people onto one agreement as quickly as possible.

Managing the culture, we have been very upfront with staff right from the start that there will be different conditions under the copied state instrument to that under Fair Work. We have conducted a number of consultation sessions and last week Scott Adams and our IR manager went around the state again talking to staff about what the change means for them as we go forward. They were again articulating to staff that there will be two sets of conditions for a period of time, and that could be up to two or three years.

Articulating to staff that there will be two sets of conditions for a period of time and that could be up to two or three years.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, what advice do you have that this arrangement is allowed under the Fair Work Act? Does the industrial instrument override the Fair Work Act? I would have thought under the Fair Work Act you are doing the same job, the same pay and conditions. It is in the act - fair work.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It would be fair to say I have not been directly in receipt of specific advice on those matters. The arrangements that are being implemented have been in development for some months under a range of different ministers but the constants in that have been the leadership of the TasTAFE organisation. Should Mr Dreher want to comment on that I would be happy for him to do so.

**Mr DREHER** - I acknowledge that Fair Work has a series of conditions and rules that we have to follow. We have sought advice on that as we have moved forward. I am going to hand over to Scott Adams because Scott has been leading our transition committee and he has been working closely with Fair Work and our legal advisers.

**Mr ADAMS** - As outlined by the CEO, employees will be on different conditions so we won't have the situation where employees are being paid differently for doing the same work under the same conditions. The difference of pay reflects the difference in working conditions.

**Mr WILLIE** - Employees will have more hours and things like that, won't they?

**Mr ADAMS** - Yes, that is correct.

**CHAIR** - Particularly if they work in January, is that correct? That was one of the issues that was discussed when these new measures were put in place that it was difficult to have any training undertaken in January.

**Mr WILLIE** - On that I think they have similar holidays which was one of the arguments that was put to the parliament.

**Mr ADAMS** - The holidays for new employees after 1 July are different to the existing employees. Under the existing arrangements, there is a compulsory leave period for teachers that takes us through to mid-to-late January. Under the new arrangements there is not a compulsory leave period.

**Mr VALENTINE** - In relation to State Service employees who may have been connected with TAFE - and I think of the IT support in the Department of Education that apparently have a service level agreement now because they exclusively provide services to TasTAFE. Are they still associated with the State Service Act or are they under the Fair Work Act too?

**Mr ADAMS** - We do have a service contract with the Department of Education for a range of services and that will continue. We regularly review that service agreement and recently, as part of that review process, 9 FTEs who were in the Department of Education and provided services directly on TasTAFE campuses, have been transferred across to TasTAFE so are now employed by TasTAFE. As a result they will transition, along with all other TasTAFE staff on 1 July.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Were they given an ultimatum or was it a case of they are happy to go across and happy to be employed under the Fair Work Act?

**Mr ADAMS** - They were not given an ultimatum. They were given the option to come across to TasTAFE or remain employed with the Department of Education.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And they would have remained employed, do you think? Do we know that it was a real offer as opposed to a gun at the head - if you don't go across you have six months left in the department?

**Mr ADAMS** - That was a commitment made by the Department of Education that they could remain employed and given the size of their workforce, they certainly have flexibility to redeploy those staff in IT roles within the Department of Education. Not all staff chose to come across to TasTAFE. There were 9 FTE positions, seven chose to come across to TasTAFE.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Did they have an attractive offer? Are they going down in their working conditions?

**Mr ADAMS** - No, they have transferred across to TasTAFE on the same conditions as they were employed under.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - And those conditions will remain while they are employed with TasTAFE for two years?

**Mr ADAMS** - They will continue to be covered under the public state instrument.

**Mr VALENTINE** - And at the end of two years they will go fully under the conditions under Fair Work?

**Mr ADAMS** - They will be covered by the industrial agreement to be negotiated by TasTAFE.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, in terms of pay progression, isn't it a fact that bans will be broader under the transition and it will be more difficult for employees to advance? What message does that send to your workforce?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, but I do not necessarily accept your premise but I will ask the CEO if he wants to make a comment on that matter.

**Mr ADAMS** - Thank you through you, minister. The salary bans that apply under the new arrangements will be broader; progression will be determined based on performance management within TasTAFE so it won't necessarily more difficult. It will be a different model going forward.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, how will the changes benefit students? Will they see any noticeable difference?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The whole idea in this very rapidly moving and growing market economy is that we provide greater flexibility to meet the needs of students as well as employers when we have undertaken this including the time of year and the flexibility in delivering training for students as well.

That's the whole idea: more flexibility and more choice for employers and students, learners and trainees who are coming through TasTAFE. In terms of what we are using to promote TasTAFE as a provider to students, maybe the CEO would like to add some more points there.

**Mr DREHER** - Thank you, minister and through you. The changes as were spoken when this legislation went through parliament are around the flexibility that we can offer. Certainly we think that these changes will allow us to offer courses across a broader spread of the year and across a broader range of times in a manner that allows us to do it efficiently and cost effectively. That is where you will see a lot of emphasis and improvements for the students.

Also, we hope that these new employment frameworks will allow us to employ people more quickly and more appropriately for the industries that they will be teaching in. Certainly that applies in new and emerging industries and the high demand industries that we talked about before.

The whole point of this is around servicing students and servicing the industries that TasTAFE has to service in a more contemporary and modern manner.

**Mr WILLIE** - The other side of this is: how will you manage the expectations from industry? Your government basically been telling them that this transition will fix all of their training problems when there is every chance they will be disappointed.

**Mr JAENSCH** - I reject that again as well. I do not even know if that is a question.

**Mr WILLIE** - It is. How are you going to manage the expectations?

**Mr JAENSCH** - You are making a critical assertion there and quite a cynical one too.

**Mr WILLIE** - The question is how are you going to manage the expectation from industry?

**Mr JAENSCH** - We and TasTAFE are working closely with industry. They asked for this, you must remember. This is a response to industry telling us what they needed TasTAFE to be in the future - to be a valuable provider of solutions to their problems.

We are not coming out of the box brand new, and then having to sell this. This is what the industry asked us for. They know that we have a significant transition process to work through. You will see every second day in the newspaper a picture of TasTAFE signing an MOU celebrating a new relationship with different sectors of our economy representing employers and employees who need training, representing how they working together to ensure that TasTAFE is going to be able to meet their needs.

That also comes with an understanding from those sectors of the stages that TasTAFE is going through to be able to deliver that. I think this is an exciting time. There hasn't been a reform this big or important in terms of our workforce and how we are supplying Tasmanian businesses with people they need for a generation or more. So I think they are well on board with this and they will stay on board with this as it produces results for them.

**Mr WILLIE** - We will see. When benchmarking against industries for the demand of trainers, how will you manage the gender pay gap?

From my understanding from the briefing, it is benchmarking for the demand of teachers, not the industry. But we do have, say, child care; there may be different demands for teachers in that industry. We know construction is very overheated; there is a great demand for teachers in that industry.

How are you going to manage this to make sure the gender pay gap is not exacerbated by industries that have been traditionally dominated by men?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Every industry that I have spoken to since coming to my role as minister in this portfolio has been talking about diversifying their workforce at all levels. That has partly also been driven by their current market conditions where they need to be looking at non-traditional sources and demographics and avenues for recruiting the people they need. I am really proud of the way some of the industries have been prepared to change and make their workplaces safe, welcoming and attractive to women, younger people, older people and people from different cultural backgrounds as well. So I think they will want to see TasTAFE as



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enabling that sort of transition that they are making, as well. I ask the CEO if he wants to comment on that.

**Mr DREHER** - The pay scale available to TAFE teachers will be the same no matter what industry they teach in. And the ability to progress up the pay scale will be the same no matter what industry they are recruited from. Also, with payment of TAFE teachers, there are external regulatory requirements that they must have that will also determine where they come in on the pay scale.

I might not have the question accurately, but what we are proposing does not change how we pay TasTAFE, whether they come out of early childhood or out of plumbing.

**Mr WILLIE** - It might change the entry level though, depending on the demand.

**Mr DREHER** - My answer would be that is no different to how it is now. It is not just the industry that determines that.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. I would like to ask about the TasTAFE student management system. Obviously, there is some funding in the Budget for \$500 000 for further investment in the virtual campus initiative and the TasTAFE student manage system. I am interested in where those two initiatives are at, because there are no forward budgets for them.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you. I will ask the CEO to respond, but I understand that the money that you see in the Budget is for some initial stage works to scope what is required,

**CHAIR** - It says 'develop a robust business case'?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, that is to get a design and a plan for what the transformation of those existing systems might require.

**CHAIR** - So, at this point and time there will not be anything because it is only new money in the Budget. Is that correct?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The CEO might be able to answer in some more detail.

**Mr DREHER** - Thank you, minister. The current student management system is approaching end of life. It has been in for eight years. You would normally review it in that eight-to-ten-year period. There have been some concerns around the risks of the current system given that a lot of TAFE institutes across the country have exited from this particular system. We will be reviewing whether to continue with the current system or whether we will need to recommend a new system.

That decision has not been made yet; the money is to help us do that work. It is quite a significant amount of work. The student management system is basically what controls all of the business activity we do, as in our student enrolments, et cetera. That money is for scoping of that and firstly, investigating whether it needs to be replaced, and then if we need to replace, how to scope that out.

**CHAIR** - What about the virtual campus initiative? Is that part of it?

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**Mr DREHER** - A key component of the virtual campus is the student management system and making sure that it's robust enough to be able to take all the interfaces that will need to be interfaced with it to build the virtual campus around it.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Given that the new model is, shall I say, more heavily collaborated by industry, I think that would be fair to say, sometimes the individual industries may have a more focused need. The concern I'm hearing is that students exiting TAFE may not have such a broad-based education and, therefore, be less multiskilled to their detriment. Do you have any comment to make on that?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I'm happy for the CEO to respond to that.

**Mr DREHER** - The education and training delivered by TAFE institutes across the country are written by industry for industry and they're called national training packages. The governance structure of TasTAFE won't change what we deliver. We're still committed to accredited training, which includes the underpinning skills and knowledge and the core skills framework that people need beyond the actual skill of the industry.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Literacy and numeracy boosting?

**Mr DREHER** - I have to be careful what I say here. TAFEs were never set up to teach people how to read and write. TAFEs were set up to skill the workforce and to train people for jobs. We have issues in Tasmania but in Australia with LL&N and D, which we've added onto it now, those programs that we currently run to help people gain the foundation skills they need to be able to study skills-based training programs will continue. There's no intention to change any of that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There could be mature age entrants that need some of that?

**Mr DREHER** - That's right. Correct.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You're giving me an assurance that that won't be outside the focus?

**Mr DREHER** - There's been no discussion about that being outside the focus and it would be remiss of the public provider not to be providing that training to give people the skills they need to get a job. And sometimes that's learning to read and write.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Have all TasTAFE campuses have resumed taking unvaccinated students and trainees back into the situation where they can be assessed for their course assessment?

**Mr JAENSCH** - That's my understanding. I'll get confirmation from the CEO.

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

**CHAIR** - Good news for a number of my constituents, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Indeed.

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**Mr WILLIE** - I'm interested in the Water and Energy Trades Centre of Excellence. There's another \$5 million there and I am aware of that project not being to the scale that it was originally thought and the accommodation of staff within that building, including offices. Will that \$5 million improve that area of the project?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think the extended funding from the Commonwealth and the state has allowed the project to expand scope to include electrotechnology training as well and to relocate that capability from Campbell Street to Clarence. Any other feedback for Mr Willie?

**Mr DREHER** - In answer to your question about staff accommodation, there's no intention to accommodate staff in that particular Centre of Excellence. It's a very large campus with plenty of space on it to accommodate staff, so the -

**CHAIR** - Students.

**Mr DREHER** - No, we're talking about staff. The intention is that staff will be accommodated in buildings close to where that particular building is and all the money is actually going into the training facilities for the students.

**CHAIR** - But there'll be no student accommodation connected with that?

**Mr DREHER** - We do currently have student accommodation on the Clarence campus site, which is one of the reasons it's the location of the Centre of Excellence and we have received a commitment from government for another \$7 million to increase the level of accommodation on that site.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What will that buy? How many extra rooms or whatever will that buy? Do we know? Do we have an understanding as to what that \$7 million will give us?

**Mr ADAMS** - There are various options with the accommodation. We have 60 beds on site at the moment. Our first stage for that \$7 million we are investing in pod accommodation and looking at a couple of different models as to whether they're single bedrooms, two-bedroom units, et cetera. That will determine the total number we want going forward.

**CHAIR** - It might be a pod.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It could be.

**CHAIR** - They're pretty fancy out my way.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's a WET pod.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It's interesting but I thought that when we looked at with Public Works there was some staff accommodation. Has it changed?

**Mr ADAMS** - No, it hasn't changed. In terms of the Water and Energy Trades (WET) Centre of Excellence, it was never intended that staff would be accommodated within that building. It was never part of the scope.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I thought I remember -

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**Mr ADAMS** - It was always part of the scope that the staff would be accommodated on the campus.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I thought it was part of the refurbishment.

**CHAIR** - As a member of the Public Works Committee, as it's a \$7 million investment, we won't get to look at it.

**Mr WILLIE** - We on the Public Accounts Committee have been calling in heaps of projects.

**Mr DREHER** - Can I just clarify if I may - Mr Willie's question about staff accommodation, it's their office space -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, that's what -

**Mr DREHER** - The question about the other accommodation was student accommodation.

**CHAIR** - Yes, student accommodation. Most of the students don't come from Hobart so they need somewhere to stay.

**Mr VALENTINE** - You're talking about domestic accommodation as opposed to staff having an office. We understand that. It's just that we thought that there was some staff space in that original thing. We'll have to go back to the books.

**Mr ADAMS** - To clarify, in the Centre of Excellence project there is an allowance of funding for staff accommodation and that will be used to refurbish some of the existing campus to accommodate staff. So it was included in the project; it was never included in the scope of the new building.

**CHAIR** - We were shown that area when we went on site to visit, if you recall?

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes, you were there.

**Mr WILLIE** - Just back to the student accommodation, are there stages of the year where that is at capacity? When I asked the question in the Legislative Council, I think it was a low demand period of about 30 per cent vacancy but are there times where students are being turned away from that accommodation at the moment?

**Mr ADAMS** - At the moment, we're not hitting capacity. It does vary through the year, depending on what happens but we are anticipating the need for more accommodation going forward once those other two trades - plumbing and electro - go to the campus.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If there are no further questions I would particularly like to thank Grant and Scott for their time. More recently, we've had quite a lot of discussion about TasTAFE and the reforms so it's not that the committee doesn't have a huge interest. Some of these reforms need time to actually start working so the questions will probably be more fulsome in next year's scrutiny. Thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We look forward to them. Thank you.

**The Committee suspended from 5.19 p.m. to 5.22 p.m.**

### **Aboriginal Affairs**

**CHAIR** – Minister, we invite you to introduce the team at the table for our area of scrutiny for you as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, thank you.

**Mr JAENSCH** – I would to introduce the Acting Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources and the Environment, Jason Jacobi and Louise Wilson also our Deputy Secretary for our Department of Natural Resources and Environment. Mel Gray, Deputy Secretary Child and Youth Wellbeing. And I would like to introduce to the committee, Caroline Spotswood, who is our brand-new Director of Aboriginal Partnerships, a new recruit and someone I would like to welcome to this part of our parliament.

**CHAIR** – Thank you, and on behalf of the committee we would also like to welcome you Caroline.

**Mr JAENSCH** – It is appropriate at the opening of this particular hearing to acknowledge and pay respect to Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional and original owners and continuing custodians of the land that we are meeting on and pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging. I am very pleased and proud to be here again today in my capacity as Minister for Aboriginal Affairs.

The 2022-23 Budget reiterates the Tasmanian Governments firm commitment for delivering better outcomes for Tasmanian Aboriginal people and their families, protecting Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural heritage and to establishing a process for truth telling and a pathway to treaty in Tasmania. Included in our Budget is \$2 million for Closing the Gap as part of our overall commitment of \$5.3 million for the Closing the Gap Capacity Building Funding Program.

The fund will build the capacity of Aboriginal organisations so, they can deliver services in their community that specifically address Closing the Gap targets in key areas such as health and wellbeing, and education and housing.

The Office of Aboriginal Affairs is currently working with Aboriginal community-controlled organisations to co-design projects to be funded from the fund, that will achieve better outcomes for Aboriginal people in our state and I look forward to seeing those initiatives take shape.

Earlier in the year, I released a consultation paper on the development of new legislation to provide greater protection for Aboriginal cultural heritage by Tasmania's Aboriginal people. Submissions have closed on the consultation paper, but I acknowledge there is still a lot of work to go through and we will continue to consult widely with Aboriginal people, in particular, to ensure we produce a robust, comprehensive and contemporary piece of legislation. The responses received and the engagement with Aboriginal people at meetings so far, have been really encouraging, as have the responses received from non-Aboriginal stakeholders, and thank everyone who has engaged with the process to date.

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In recognition of the importance of Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, the 2022-23 Budget allocated an additional \$200 000 over two years towards development of a new purpose-built statutory Tasmanian Aboriginal Heritage Register. The register is a critical aspect of improving protection for Aboriginal cultural heritage and an integral part of the new stronger Aboriginal cultural heritage legislation that is under development.

A key commitment of our Government in the past year, is to progress on the pathway to truth telling and treaty. The 2022-23 Budget includes \$500 000 to offset the costs to Aboriginal people of taking part in the process and ensuring their voices are heard.

I have invited all Tasmanian Aboriginal organisations to send delegates to a gathering in July, to discuss the process of establishing an Aboriginal advisory body to help guide the next steps towards truth telling and treaty.

Yesterday, I released a consultation paper on a revised model for returning land to Tasmania's Aboriginal people. This is on proposals for change which outlines our Government's proposed approach to amending the Aboriginal Lands Act 1995, to support the return of more land to Aboriginal people. This paper has been informed by consultation undertaken over several years and outlines the Government's proposed approaches and directions on key amendments to the act.

It is clear a new approach is necessary, if land returns are to play a constructive part of our shared journey to reconciliation and I look forward to hearing the views of all Tasmanians, and particularly Tasmanian Aboriginal people in this regard.

Madam Chair, thank you for the opportunity. Our Government will continue to work with all Tasmanian Aboriginal people in partnership as we progress towards true reconciliation. Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - The things that you were talking about in your preamble seem very positive and good.

Can you outline what progress has been made to date on the development of new Aboriginal heritage legislation, and when this will be brought before the parliament?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I covered in some high level in my preamble, but we have a consultation paper which has been made public. The formal comment period has closed on that, but as usual with these processes, we will not reject any further questions, comments and inputs, particularly from Aboriginal organisations. We know some of our consultation period also occurred at the same time as our mutton bird season, which has involved a lot of Aboriginal community organisations and groups as it has for a very long time, historically as an important cultural practice there.

We will not exclude them because they may have been out of action, or in action, actually.

**CHAIR** - Had their focus elsewhere.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, exactly. Working hard. We will keep working with them.

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We have the consultation paper. Our next steps are to consider the matters that have been brought up in the responses to the consultation.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you give us an idea of how many responses were received?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I think I have some information on that. My notes tell us more than 30 submissions. That is formal submissions, but there are also a range of conversations underway. And there are some organisations that we have had meetings with and with whom we are planning more face-to-face discussions. Then we will take the matters raised, digest them and use them to refine our approach. It would not surprise me if, before the end of the year, we have a further set of more refined proposals for changes to the act that we also consult with, again,

**Mr VALENTINE** - So, you see this coming to the parliament early next year?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Early next year.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you for that. Can you detail the outcomes from the review into the model for returning land and whether those outcomes would be incorporated into the Government's processes for handing land back to Aboriginal communities in Tasmania?

**CHAIR** - Is the member referring to local area management or just general?

**Mr VALENTINE** - It is called the Review into The Model for Returning Land.

**Mr JAENSCH** - The review of the model is a long-term process. We have sought comment in the past on changes that people would like to see to the act, and the process for returning land. Off the back of those, we have now prepared a range of proposals that we are asking people to comment on, to see if we have captured the needs that have been identified over a couple of different consultation periods, including ones that we ran in 2018-19 and, interestingly, matters that were raised through other forums, like through the work that professors Warner and McCormick did on their consultations on a pathway to truth telling and treaty. There are some resonating themes. They reinforced that this is a priority issue for Aboriginal people but also that there are widely differing views on how we should proceed.

Key amendments that are proposed in the consultation paper reflecting the views of people who made contributions to those previous consultations include: extending the scope and intent of the act to meet community expectations, including objectives of the legislation in its description; enabling broader and more inclusive representation on the Aboriginal Land Council elector roll; simplifying the process for land return by creating a new instrument for transfer of parcels of Crown land; expanding provisions for local or regional Aboriginal community organisations to be involved in land management; create transparent processes and clear criteria for proposing and assessing land for return; and also to clarify the role of the Aboriginal Land Council of Tasmania and require more reporting of administrative and land management activity that they undertake on behalf of Aboriginal people.

We do not propose changes to the key roles of the Aboriginal Land Council, but importantly, we look at how more Aboriginal people in Tasmania, can participate in its processes, including the return and management of Aboriginal land.

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**CHAIR** - Does that include more people who identify as being Aboriginal?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes. One of the key things that is included in the proposal is removal of a clause in the act which provides for any person to object to someone being listed on the elector roll on the basis of not being an Aboriginal person.

One of the factors that has been identified is that this is a very unusual clause. It does not appear in any other similar legislation elsewhere in Australia. Many Aboriginal people in Tasmania find it an unnecessarily adversarial clause. It starts with 'objection' - a negative. They find that is a factor that might encourage them not to pursue being listed on the elector roll participating in that process. This is something that we are open to hearing the views of all Tasmanians on and all Tasmanian Aboriginal people as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am sure you will get those views.

**Mr JAENSCH** - We are getting them.

**Mr VALENTINE** - There is no question that is probably one of the more difficult ones.

**CHAIR** - I have a supplementary question. I have been involved in two inquiries where land transfer has been the focus. Can you indicate whether those two committee reports have been considered?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Matters raised in those reports have been considered in our thinking on how we propose these changes.

**Mr VALENTINE** - 2013 was one of them. I remember the Chair and myself.

**CHAIR** - There was one prior to that as well.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I think Rebecca Creek and larapuna and were the two areas. Have there been any land transfers back to the Aboriginal community since those two were considered that you are aware of?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, there has been a small transfer. I need advice as to the name of that parcel.

**CHAIR** - I think it was somewhere in the south east, was it?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will get the name. There has been a return. It's a small site, I believe.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Can you give us an idea as to where that is?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I will get some information.

The point is that we have found the existing legislation doesn't provide a clear process by which further parcels of land can be proposed, assessed and considered for return. In order to give effect to land return you are facing an amendment to the existing legislation and there are no guides to how to bring that about other than just a standard bill. What we want to try to



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provide is a process that everyone can see, which talks about the purpose and value of returning land to Aboriginal people and some of the other requirements around it.

**CHAIR** - Are you considering bypassing parliament?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No. One of the things we are proposing is a new instrument in the form of a disallowable instrument to be tabled in both Houses of parliament as for a range of other matters, like our housing land supply orders currently, so that parliament has the opportunity to see, to scrutinise, to debate if they see a need for it. That would be a different and a more straightforward mechanism than a full amendment to the legislation but we are open to feedback and advice on that mechanism as well.

At the moment there is no mechanism other than amending the act. For our record, I am advised that the parcel returned has the European name, Lake Meadowbank in the Derwent Valley, and it was returned from Hydro Tasmania. It is rock-marking site. In 2015 it was returned. Its name is Nirmena Nala at Lake Meadowbank.

**CHAIR** - South west.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Nirmena Nala.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Central, yes.

**CHAIR** - Yes. More central.

**Mr VALENTINE** - What was that again?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Nirmena Nala.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Minister, can you expand on the reasons behind the policy for a separate Aboriginal Heritage Register, what the Aboriginal community's expectations are for such a register and what outcomes are expected from the funding being provided for its development?

**Mr JAENSCH** - One of the things we want to do is ensure that Aboriginal heritage is protected from harm. One of the most important things is that people do not, in ignorance, plan, develop or disturb heritage because they did not know it was there. We are encouraging our developers, people who are subdividing land or building a house or farming.

**Mr VALENTINE** - It could be millions of things they are just not aware off.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Exactly. What we want to do is promote that people take account of Aboriginal heritage far earlier in their process. To ensure it does not turn up after they have spent all their money buying land, getting all of their planning approvals, but as soon as they get underway and start digging and after they have committed all their money already, then they find Aboriginal heritage and it is the reason for them not to proceed. That makes Aboriginal heritage a reason why they cannot do what they want to do. Whereas, what we are trying to promote is Aboriginal heritage is protected under law. We need developers, planning and approvals processes to flag Aboriginal heritage early so you can design around it, cater for it in your planning and have fewer occasions where we need to issue or consider applications

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for permits to destroy or relocate or conceal Aboriginal heritage. Now, to support that, we need a stronger and more contemporary and up to date searchable Aboriginal Heritage Register. It is a busy time for Tasmania with a lot of development and building going on and we are moving into having things like PlanBuild and our Tasmanian Planning Scheme in place. What we need to be able to do is to have those processes pop up, you need to have a dial before you dig search. You need to search up whether there is a likelihood of Aboriginal heritage in the area that you are planning to build before you start. Not, as a showstopper later in the process because you never knew.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Part of the question was what the Aboriginal community expectations are for such a register? Are they fully on board with this move to have a separate Aboriginal Heritage Register.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There is already an Aboriginal Heritage Register, it is about updating and strengthening it -

**Mr VALENTINE** - Yes. It is '76 or something, but in terms of renewing it, is that something they wish to see? And whether or not they see some other way of dealing with Aboriginal heritage?

**Mr JAENSCH** - The overwhelming message to me from the Aboriginal Heritage Council, made up of Aboriginal people as its members, has been that we want more protection more Aboriginal heritage. Part of that, is ensuring that it can be identified and managed for, much earlier in the planning process. I might ask if Steve Gall would like to come and provide some comment, this is his area and he speaks very well.

**Mr GALL** - Firstly, can I just say, ya pulingina milaythina Pakana. Hello and welcome to Aboriginal Land, always was, always will be. Aboriginal Heritage Register. Most contemporary legislation across Australia requires a statutory repository for Aboriginal site information so you can make informed decisions. That is what the state is really doing. The Aboriginal community's view on it is that it is Aboriginal information, that its IP belongs to the community. I come from that community and I totally agree with that. There are some sensitivities about it and there are certainly divergent views on how it is to be managed. One of the steps we take is, because the Aboriginal Heritage Council established under our act, we provide minutes and advice to them so they can make informed recommendations to the minister and the director of Parks and the register is central to that. The intention is to with the new register provide access for Aboriginal community and they can actually tap in to that information, have access to it and view videos, films. Whatever is on that register they can have access to and they will - through the council - have direct management of that register. We answer to the council as far as the register is concerned.

**CHAIR** – Can only Indigenous people put forward areas to be considered or can any Tasmanian put forward an area?

**Mr JAENSCH** – All Aboriginal heritage is protected under our laws and so any heritage items that people come across should be reported to Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania and then they can be assessed, described and recorded in the register.

**Mr GALL** – For the last 47 years there has been a requirement for people to report to the Director of National Parks as soon as practicable anything they suspect to be Aboriginal heritage. The current process is that Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania then has a look at that

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recording and validates it or requires some sort of other assessment to be undertaken so we can validate and quality assure the information that is on the register.

**Mr VALENTINE** – Thank you for your welcome too. Is it still the case any construction project of significance has to have an Aboriginal heritage study as part of their planning process? You used to be in the planning area so you would be able to tell me that I suppose, is that still the case or is it hit or miss? This is what I am concerned about and can you address that, especially on coastal areas and coastal policy.

**CHAIR** – We do not have a coastal policy.

**Mr VALENTINE** – We do, but it has to be implemented by local government.

**Mr JAENSCH** – As I said before all Aboriginal heritage is protected and what we are driving for is it to be considered earlier in any process, therefore depending on the size, scale and complexity of the process you should be able to, through the dial before you dig system, access not necessarily detailed information about heritage at a particular site, but the likelihood there may be some there. Recommendations triggered by that as to the next steps you should take, including potentially undertaking a survey of the area to identify what heritage may be at risk or you may encounter in your development.

**Mr VALENTINE** – I thought since the Brighton bypass there was this stricture any infrastructure development, certainly by government, but I thought by anybody, they had to undertake an Aboriginal heritage survey of the area, so that sort of thing did not happen again. What is in place, I mean dial before you dig is fine if you remember to do it.

**Mr JAENSCH** – And dial before you dig, for building a house lot is different from creating a brand new subdivision, is different from creating major public infrastructure, maybe Steve could let us in on the different requirements.

**Mr VALENTINE** – I would appreciate that.

**Mr GALL** – Major projects undertaken by the state Government are all scrutinised, they come through as a desktop process for us, so it does not always end up in a field survey and depends on the risk that comes out of the desktop assessment. AHT has technical specialists, archaeologists and Aboriginal cultural heritage officers skilled in this area and they will look at all the records. They then provide me with a way forward to give to a developer to say yes you can have an assessment or not. We do not make people jump through hoops if they do not need to, but we put up a management actions such as an unanticipated discovery plan. For anyone just building a house, there are some mechanisms. The local government, quite a few of them refer people onto us. There's access to our information on planned build at the moment. Planned build is at stage one of its implementation, so there is a referrals space there that talks about Aboriginal heritage and it puts it to the Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania page.

We get about 45 000 dial before you dig referrals a year which end up in about 3500 desktops. It has been very effective and some of the other steps the minister has been taking which he took out, list inventories and things like that, will make it more effective and we'll pick up those other areas. We are picking up more and more.

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**Mr VALENTINE** - Basically, the Aboriginal community are satisfied with the processes and procedures that are in place. Is it fair to say that in terms of the discovery of Aboriginal heritage?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I would never undertake to provide a response to a question like that on behalf of the Aboriginal community.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I would have thought the consultation might have happened and you could say, yes.

**Mr JAENSCH** - What I can say is that through consultation on our legislation, through our continuing involvement through the staff and the networks of Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania, the Aboriginal Heritage Council, made up of Aboriginal people from around the state, that's what is informing the work that we're doing.

**Mr VALENTINE** - I think I've asked enough questions, Chair. I just hope it goes forward well.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, you might not be aware of this. There has been some discussion about the property owned by Dick Smith, at Crescent Bay - a beautiful part of the world - that it is of significance to the Aboriginal community. How does the Government plan to respond to the proposed sale of the lot at Crescent Bay in the context of your recently-released consultation paper on proposals for change and an improved model for returning land to Tasmanian Aboriginal people?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I don't have any specific advice with me on this but I'm happy for Mr Jacobi to provide comment.

**Mr JACOBI** - This was a matter that was raised in Mrs Petrusma's session previously. The Parks and Wildlife Service regularly receives applications or suggestions for the purchase of land. We normally assess each of those proposals against the particular values that would be protected and the commercial cost of the purchase.

In the particular case of the Crescent Bay proposal, I appreciate that it is a significant parcel adjacent to the Tasman National Park, but it is likely that that parcel will sell for many millions of dollars and without any dedicated funding allocation for that purchase it would not be a priority for us at this point in time.

I mentioned before, we receive multiple applications for parcels all across the state and we consider those on a case-by-case basis.

**Mr WILLIE** - How many do you receive a year?

**Mr JACOBI** - Off the top of my head, I would be aware of at least four or five parcels that have been identified and brought to my attention as being worthy of purchase. Some of them are no bigger than a couple of hundred square metres, landlocked parcels within the conservation reserve that would be nice to tidy up. These are freehold parcels we are talking about. It is important to also recognise that these are freehold parcels. They've been driven and the demand for the purchase has been driven by the owner. The owner is trying to secure

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the best price. Obviously, if there was a parcel that had significant Aboriginal heritage on it, then that would be an important consideration for government.

**CHAIR** - Minister, you talked about some gatherings in July that you had in your overview. I represent a number of Aboriginal communities and I am interested to know if all Aboriginal communities will have a representative at that gathering, for instance, my Flinders Island Aboriginal Association?

**Mr JAENSCH** - I have written to 22 Aboriginal community controlled organisations -

**CHAIR** - Circular Head CHAC as well? All those?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Yes, inviting them all to nominate delegates to come to a gathering in late July. We recognise that not all Aboriginal people in Tasmania are associated with an organisation and we certainly do not seek to exclude people, but we want to ensure that we have a cross-section of the state. We are tapping into networks that we know of Aboriginal people and asking them to send delegates.

That gathering is not a decision-making forum. It is an exchange of information because we want to propose the establishment of an Aboriginal advisory group, a small group of people who we can work with on sensitive matters that need to have Aboriginal people involved in the design from the beginning, like those next steps for truth telling and treaty. This is a new way of working that we are committed to; it is not easy.

**CHAIR** - If it had been easy it would have been done before.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Exactly. It is full of traps for young players, I can tell you, in ensuring that we give everyone a chance to be heard and we do it in a way that they feel safe and confident to come forward. That is our challenge to do that.

At the end of July we want to invite these parties together to talk about how this Aboriginal advisory body may be formed, what its terms of reference might be, and how it will work. When those people go home to their communities and their networks and discuss it, we want to ensure they are in a position to feed back to us their view on who might be suitable people for us to approach to be members of that group, who might have the trust of Aboriginal people, who might be acceptable broadly to their community and who they think would do a good job. We are waiting to be guided by them, and if we can assemble a group like that, then we will sit with them and work alongside with them on taking the next steps to truth telling and treaty. If we just do it as government, it is our process that we are asking them to fit in with, not a process that they have had a hand in designing themselves.

**CHAIR** - Do you have a list of land that you are proposing to discuss in and about the land transfer review consultation process?

**Mr JAENSCH** - No, the discussion relating to the amendments to the act is about the process, and the structures for doing that. What we are doing in parallel with that is having discussions with a number of different -

**CHAIR** - To identify parcels.

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**Mr JAENSCH** - they are doing the identifying, they are bringing them quite forcibly in some cases, others as a possibility. How would we go about putting in an expression of interest to co-manage this land with Parks, for example, or to transfer this land to Aboriginal ownership, control and management? Our understanding of each of those proposals, and they are on different types of land around the state, big and small, that have been proposed by different groups with more or less experience in managing land as well. This is informing the proposals we have to amend the act, because these are the types of cases that it is going to have to deal with.

We are working those up so that by the time we have the legislation improved, we have candidate parcels of land to work with. There are some of those that we may be able to advance in the meantime under existing arrangements, but they are all a bit different to each other. If you are comfortable with that answer on that question, Mr Jacobi has indicated he needs to update his answer to a question earlier.

**Mr JACOBI** - In response to Mr Willie's question about Crescent Bay, I mentioned that it had come up in Mrs Petrusma's Parks' session this afternoon. It did not. I just thought it would.

**CHAIR** - Mr Valentine, have you exhausted your questions in this area?

**Mr VALENTINE** - I am interested in the sort of work that might have gone on in informing regarding the cultural aspects of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Management Plan. Specifically, what sort of work has been happening in that space of late? I am assuming it might be in relation to the idea of putting some huts on the South-Coast Track but there might well be other matters.

**Mr JAENSCH** - There is a lot of work. It is a large area and it is an area that has received its World Heritage listing in part because of the Aboriginal cultural values of the area. A range of activities is currently underway there. The Tasmanian and the Australian governments provide joint funding to support the understanding and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage values in the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Under the 2018-23 funding agreement for the TWWHA a \$5.1 million annual commitment in Australian government funding was secured to protect natural and cultural values in the TWWHA. The Tasmanian government has been dedicating \$1.08 million of this funding each year to the protection and management of Aboriginal cultural values there.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Is that \$5.1 million recurrent?

**Mr JAENSCH** - It is an annual commitment under the 2018-23 funding agreement of which the Tasmanian government dedicates \$1.08 million.

**Mr VALENTINE** That runs out next year.

**Mr JAENSCH** - This is the first time dedicated funding of any significance has been allocated to Aboriginal cultural values management in the TWWHA. It is matched by a contribution from the Tasmanian government, including in kind contributions. Four projects under the TWWHA management plan are being implemented. A program of Aboriginal community access visits - in 2021-22, 95 Aboriginal people were involved in a series of six

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specific access visits. The development of a guide for the interpretation and presentation of Aboriginal cultural values has been completed in collaboration with Tasmanian Aboriginal people and provided to the Parks and Wildlife Service.

Opportunities have been created for Aboriginal people to attend the national Indigenous Firesticks workshop, which facilitates, funds and supports Tasmanian Aboriginal people to attend the workshops annually in locations across Australia. The assessments of risks to Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and development of protocols for effective management is seeing the development of a GIS model for coastal and inland areas to identify natural and cultural hazards, with field work to validate the model and develop more baseline data. The detailed plan for a comprehensive cultural assessment of the TWWHA is a multi-year plan. That will be carried out in stages over a 10-year period, scheduled for completion in 2028.

Five projects are currently underway. First, rock art in the landscape and seascape, recording conservation and management. This field work involves Aboriginal people with 17 sites digitally recorded in the TWWHA so far. Post-contact Aboriginal heritage and shared values of the TWWHA is a project that provides opportunities for Aboriginal people to be involved and trained in the development of healthy country plans which are aimed at supporting the management of values in areas in the TWWHA.

To date, a healthy country plan has been developed for Research Bay with seven Aboriginal people trained in the process. A further seven Aboriginal people are currently being trained in the north-west. Another project reviewing building and integrating robust systems for the management of cultural values in the TWWHA aims to improve and strengthen integration of Aboriginal cultural heritage management within the Parks and Wildlife Service and the work of Tasmanian Government agencies. An assistant aboriginal heritage adviser program for the management of the Aboriginal cultural heritage values program is providing training, education and employment for four Aboriginal people over four years, and cultural heritage training for the management of cultural heritage values in the TWWHA, which provides employment opportunities for Aboriginal people to develop and deliver course material on TWWHA land. There are two key products: face-to-face Aboriginal cultural heritage training provided by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Cultural Centre and an online training resource developed with Aboriginal people and available to the public. Considerable work is underway. Mr Jacobi or Steve, do you have any others to add to that update?

**CHAIR** - It was an extensive list, minister.

**Mr JAENSCH** - But there's more.

**Mr GALL** - Yes, through the minister. This is an exciting time for Aboriginal people because we haven't had an investment of this calibre before. These projects are designed by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people. It's included Aboriginal people in every part of the process and it's for Aboriginal outputs. It's not related in any way to any particular development applications that are going forward. These are totally independent of that. This is about capturing baseline data and understanding the cultural values of the large property and then to really inform good management decisions around that.

**Mr VALENTINE** - Thank you, I really appreciate that.

#### **4.4 Aboriginal Affairs**

**Mr WILLIE** - You asked this for me, Chair, but there might be some expansion. Minister, yesterday you indicated that engaging with the Aboriginal community organisations is your preferred approach, despite the Aboriginal population being vastly larger than the organisational membership. The question is, will you commit to releasing an engagement strategy that shows how the Government will reach out to Aboriginal families and individuals to include them in the very important work of closing the gap through treaty, truth-telling and healing?

**CHAIR** - I'd suggest that your question is much more finessed than mine.

**Mr JAENSCH** - He's had more time.

The Aboriginal community organisations that we spoke of are the ones we have an address for. They have a network within their own communities that we're relying on them to draw their advice and their input from. Contacting those organisations is for the purpose of getting diversity of representation in the room for the initial discussion.

Our intention would be, as it is for any consultation that we do on the Aboriginal Heritage Act, the Aboriginal Lands Act, is to be able to go broadly to everyone who's got something to say and ensure that we hear all voices.

In terms of getting direct advice on how to set up this Aboriginal advisory body in the first place, we want to ensure that we're getting a cross-section of views, recognising that we can't get everybody in the room. Our hope would be, that if we have Aboriginal people guiding the next steps on, say, the development of the process for truth-telling and treaty, they will be able to give us insights into how best to design that process so that Aboriginal people come forward and participate.

**Mr WILLIE** - You'd potentially release a lot more information after that initial discussion?

**Mr JAENSCH** - Absolutely, yes.

**CHAIR** - I think we've probably wandered into Aboriginal affairs. There's a note that explains the increase in funding for this line item. That's always very helpful, whoever suggested they put a note in. Thank you.

**Mr VALENTINE** - No, I don't think so. I think I've asked plenty.

**CHAIR** - No, you've done a good job. Minister, that draws to a close the Committee B scrutiny. It's 'B' only in letter, not in status. I've had to mention that a couple of times in the last couple of days.

**Mr JAENSCH** - It's not the B team.

**CHAIR** - It's not the B team. It's the 'better team', as the member for Launceston suggested.



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On behalf of the committee and our committee support here, we sincerely thank you and your Government in general for today's effort. It is a big undertaking to provide the information that members ask for and we do our best to get through all output groups and line items. I did fail at one hurdle today so I am a bit disappointed about that.

We ran out of time in Education, but there are always opportunities in parliament as an elected member to put a question forward. Our sincere thanks to you and we wish you all the best.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you, Chair, and thank you members of the committee. Scrutiny is part of the job and we welcome it. It is good for us and we have absolutely no complaints about preparing for it and to answer your questions. I thank our department staff along the table and in the room here and my office staff as well and all the advisers who have helped to prepare me and stuff my pockets with notes to be able to answer your questions.

**CHAIR** - It is a lot of yellow notes. We noticed that; it is right through all agencies so thank you. I place on the record also a special thanks to our committee secretary, we have Simon Scott and Julie Thompson, exceptional support and also, we have had Liam with us for three days now and he has done an excellent job. So, thank you Liam and we will have you back any time.

**Mr JAENSCH** - Thank you everybody.

**The Committee adjourned at 6.11 p.m.**