



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE A

Hon. Felix Ellis MP

Wednesday 7 June 2023

MEMBERS

Hon Luke Edmunds MLC;
Hon Nick Duigan MLC;
Hon Ruth Forrest MLC (Chair);
Hon Mike Gaffney MLC (Deputy Chair);
Hon Dean Harriss MLC; and
Hon Sarah Lovell MLC.

IN ATTENDANCE

Hon. Felix Ellis MP, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management; Minister for Resources; Minister for Skills, Training and Workforce Growth

Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Donna Adams Commissioner of Police/Secretary, DPFEM
Jonathan Higgins Deputy Commissioner of Police
Adrian Bodnar Assistant Commissioner Operations
Robert Blackwood Assistant Commissioner
Glenn Keating Assistant Commissioner
Mandy Clarke Deputy Secretary
Mandy Denby Manager, Office of the Commissioner/Secretary
Scott Wilson-Haffenden Director, Finance and Business Transformation
Kathy Baker Executive Director, People and Business Services

Dermot Barry Chief Officer
Jeremy Smith Acting Deputy Chief Officer
Michael Lowe Acting Director, State Emergency Service and Volunteers
Allan Garcia Chair, State Fire Commission

Skills, Training and Workforce Growth

Kim Evans Secretary, Department of State Growth
Mark Bowles Deputy Secretary, Business and Jobs, Department of State Growth
Angela Conway Acting Deputy Secretary, Business Services
Alex Paterson Acting General Manager, Skills Tasmania
Stuart Hollingsworth Director, Jobs Tasmania
Peta Sugden Director, Workforce Development and Strategic Relations
Travis Boutcher Manager, Budget
Grant Dreher Chief Executive Officer, TasTAFE
Fiona Le Gassick Director Future Students and Industry, TasTAFE

Resources

Deidre Wilson Deputy Secretary, NRE Tas
Alastair Moreton Director, Forest Policy
Brett Stewart Deputy Secretary, Resources, Strategy and Policy, Department of State Growth
Ben Waining Acting Director Mineral Resources Tasmania
Glenn Dean Director Finance
Travis Boutcher Manager, Budget

The Committee met at 9 a.m.

DIVISION 7

(Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania)

Output group 2 - Primary Industries and Water

2.5 Forest policy

CHAIR (Ms Forrest) - Welcome, minister, I believe this is your first budget Estimates meeting. I'll get you to introduce your team. Starting with Forestry and Resources we have scheduled in 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. and then we will have a short break, and then we will go to Skills after that break, around 11 o'clock.

After you introduce your team, if you wish, you can make an opening statement related to forestry.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks for having me, Chair. To my left we have Ms Deidre Wilson, Deputy Secretary, Department of Natural Resources and Environment; Mr Alastair Moreton, Director, Forestry Services; and to my right, my Chief of Staff, Elaina Deayton, but she won't be taking questions. We will introduce the mining team when we get to that and please feel free to let us know when you would like to swap us over. I thank them for their efforts together with that of their team in supporting the Government and the state in this important area.

I also note, as you did Chair, that this is my first appearance before the Committee as minister for Resources and I want to recognise the valuable contribution made by my predecessor, Guy Barnett, during his long tenure in the portfolio.

Chair, the Government was elected in 2014 with a mandate to rebuild the forest sector and drive mining forward. Since day one we've taken firm, decisive action to do just that. Now, nine years on, jobs are up, investment is up and confidence is up. Today, more than 10 000 Tasmanians earn a living, directly or indirectly, from our resources sector. These industries also provide the lion's share of our export earnings here in Tasmania - more than 60 per cent of the \$4.64 billion earned in the 12 months to March this year.

Looking forward, the growing demand for smart, innovative low-carbon products firmly puts Tasmania on the edge of a wave sweeping the world. Our attractiveness as a supplier of minerals and fibre is only super-charged by our genuinely world-leading renewable energy credentials, net-zero status and well-respected regulatory framework.

This budget continues our support for ongoing initiatives, including our popular co-funded Exploration Drilling Grants Initiative, our refreshed Geoscience Initiative and additional support for our important mining and quarrying sectors committed in last year's budget. The ongoing support is on top of other commitments from our 2021 election platform which includes \$10 million to support our On-Island Timber Processing Grants; \$1.15 million to the Tasmanian Timber Promotions Board to value-add and promote Tasmanian timber products to the world; and \$450 000 to help mining and forestry sectors develop industry-specific diversity action plans.

Of course, the greatest support which we can provide to this sector is confidence, that they have a government that backs them in. Unlike other state governments, we will not shut

down our native forestry sector; we will not engage in further land lock-ups, including in the Tarkine. Businesses looking to invest in Tasmania can do much with the confidence that comes from a government that believes in the industry and its future.

Before concluding, I will touch briefly on where I think exciting new opportunities for our resources sector lie. Metals and other minerals from Tasmanian mines will be key to helping bring about an electrified future and meeting the defence manufacturing needs of our country. Critical minerals are a huge opportunity here in Tasmania. The Dolphin Mine, for example, on King Island, is Australia's primary source of tungsten, hosting the highest-grade mineral deposit of a significant size anywhere in the western world.

Besides tungsten, Tasmania has quantities of antimony and rare earth elements that are the subject of current exploration activity and then there are the critical minerals like germanium, indium and cobalt associated with existing operations. Already there's been interest from local mines and processes around extracting these key minerals to meet our strategic and technological needs. All of this is why our Government is developing a Tasmanian critical mineral strategy to best position our state to take advantage of new opportunities.

Timber and wood products from our sustainably managed native forests and vast plantation estate will be necessary to build our homes, to bring about the plastic-free future and to sequester carbon. Despite being one of the world's most forested countries, Australia is currently a net importer of timber. Plantation timber alone cannot meet existing demand without sustainably managed native forest currently filling the gap. Our plantations plan today will not be ready for decades to come. The earlier than expected shutdown of native forestry in Victoria and growth in demand for carbon-sequestering products like timber is a huge opportunity for Tasmania.

We'll continue to work with our local industry to ensure security of supply, ensuring that Tasmanian timber supports Tasmanian jobs. The benefits of sustainable forestry, particularly in the native space, include new opportunities regarding carbon which we're already exploring with STT and benefits of active land management such as a pathway to improve the landscape's resilience to bushfires, improve environmental outcomes and provide a stage for some of the world's best recreational offerings.

Chair, our resource sector is uniquely positioned to help bring about a new global future and I'm excited to play a small part in helping realise this.

CHAIR - Thank you. I'll open this up. The way we do Estimates, minister, is to go line by line through this and various members take the lead on it. The first one is Mr Duigan, who will no doubt have a Dorothy Dixier and I hope it doesn't cover all that information you provided in your opening, because if you start repeating it all I'll pull you up.

Mr ELLIS - I'm sure it'll be a penetrating insight into new information.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you very much, Chair. I asked this question as a person who has spent more than a decade travelling around the country looking at the forestry sector, so it is very important to me and I'm a supporter of it.

PUBLIC

In recent times, the Victorian Andrews Government has made a decision to shut down its native forest sector by the end of this year. I'm interested to know what you see are the benefits of a sustainable native sector and what Tasmania's approach is.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. As I said in my introductory remarks, Australia is not currently producing enough timber to meet its domestic needs. What's more, Australians will be demanding more wood, not less, as we move forward, given wood's sustainability and carbon-sequestering capacity and natural beauty. Plantation timber alone cannot meet existing demand without sustainably managed native forests currently filling some of the gap. Plantations planted today will not be ready for decades to come. The reality is that native forestry in Australia is sustainable. It provides timber to build our houses, fibre for a plastic-free future, and is the lifeblood of regional communities such as yours and mine, Mr Duigan. It provides secure jobs.

The other benefits of sustainable forestry, particularly in the native space, include new opportunities regarding carbon sequestering, the potential for biodiversity credits as well as that framework potentially comes online, and the benefits of active land management as a pathway to improve our landscape's resilience to bushfires, improve environmental outcomes and recreational outcomes.

We know that the Greens only suit the science when it suits their preconceived position and their narrative.

CHAIR - You don't have to make political comments in this Chamber, minister. I'll stop my side doing it if you can try to stop yourself doing it.

Mr ELLIS - I'll remain restrained on that, Chair, but I do note that we have some extraordinary opportunities as a state. Decisions in other jurisdictions have been catastrophic for those regional communities and to see the faces of young children looking at a future that maybe doesn't have a place for them in the towns that they grew up is a great tragedy. What that means for us in Tasmania is that there is a great opportunity. It means that there is a potential future for those people to come down and work in our mills and our forests because we know that in Tasmanian forestry there are more jobs than people. We think that there can be a home for some displaced Victorians and Western Australians. More than that, it's an extraordinary market opportunity for our finished products as we sell them to mainland Australia.

As I noted before, our country is a net importer of timber despite being one of the most forested countries on earth. I think we have a moral imperative to produce sustainable products such as timber and to not outsource that Third World countries that can't manage their forests to a high degree but that we do, backed in by our outstanding regulatory system. It's very short-sighted but for far-sighted governments and far-sighted policy-making, it should stand us in good stead here in Tasmania.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. One more question perhaps that follows that: in and around what's been said by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the IPCC, and what it has said about sustainable forest management and how Tasmania's approach is in line with their research in our public production forests.

Mr ELLIS - That's spot on. Sustainable forestry management is part of the solution to climate change, not the opposite. I won't say that because I won't be political, but we do not agree that ceasing all native forestry is the best approach to mitigating bushfires and climate change. Our strategy is informed by science. It aims to balance conservation and use to provide the optimal framework for atmospheric carbon reduction and timber production. Tasmania's large productive forest estate sequesters carbon and provides society with low-emissions products. The overwhelming majority of trees harvested in Tasmania are from plantation and regrowth forests, and where timber is harvested from our native forests, it's done so in a sustainable way in accordance with our world-class forest practices systems.

In fact, in any given year, less than 1 per cent, about 0.27 per cent in fact, of our native forests are harvested. Whenever wood is harvested from our native forests, it's regrown as a native forest. That not only maintains our native forest estate in perpetuity, in line with our permanent native forest estate policy, but allows for carbon capture as these trees grow. Our sustainable forestry management approach is reinforced by the IPCC, as you mentioned before, and supports jobs in forestry rather than job-destroying lockups.

In fact, the IPCC, the Food and Agricultural Organisation and the International Energy Agency have repeatedly concluded that the sustainable management of forests, including a mixed strategy of conservation and timber production, is more likely to be the optimal outcome for atmospheric carbon reduction. The IPCC says sustainable forest management can prevent deforestation, maintain and enhance carbon sinks and can contribute towards greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. Sustainable forest management generates socioeconomic benefits and provides the fibre, timber and biomass to meet society's growing needs. That's from the IPCC's Special Report on Climate Change and Land, from August 2019.

Unlike Labor in Victoria, or should I say, unlike the governments in Western Australia and Victoria, we do not intend to shut down our sustainable native forest sector. We're committed to long-term sustainable management of our forests for the benefits of all Tasmanians.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, can you outline for the committee the estimated - appreciating we're not quite at the end of the financial year yet - total expenditure for this financial year for any consultants in your department: advertising and marketing, travel, and ministerial and senior executive salaries, please?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. When you say my department, are we talking specifically about NRE Tasmania through forestry policy in this? We've got a couple of different departments.

Ms LOVELL - I'm happy for you to give us both; if you wanted to do it all together, we can do it all together. That's fine.

Mr ELLIS - I will just pass that over. Can we just double-check -

Ms LOVELL - Consultants, as in external consultants; advertising and marketing; travel; and ministerial and senior executive salaries.

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to the forest policy team to provide an update on their expenditure in those regards.

PUBLIC

Ms WILSON - On travel expenses, we've got whole-of-department expenses. On domestic travel, the total expenditure for intrastate and interstate travel and accommodation was approximately \$948 000.

On advertising, as at 31 March 2023, the total expenditure advertising was approximately \$229 000. I'll get you the next one, which is consultants. My understanding is there were no consultancies for Resources.

Ms LOVELL - I think you gave me travel. You gave me domestic travel. No international travel?

Ms WILSON - Not for Resources.

Ms LOVELL - Ministerial and senior executive salaries?

Mr ELLIS - If it works for you, Ms Lovell, we will provide State Growth.

Ms WILSON - I will have to come back to you. This is not the one I am after. I do believe I have those figures.

CHAIR - We can take that later in the day even though it's the Police portfolio.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, do you have a view on the special species sector's request for a new organisation to be created to manage the supply of special species timber?

Mr ELLIS - We have had some really good discussions among the special species sector. I held a special species roundtable off the back of review work we are doing into the Special Species Management Plan. One of the things we have to remember about special species is that it is perhaps the most charismatic part of the native forest sector. It is a really iconic part of the Tasmanian story when it comes to forestry. People recognise the beauty of Huon pine, sassafras, blackwood, celery top pine for a range of different values. I note in this beautiful chamber as well as mine we are surrounded by Tasmanian native timber and perhaps others. It speaks to -

CHAIR - I think ours might have been imported -

Mr ELLIS - Oh really? We will fix that for you, Madam Chair. We will get rid of this and replace it with something good. But certainly there are huge opportunities in that space.

We currently manage special species in Tasmania through a variety of different sources. We have private land where we manage different forests of that type, but predominantly it comes on public land - permanent timber production zones managed by STT. They provide special species as part of that as arisings and for a range of other different values.

They also manage Island Specialty Timbers, in the Huon, which provides a large range of different species as well as the Huon pine stockpile in Strahan. At Island Specialty Timbers they also have the wooden boat board bank, which many boat builders and timber craftsman take particular interest in. They're outstanding examples of special species timber and at that size and scale very difficult to come by.

Regarding suggestions about whether we set up a separate authority or separate government business, I've heard different views in the special species sector. Some support the idea, others not so and take the view that part of the issue with the lockups in Tasmania forestry in the past is that it has removed scale from parts of the industry and that removing scale further might actually impede our capacity to bring those beautiful timbers to market.

I have an open mind on what the future looks like in the special species sector. We need to make sure we are delivering these beautiful timbers to market. A natural shift is occurring with parts of the STT business model as we move to more regrowth and less mature forest harvesting, where typically special species are found. We also have an expression of interest process that we'll be working through with Sustainable Timber Tasmania on the plantation saw log estate been managed over the last 30 years to mitigate the loss of some timbers that were caused by lockups in the early 1990s and the late 1980s.

I have an open mind. We are working really closely across the sector and across the special species supply chain from landowners and managers through to contractors, through to our end users and even customers on what more we can do to promote this really special part of the industry. The people calling for a shutdown of native forestry here in Tasmania are actually calling for a shutdown of the special species sector. That would be an extraordinarily retrograde step, particularly given the broad support in our community for these special timbers and the way they are managed for sustainable outcomes.

CHAIR - This is a series of questions, minister. I know you have been asked these through different measures but I am hoping you can provide answers today. In looking back, as you have looked back to the past, I will, to bring us to the future.

In 2013, former federal Environment Minister, Tony Burke, provided Tasmanian with \$2 million in federal funding for developing and implementing the special species timber management plan. I understand that when the management plan was completed, funding in the vicinity of \$400 000 remained from the original \$2 million. Minister, can you please advise the quantum of funding remaining from the original \$2 million?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. I will make some initial remarks and then pass over to the forest policy team. You are certainly right. The compensation that was paid for some pretty disastrous decisions back in those days is an important part as we try to move forward and grow our forestry sector. The pain that was wreaked on a range of different -

CHAIR - Can we just focus on the question, minister. How much is left from the \$2 million?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. As I say, the pain wreaked on some of those communities was really difficult but in terms of the funding available still, I will pass over to the forest policy team to provide an update.

Ms WILSON - When the Tasmanian Forestry Intergovernmental Agreement was terminated in 2014, work continued in terms of the development of the special species management plan, as you indicated. It was released in 2017. I am informed there is no remaining funding specifically set aside for special species timber projects or programs, however, there remains a relatively small amount of residual Tasmanian Forestry

PUBLIC

Intergovernmental Agreement money that can be spent on forestry priority projects, which would be in line with the negotiated arrangements with the Australian government.

CHAIR - How much is that?

Ms WILSON - We will have to be approximate.

Mr MORETON - We have a couple of hundred thousand dollars of what we'd call TFIGA residual.

CHAIR - Let's say, roughly \$200 000, is that what you're saying?

Ms WILSON - Roughly.

CHAIR - Okay. Does the Government have any special species timber management plan implementation programs to which the remaining funding is actually allocated or is it just a bucket that sits there someone needs to ask for access to?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of allocation, we will continue to work through any priority areas. Our priorities are particularly focussed on supply and opportunities there.

CHAIR - There is no plan? There's \$200 000 roughly sitting there with no plan?

Mr ELLIS - We are working through a range of different forest policy matters at the moment. There are big opportunities for Forestry here in Tasmania -

CHAIR - Is this related to special species? We are not talking about Forestry broadly here. I am talking about special species.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I understand. As I say, there are huge opportunities for Forestry in Tasmania and special species are a really charismatic and important part of that. It is some of the highest value timber we have. In terms of the feedback received from a range of players across the special species supply chain in the roundtable I held earlier in the year, there are some major opportunities. Some of that is in the way we market our special species. There are undervalued species among that list. For example, myrtle is a beautiful timber of rich reds that we actually have in abundance in Tasmania's forests, but it hasn't had the recognition in the market it perhaps deserves. That was one of the matters that -

CHAIR - I would argue that. I think myrtle is quite a well-known and beautiful timber.

Mr ELLIS - I suppose I meant recognition in the sense of demand. People recognise that myrtle exists, but compared to what it used to be like, the demand for myrtle has really come off. Our society is looking more for blonde woods - say, species like Huon pine and Tasmanian oak - than red woods, particularly myrtle.

There are other matters for special species, such as supply chain logistics. We work closely with Hydrowood, for example, which is a really innovative Tasmanian company and as amazing success story, I've got to say. They harvest special species timber, in particular, from the bottom of hydro lakes.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - This money is not to be used for that. What I'm asking you is, is there a specific new or different - like single-stem extraction, for example. We know some of this timber is in difficult-to-access areas. Even as you continue your harvesting program in native forest, it becomes more expensive because they're more remote and in more difficult areas to access. The easy ones have been dealt with already and they're regrowing.

Mr ELLIS - They are being regrown. As I mentioned, we have a range of different opportunities. Hydrowood is looking specifically at salvage, and perhaps some policy opportunities exist there. Another, as you say, is single stem. I've heard a range of different innovative ideas around that kind of selective harvesting approach.

CHAIR - Can this money be used for something like that?

Mr ELLIS - As I say, we've got some opportunities that we will look really closely at in the special species sector. Potentially, it looks like things such as new marketing, supply chain, land access and a range of different matters, as well as targeting what species we may want to talk about - celery top pine, for example, is much loved among boat-builders for its properties. Looking at what the potential opportunities might be in that single-species category so we can grow our capability and supply in particular areas.

We're working through a range of different matters with our whole special species supply chain and I've got a really open mind around where that funding goes.

I might just pass over to the Forest Policy team to add to my answer.

Mr MORETON - Thanks, minister, and through you, I just wanted to add a comment about implementation. The Special Species Management Plan was delivered in 2017. I was the project manager on that. There was actually a fully funded implementation plan of the management plan at that time. That included various things like making sure our systems were up to date, updating things like silvicultural guidelines to make sure they were consistent with the plan. Implementation happened directly after the plan was finalised.

CHAIR - Thank you. I have another question in this same area, and it has a bit of a lead-in. The Government is on the record stating that approximately \$1 million per year is spent on managing the 52 700 hectares of Special Timber Management Units (STMUs) on PTPZ land, and this provision is likely to be continued. If this is wrong, you can correct me when I ask the questions.

Additionally, it was advised at GBE hearings last year in December that STT are not engaging a contractor to harvest special species timbers from within the Special STMUs.

The Government has also recently advised, through the parliament, that of the 52 700 hectares of STMUs, 10 650 hectares do not contain any special timbers; 5430 hectares are within mining leases; 3832 hectares have been previously harvested and are regrowth forests; and 1650 hectares were not available due to the pursuit of FSC certification.

Despite claiming that STT is not engaging contracts to harvest special species timbers from the STMUs, the Government has also advised that up to 1200 hectares of STMU areas are being targeted for harvesting in the next three years, primarily to support eucalypt products, not special species timbers.

PUBLIC

Minister, are you able to inform the committee of the dollar cost per hectare for managing the 52 700 hectares of STMUs?

Mr ELLIS - Dollar cost per hectare. That is probably more a question for GBE Scrutiny than Budget Estimates, Chair.

CHAIR - Can you tell us what the total volume or tonnage of eucalypt product is forecast to be produced from these areas between now and 2027?

Mr ELLIS - By STT? That would be a question for GBE scrutiny.

CHAIR - Someone's having trouble getting answers to these questions. Do you know what total volume of special species timber products is forecast to be produced from these areas between now and 2027?

Mr ELLIS - 2027?

CHAIR - Between now and 2027.

Mr ELLIS - There is GBE scrutiny later in the year. STT publicly released their three-year wood production plan, which won't quite get you to 2027, but it's certainly over the next three years, and that information is available through there.

CHAIR - How long does it take you to respond to the communication from constituents on these matters, generally?

Mr ELLIS - As in me personally, or STT?

CHAIR - As the minister. Ministerial correspondence.

Mr ELLIS - We provide answers as quickly as we as we can. We work with STT through a range of different matters. There's some complexity in the questions you've asked, but we provide information as it comes to hand and is available. Did you have any particular correspondence that you're concerned about, Chair?

CHAIR - This one has been sent to you, but I'll move on. There's a couple of other questions in this area, and then I'll come to you.

Mr GAFFNEY - I've had some questions raised with me, and the comment has been made that STT's decision to cease operations at Teepookana was apparently made without any industry consultation. Would you like to comment on that?

Mr ELLIS - STT is a GBE, so we can cover that in GBE scrutiny if you like.

Mr GAFFNEY - But the decision to cease operations was made without industry consultation. You would know, as minister, whether that consultation happened.

Mr ELLIS - As I say, STT is a GBE and we don't have any STT people here in the room today. If you like we can ask these questions at that scrutiny.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. Would you be able to provide any information -

Mr ELLIS - If you like, I can talk broadly about Teepookana.

Mr GAFFNEY - No, I don't want 'broadly' stuff, because we have to get specific. There are some questions here. How many coupes in the current three-year wood production plan are within the STMUs?

Mr ELLIS - STT's three-year wood production plan?

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - As I say, GBE scrutiny is later in the year. We don't have STT staff here with us today. For your benefit, Mr Gaffney, the wood production plans are available - the three-year plan and forward plans. It's public information. As I say, we're happy to provide information, but we don't have any STT people here because this is Budget Estimates scrutiny. If you want to ask these questions in GBE scrutiny when we have STT staff here, I am more than happy, but that's just the limitations of the process.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. Thank you.

Mr HARRISS - I have a question about special species. In the Forestry Tasmania 2015 Special Timbers Resource Assessment for PTPZ land, page 24 shows that post-2027, the total volume of category four and utility special species sawlogs in the south only totalled nine cubic metres. The north-east was similar, at eight cubic metres. In the north-west, the volumes were boosted by blackwood, but non-blackwood species such as celery top - which you mentioned before - are almost negligible.

If that's the case - and you mentioned Island Specialty Timbers previously - can that remain operating post-2027 on those low predicted volumes?

Mr ELLIS - Can Island Specialty Timbers keep going?

Mr HARRISS - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Island Specialty Timbers has a range of different timbers available and it also has a strong stockpiling effect. If you look at the Wooden Boat Board Bank there, those timbers have been there for quite some time. As I say, we are working closely with the special species sector around additional capability in this space because it is really important. Broadly speaking, as STT is shifting their business model to more regrowth forest and more saw log plantation, that has necessitated a change in harvesting because previously you would get special species as arising from old-growth harvesting. That model is changing and that is why we have held the round table, so that we can develop a policy suite to respond to this.

I think that special species need to have a bright future here in Tasmania. Island Specialty Timbers is at the nexus of that supply chain. What we do to support special species broadly will enable a strong and bright future for Island Specialty Timbers. I was down there about a month ago, catching up with the team. They have some amazing timber that is available currently through that facility. As we are looking to be more innovative in this space with

changing business model and policy prescriptions, we need to be very intentional and active in the special species space.

I should say, as well, if the Legislative Council were interested in a briefing specifically about special species timber, we are more than happy to provide that as well. I think, broadly speaking, this is a policy challenge and puzzle that should interest all of us.

CHAIR - The challenge is that briefings are not on the record, minister. No-one can go out and relate what is said with any degree of certainty; no parliamentary privilege. These are the reasons that we ask the questions in these formal settings to get it on the record so that people out there who are interested in this can actually hear it.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, absolutely. More broadly, Chair, we are interested in providing the information. I have been asked a range of GBE questions. GBE scrutiny is obviously later in the year. There will be an opportunity to provide information through that, as we always do and as I did last year. I am more than happy to do that. We are in budget Estimates, so I'm happy to provide information on the Budget with the team that is available to support as well.

Broadly speaking, Mr Harriss, I think your observation is a really important one, that we need to be making sure that we have a strong special species supply chain right all the way through. That includes having enough stock for our retailers, such as Island Specialty Timbers, as they facilitate timber coming from our forest out to our manufacturers and then into the broader community, where they do such an amazing job of promoting Tasmania's sustainable native forest industry.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, I have a question. When will the hardwood plantations be coming on line?

Mr ELLIS - Some of these hardwood plantations have been growing for more than 30 years. They were planted, particularly after the Helsham Inquiry and some lock-ups that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s. I visited a coupe, for example, just near The Sideling. Particularly the thinned and pruned estate is an outstanding opportunity for Tasmania and STT. The nature of the thinning and pruning that occurs enables the forest to generate saw log and it creates quite a -

CHAIR - Yes, we know that.

Ms LOVELL - I just need to know when they are coming on line.

Mr ELLIS - Some of them are effectively available now. We have a broader process that we are working through to make that available to the market. If you look at the sustainable yield 6, which is our plan to demonstrate the sustainability of supplying 137 000 cubic metres of high-quality saw log to the market for the nine years and beyond, that demonstrates that in the next few years, that resource will be coming on line strongly. I might pass over to the forest policy team if they've got anything further to add to my answer.

Mr MORETON - As the minister said, the Government has been aware that in the coming years the wood supply from our public production forests will need to be derived from a mix of native forest and plantation grade sawlogs. Nitens is a plantation species; it's predominantly nitens plantations. It's an introduced species into Tasmania, it was planted

widely during the managed investment scheme period, primarily as a feedstock for the then proposed Tamar Valley pulp mill.

There's been a bunch of industry research looking at higher value uses for nitens for probably about over a decade. I am aware that Sustainable Timber Tasmania ran a process in late 2020 where they resulted in several processes receiving hardwood plantation nitens for trial sawmilling. This was a small-scale trial just to give some interested sawmillers the opportunity to better and more fully understand the properties. Any further questions about exactly when the commercial resource will be allocated is probably something best directed to STT.

Mr EDMUNDS - Just on 2.5, Forest Policy drops from \$2.6 million in the current financial year to \$2.25 million in the coming one. Has the Wood Encouragement Officer's contract been discontinued?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to the Forest policy team to provide some more information.

Ms WILSON - Just to be clear, you're talking about output group 6, Expense Summary table?

Mr EDMUNDS - Yes, 2.5

Ms WILSON - There are a range of -

CHAIR - Just on that, the appropriation also drops away in table 7.13.

Ms WILSON - In terms of the change in the appropriation, this is the standard change in appropriation that happens when programs roll over. In this case we've got a decrease in funding remaining of about \$300 000 in the first year around resource policy initiatives and then in 2024-25 there is a drop-off in terms of the Timber Promotions Supports Initiative. What is can say is that is offset by an increase in funding for other resource policy initiatives in that year.

CHAIR - Such as?

Ms WILSON - I don't have the - it's the normal ups and downs in terms of cash flows.

CHAIR - Such as what policies?

Ms WILSON - That would be things like the On-Island Processing Program and the election commitments in terms of the flow-through.

CHAIR - In the footnote on the page 152 it says this reflects the completion of the On-Island processing evaluating initiatives.

Mr ELLIS - On-Island Processing is a \$10 million grant funding, \$6 million of that has been expended on a range of different grants for local producers, local millers and there's \$4 million to go. A further allocation of that will be through the next round and that's an opportunity as I mentioned -

PUBLIC

CHAIR - I thought there were other policy decisions. That's what -

Ms WILSON - It's the normal cash flow through, just the normal movements in cash flows across initiatives such as the On-Island Processing, the -

CHAIR - Yes, I accept that. You made a comment, though, that there were other initiatives, other offsets.

Ms WILSON - Offsets, yes.

CHAIR - I thought you said other policies?

Ms LOVELL - I thought you said offset by other policies.

CHAIR - Yes, by the policies. I'm interested in what the other policies are?

Ms WILSON - Oh no, that's what I mean, it's the normal cash flows of the -

CHAIR - So there's no new policies?

Ms WILSON - No.

CHAIR - I understood it to be new and different policies.

Ms WILSON - So what we are talking about is the cash flows of our -

CHAIR - Yes. I understand that.

Ms WILSON - In terms of those, year by year, the budget is determined and different allocations are made. In terms of your specific question -

Mr EDMUNDS - So the footnote on 152-6, says the decrease in Forest Policy in 2023-24 reflects a decrease in funding for the Timber Promotions Board. My question is, has the Wood Encouragement Officers' contract been discontinued?

Mr ELLIS - No, not as far as I am aware.

Ms LOVELL - What has been? What is the decrease?

Mr ELLIS - I will just pass to Mr Moreton.

Mr MORETON - The Tasmanian Timber Promotion Board funding was \$1.15 million over several years. Only a component of that was for the Wood Encouragement Officer. He is on board and got a contract. We are meeting with him regularly.

Mr ELLIS - He was actually at our special species roundtable.

Mr MORETON - Yes, and the remaining bulk of it, \$1 million, was for promotional stuff.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - But something has to reduce, isn't that the point here?

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, that is effectively about a major marketing campaign and other expenditure that happens in the market. Obviously, wages are a portion, but the other thing to remember is there is really strong demand for Tasmanian timber at the moment and the industry's capability to grow their own source marketing is really strong at the moment.

Ms LOVELL - To clarify a question on that. It was \$1.5 million over several years and you said it has been reduced. The Wood Encouragement Officer's on board and has a contract. How long is that contract in place for?

Mr ELLIS - We can follow up for that information.

Ms LOVELL - Are you happy to take that on notice?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we will see if we can find it today and get back to you.

Ms LOVELL - You said 'broadly speaking' there's been some reductions but specifically speaking, is it a marketing campaign? What has ended? What is the program, you must have a breakdown of that?

Mr ELLIS - There's board funding available for the promotion of Tasmanian timbers. It happens through that board and of course, we know it is beloved around the country for its range of different values, which is partly why we established the grant. It is \$1.5 million within the Tasmanian Timber Promotion Board. It will enable it to deliver a \$2 million strategic marketing campaign focussed on raising awareness of the quality and versatility of Tasmanian timber and engage a full-time Wood Encouragement Policy Officer, that has been the subject of this discussion.

Grant funding will support the promotional marketing of Tasmanian timber and timber products. The marketing campaign supported by this funding, Tasmanian timber, many of you may have seen it, is already building connections between industry, architects, furniture makers and the general public. It not only showcases our beautiful timbers but shares stories of those who work within it and we know people love the Tasmanian story, Tasmania brand, the quiet pursuit of excellence.

Ms LOVELL - To be clear, is it that marketing campaign that is ending that the funding is no longer required for or what activities are currently and have been undertaken by the board this year will no longer continue with that reduction in funding?

Ms WILSON - In terms of the reporting at this level of the budget, we do not have the specifics of each individual budget, but what I can say is this is an absolutely normal process in terms of budget -

CHAIR - We are not denying that.

Ms WILSON - And there are ons and offs and this would be about the cash flowing of the initiatives.

PUBLIC

Ms LOVELL - Yes, we understand that. What we are trying to get to the bottom of is what are the offs? You said there are ons and offs and that happens in every budget and we interrogate that across every portfolio. Every minister sits here and explains to us what is on and off and that is what we are asking.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, so the board will work through it, that is why we have a board.

Ms LOVELL - It is a general reduction in funding for the board and the board will have to make decisions across their budget?

Mr ELLIS - But broadly speaking, there is really strong demand for Tasmanian timbers.

Ms LOVELL - I do not think anyone's arguing that. We do not need to hear that again.

Mr EDMUNDS - Just to be really clear, we are looking at that output item, which essentially is more than halved into the out years and then your own footnote in your own Budget reflects a decrease in funding for Timber Promotion Board. We are just asking questions about, what is going? An obvious one is the Wood Encouragement Officer, which there is a lot of fanfare about.

Mr ELLIS - That is not the case.

Mr EDMUNDS - It is a general cut in marketing budget?

Mr ELLIS - Obviously, some of these campaigns have been developed and I have mentioned the Tasmanian timber campaign before. That development process does not necessarily need to happen now because it's done. We support the board strongly in their work.

Mr EDMUNDS - We had a couple of things like this come up yesterday. That is something where the money might come back into the budget in that out year, so it is not necessarily accounted for in this budget.

Mr ELLIS - It is not in the budget - the numbers are there in black and white.

Mr EDMUNDS - I know it is hard to speculate but when we get to 2026-27, that \$1.177 million is likely to be higher number?

Mr ELLIS - Future budgets are a matter that we will work through when we are preparing future budgets.

CHAIR - The board may say they need more money for promotion if timber is so hot -

Mr ELLIS - The board may say a range of different things. We always work really closely with them. We listen to them. Many of them are involved in timber production in shared parts of our electorate. I strongly support them. The door is always open. We'll develop future budgets in the future and we will come back next year and discuss.

CHAIR - I want to go back to what you raised in your opening comments, minister, about the decision in Victoria in a few years time to cease native forest logging or harvesting.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - At the end of this year.

CHAIR - Oh? Is it the end of this year that they are actually stopping? A couple of questions around this in terms of how our situation is in comparison to Victoria. It appears VicForests may be able to avoid paying compensation or cancel contracts because of a force majeure. The recent bushfires devastated thousands of hectares of forest, making the supply more difficult. When we lost a fair bit of forest a few years ago, was a force majeure considered at that time by the Government?

Mr ELLIS - A lock-up would happen under the previous government.

CHAIR - I am not talking about lock-up. I am talking about the bushfires that did burn up our forestry and was a force -

Mr ELLIS - Sure, okay. It's specifically around bushfires. In our case, policy change would be the primary threat to Tasmania's native forest sector. For example, if a future Government of a different colour decided that they wanted to go down the Victorian path, that would be the primary risk in this sense.

CHAIR - You are missing my question entirely. When Victoria may be able to avoid paying some of the compensation based on a claim of force majeure related to the bushfires. When Tasmania had major bushfires a few years ago, was a force majeure considered then to try to offset their risk?

Mr ELLIS - No because we were still supplying timber. We were still making available 137 000 cubic metres of high-quality saw log to the market. What is happening in Victoria is they are shutting down their industry. They are providing nothing to the industry. We have had bushfires, that has impacted our wood supply picture -

CHAIR - That is my point.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, but what it has not done is meant that we cannot meet those obligations and requirements. If you look at Sustainable Yield 6, it shows that we will be able to make available 137 000 cubic metres of high-quality saw log over the next nine years and beyond. Ultimately the key risk would be in a policy sense.

CHAIR - Alright, I understand, so a policy change?

Mr ELLIS - Perhaps, I might pass over to the Forest policy team to add further remarks on that.

Mr MORETON - The 2019 bushfires, as you might recall, did substantially damage the estate and also substantially damaged a couple of processing facilities at Southwood. In terms of your comment about force majeure. Yes, there are force majeure conditions in some of the contracts, but the point is with the contracts with STT and those processing facilities whether, on a specific bushfire, the processing facility chooses to use that condition is a matter in those specific contracts.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - At an industry-wide scale they are two totally different examples. One is a state government shutting down forestry and another is state government continuing forestry and continuing to make available 137 000 cubic metres.

CHAIR - I understand that. The question was around whether it had been used.

Minister, I am sure you are aware that VicForests made a big loss in 2022. You probably also know one of the reasons for the loss is that VicForests expenses roading costs and replanting costs, unlike we do here in Tasmania. If we did consider roading and replanting costs, do you acknowledge that we could make a larger loss than we currently make? I am not saying there is anything wrong with this. I am just saying it is a standard accounting practice to expense capital outlays, if there is no measurable value.

Tas Rail does it every year because it is below-the-rail investment and they immediately expense it. The question is, that means that if roading and replanting were treated as operating expenses and included in calculating future net-proceeds from native forests, then our trees would actually have a negative value. I'm raising this because there is a crucial aspect of any forest policy that a government does need to consider. If we expensed our roading and replanting as part of our operating and the cost associated with that, would we be in a similar situation and do we need to rethink our policy?

Mr ELLIS - We reject the description of Sustainable Timber Tasmania making a loss; it's made a profit over the last five years.

CHAIR - Yes, but that's because of the accounting treatment of the roading and the -

Mr ELLIS - No, you said they 'make a big loss and they already currently do', but they don't currently make a loss. They've made a profit for the last five years, and that's available in their annual reports. They are publicly available. STT reported a total consolidated comprehensive income of \$17.6 million, a net underlying profit of \$3.2 million; that's in the 2021-22 annual report. As I mentioned, it's the fifth successive profit result.

CHAIR - There are lots of reasons we could argue about this, but I won't. Some of their liabilities were taking off them that dealt with this, like the superannuation liability was taken into the General Government Sector. There's a whole range of reasons why this happened but anyway, let's leave that.

My question is around the accounting treatment of roading and replanting.

Mr ELLIS - Sure. STT manage the forests for multiple values and that's important when we think about a landscape-scale manager like STT. They make available access to fire tracks, fire breaks - beekeeping is another important one. They are a major facilitator of beekeepers in Tasmania. They even have their own fire crews. STT is one of three key pillars of our fire management in this state as well as TFS and Parks.

CHAIR - For which they do get a CSO to assist as well.

Mr ELLIS - And I'm sure you can understand why that's important.

CHAIR - I'm not disputing that, I'm just saying that other money comes in.

Mr ELLIS - You look at Parks, for example, as a more passive land manager, they have significant funding provided to them for the services that look quite similar to what STT provides, but STT, because they have a business model which means they're capable of broad-scale active land management, which means that where they're providing access to a range of different values, those are supported, for example tourism operators; many mountain bikers are able to access mountain bike trails because of STT roads, and even STT land in the case of the Derby mountain bike tracks.

I think we've always got to be conscious and remember that where STT are managing the forest for multiple values, there should be a payment that reflects that. It's not always based on the commercial timber harvesting that's happening in the vicinity at that time. We're talking about a long rotation, 65 years plus, before they may go back into that forest, but they still maintain the road. If they didn't maintain the road, it would either be done by nobody, which would mean that we couldn't access many of those values - whether that's beekeeping, tourism or others - or it would be maintained by the state and it would cost a lot more because there would be no commercial business model behind it.

I understand the old arguments of the past around Forestry Tasmania and the commission and all that sort of stuff. We put STT on a more sustainable footing financially because we think that's important.

CHAIR - I don't disagree with that but, yes, anyway.

Mr ELLIS - But you can see, where we're managing for multiple values, that's why we have a community service payment and it's a good thing that we do.

CHAIR - And VicForests didn't provide any of those things?

Mr ELLIS - The disastrous decision in Victoria is a matter for Daniel Andrews; if you want to get him in here I'd love to see him answer some questions.

CHAIR - No, I'm just saying they would have had multi-use for their forests as well.

Mr ELLIS - And that's why it's a catastrophic decision. What they have done in Victoria has meant that they will lose access to fire trails, to fire breaks, to tourism operations.

CHAIR - I'm just saying the accounting treatment's different. I think we've done this. We'll go to Mr Gaffney.

Mr GAFFNEY - I think the recognition of Sustainable Timber's relationship between other tourism, whatever, that's why I think they've been allocated \$8 million to assist with that, so that's fine.

As a forest policy, I asked that the Minister for Tourism yesterday, the Premier, about his thoughts about - we've had a concern from a group of residents about some harvesting to be done in the Dial Range in the near future. They are aware of its recreational values, as you would be, for bushwalking, hiking, trailbike riding, businesses up there. What flexibility is there, or how do they get involved with the process if there are going to be felling or clearing

so those industries are not impacted. If people are coming here to ride our trails and their view is not that good, how do you see that working as part of your forest policy?

Mr ELLIS - As you have probably identifying there in the question, specific coup level decisions are a matter for Sustainable Timber Tasmania and we will have Government Business Estimates later in the year -

Mr GAFFNEY - The Forest policy, your input into that would be -

Mr ELLIS - But broadly speaking, we manage the forest for multiple values and multiple land access. Mountain biking is a great example of this, whereby we have had a really strong partnership and coexistence between mountain biking and forestry. If you look at Blue Derby, that is actually permanent.

CHAIR - The question is specifically about the (indistinct)

Mr ELLIS - Specifically, we will have GBE Estimates but in terms of policy, people can get in touch with STT. We are consulting with residents, neighbours, others all the time. Mr Gaffney, you live in a rural and regional community and know being good neighbours is really critically important because here in Tasmania we live cheek by jowl. We need diverse regional economies able to support the coexistence of, for example, tourism and forestry, tourism and mining because we can drive better outcomes for everyone in our community when we do that.

I am not going to speak specifically about coup level discussion but when it comes to consultation, we work closely with neighbouring communities managing that. If you look at, for example, the Blue Derby experience as a more mature mountain biking infrastructure establishment on Permanent Timber Production Zone land and also access facilitated through it, they work closely with the local communities to figure out what are the values we want to preserve here? What will help make the mountain bike experience -

Mr GAFFNEY - With the known one, for example, if people want to be involved, do they write to STT about their activity or do they come through you as Forestry Minister?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, they can get in touch with me. My door is always open but STT is the key point of engagement with stakeholder engagement with STT. Very well experienced with it. They manage the relationship well with the mountain biking that happens in Blue Derby, for example, and have facilitated that over a number of years.

Mr GAFFNEY - So the \$8 million worth your Government's given to STT for their - including community tourism, access to public recreation sites - that will be part of that deal, would be to have that consultation with those groups?

Mr ELLIS - It would be more. For example, if you think about a mountain biking operation at Maydena, their access road that goes to all their trails is actually a Sustainable Timbers' road. When we are thinking about accessing these kinds of operations, it is less the case of funding an email address or funding people to talk to it. It is the broad management they provide. They provide a range of different landscape services for the community. I am not sure in the particular case you raise, Mr Gaffney, and we can discuss it further at GBE

PUBLIC

Estimates but there may be roading arrangements that would be significantly important in that case. There may be other services provided at a landscape scale through there.

One of the things people need to remember about forestry and particularly native forestry, is it enables so much of the Tasmanian way of life, where we get access to these beautiful areas we do not want to lose. That is the future Victoria is facing, because maintaining roads and maintaining bridges is expensive and if we do not have a strong clear business model to support, that community in Victoria will lose access to a range of different values or someone else has to pay for it. That is the thing we have to remember.

CHAIR - Before we go to Nick, I just wanted to ask if it is possible to get - going back to the special species management plan funding, the \$2 million, are you able to provide a breakdown of how that - the \$2 million less the \$200 000 that is left, how that was spent, a breakdown of what was funded through it.

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to the forest policy team. A lot of that was before my time.

Ms WILSON - I believe we would be able to provide that information, noting we will also provide information on the various stages of the agreement and what was agreed in terms of what could be funded of the account.

CHAIR - Sure. That would be helpful.

Ms WILSON - Because it did -

CHAIR - Do you want to put that on notice?

Mr ELLIS - We'll see if we can get that information for you.

CHAIR - If you don't get it today, we will send a letter to you later.

Mr DUIGAN - Minister, you touched on it a little bit in what you've been saying, the forest sector is a major contributor in rural and regional Tasmania, can outline what the Government's doing around supporting the industry specifically in those places?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Duigan. The Liberal Government is committed to growing Tasmania's forestry sector. We were elected in 2014 with a mandate to rebuild our forestry sector. Since day one we've taken firm, decisive action and done just that. We've ended the land lock-ups that devastated our timber towns and turned back the tide by converting land previously marked for reserves into a resource, available for future productive use.

CHAIR - You're repeating your opening statements here, minister. I listen to everything you say.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair, I'm very grateful for that.

We tore up the job-destroying Tasmanian Forest Agreement, which almost halved the production forest estate and gutted wood supply for the industry; we restructured Forestry Tasmania into Sustainable Timber Tasmania and put it on a secure financial footing, as we've covered. We are providing a framework to support projects, offering new on-island processing

and management options for Tasmanian wood, including bioenergy options, of which I know you take a particular interest.

This is supported through an \$11.7 million election commitment package to the forestry sector. Support we are providing includes \$10 million over five years to the On-Island Processing Program to support more on-island processing and value-adding. There is \$1.5 million to the Tasmanian Timber Promotion Board, which we touched on, which will promote and sell Tasmanian timber to the world; collaboration with Sustainable Timber Tasmania to secure long-term resource supply for our sawmills, and \$150 000 over three years to address skill shortages in one of my other portfolios to train the forest industry leaders of tomorrow delivered by Arbre Forest Industries. That may be in the beautiful electorate of Windermere, I can never quite remember your boundaries, but in the northern suburbs of Launceston -

CHAIR - The 'northern suburbs of Launceston' – there's not a lot of forestry there.

Mr ELLIS - No, but Launceston is a timber town.

CHAIR - But not in the city.

Mr ELLIS - It's the place where people gather from the industry right around the beautiful north and north east. It's the training hub. Much of Launceston's prosperity has been built on that. Many of our training opportunities lie there.

I was pleased to launch in Burnie a \$300 000 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Action Plan project to increase gender and cultural diversity in the forest sector, delivered by the Tasmanian Forest and Forest Products Network. Burnie is another timber town surrounded by hardworking Tasmanians.

The mistake the industry has made over many years is to not be as inclusive as it could be. We missed out on some bloody good foresters. By providing a diversity action plan we are able to bring more people into the industry that will help it grow in the future. We may even welcome in Victorians, but we didn't include that in our diversity action plan.

Our approach to driving growth in the forest industry and supporting job creation in regional communities is working. Almost \$6 million of funding for our On-Island Processing Program has been committed. It's estimated this will lead to a direct investment of \$23 million for industry and create at least 30 new direct and indirect positions.

I had the privilege of going to Branhholm Sawmill and seeing some of the work they're doing based off the grant. There are other grants provided to different millers around our state, including in Smithton. It's an innovative approach to getting more value out of the timber that we produce from our forests. That's what we should be doing here in Tasmania. We have outstanding capability to grow trees. We also have outstanding manufacturing capabilities. As the two come together, it's a big opportunity for our industry.

CHAIR - The gender diversity plan was welcomed and a good body of work to start. Can you provide a gender breakdown on employment in the sectors and/or bands across your forest policy area?

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass over to the forest policy team if they have that information to hand. It was the forest policy team in the department, correct?

CHAIR - Across the department.

Mr ELLIS - Across NRE or forest policy in particular?

CHAIR - Forest policy area. I do not know if mining is separate, but the resources -

Mr ELLIS - Different department, yes.

CHAIR - Yes, I will be asking the same question in that area.

Mr ELLIS - Talking about outstanding female leaders, Deidre Wilson.

Ms WILSON - The Forest Policy branch has 8.45 hectares. The director for Forest Policy will sit there and just write down the numbers of males and females and provide that to me. I do have the information on gender profile.

Mr ELLIS - I might speak while they are looking for this information, more broadly about the industry, perhaps Chair, as well. There has been a really fascinating shift within the industry over the last couple of years bringing more women into the industry. In the past, the timber industry was viewed as a very 'blokey' industry and there are some big opportunities for women in our frontline forest services, driving trucks, harvesting timber, working in mills.

Also, as forestry continues to mature as an industry as well, there are a number of important scientific land management and broader opportunities too. The opportunities within the industry itself are becoming more diverse. That is also helping to attract a more diverse cohort of people looking to work within the industry. We need to continue to back that work in because a more diverse industry is a stronger industry as well.

Ms WILSON - In terms of the diversity profile, male/female, just to confirm the question. We have 1575 staff.

Mr ELLIS - This is NRE.

Ms WILSON - To be clear, we have 769 people who identify as male and we have 804 who identify as female. That is 48.83 per cent male. We have 51.05 per cent female and we have 2 undisclosed at 0.2 per cent. You were asking for a gender/salary profile?

CHAIR - Yes, by band.

Ms WILSON - By band? I have it by salary range.

CHAIR - The question that naturally flows from that is, have you identified the gender pay gap, if there is one, across this sector?

Mr ELLIS - Across the department?

CHAIR - Across this area.

Ms WILSON - Minister, I can say that we do continue to work on our diversity across the organisation. For example, with the SES officers at my level, 58 per cent of SES officers identify as female now, as compared to 32 per cent in 2021. I do not have the information of the gender gap -

CHAIR - Pay gap.

Ms WILSON - The pay gap, but yes, I have found the bands now. With your indulgence, minister -

CHAIR - In light of the time, we still have to get to Mineral Resources.

Ms WILSON - The key one for us has been that band 6-7 to senior leadership. At our lower levels, we have tended to have more females than male.

CHAIR - Which is part of the gender pay gap.

Ms WILSON - Exactly, but now at our band 6 level, for example, 43 per cent are now female; at the band 7, 47 per cent; band 8, 43 per cent; and SES, 58 per cent. That is giving you an indication that we are closing that gap that used to exist in NRE Tasmania in that senior leadership.

CHAIR - Is it possible to provide an assessment of the gender pay gap, based on those figures at a later time for the Committee?

Ms WILSON - We have that band level information by percentage by male/female. We could certainly look into providing some information about the total amounts of employee pay.

CHAIR - If we could put on notice to you to ask for the table that you have just read from, provide that table and any information related to the gender pay gap, as it stands.

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, this is an amazing piece of change work that we have done in NRE as well, driven by our outstanding female leaders, including Deidre. We are really committed to that. We have a similar focus with boards in Tasmania, because we really recognise a diverse workforce is a strong workforce and diverse leadership is strong leadership. I was at the launch of the Diversity Action Plan -

CHAIR - As I was.

Mr ELLIS - And appreciate you being there, a beautiful day in Burnie as it always is. Even among our forest network, a lot of the senior leaders are female.

I might provide an update on our boards. As Minister for Resources, I have oversight of the administration of five statutory bodies or committees. I manage the governance of those bodies. As at 31 March, our latest figures, we represent 53 per cent of membership and gender equity continues to be a focus in recruitment.

CHAIR - Yes, that does not give the whole picture. There might be 53 per cent women but there are hardly any female chairs. That is why we need the breakdown and the gender pay

gap. I hear what you are saying. Your Government has done a good job in this area, absolutely no two ways about that. I have commended the Government many times on this, but it is the gender pay gap I am interested in and the gender reflected in those senior positions such as chairs.

Mr ELLIS - A great example is Chair of our FPA, Pam Allan. She is an amazing leader in that area. You may have seen an op-ed she wrote for the *Mercury* just the other day and our CEO of the FPA, Anne Chuter -

CHAIR - Yes, I accept that. I just want the figures. We are running out of time.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to provide it, but we are really proud of the work we are doing in that area.

Ms LOVELL - Actually, before we move off the line item, we haven't had an answer come back yet about their length of contract for the Wood Encouragement Officer. I want to confirm if we do not have that yet, whether the minister's happy to take that on notice, before we close off that line item?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I might just pass to Mr Moreton on what we can reveal around personal employment matters, which I am sure you might understand.

Mr MORETON - We can confirm the Wood Encouragement Officer, Gary Fleming, is on a two-year contract. We have a grant deed with the Tasmanian Timber Promotions Board. The Wood Encouragement Officer is employed by the University of Tasmania and the Tasmanian Timber Promotions Board.

Ms LOVELL - Two years, when did that start?

Mr MORETON - He commenced in November 2022.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - And I think we have an answer on the ministerial staffing question.

Ms WILSON - In terms of the resourcing portfolio, no payments will be made for ministerial staff in the reporting period of 1 July 2022 to 31 March 2023. That is what I am informed.

Grants and Subsidies

CHAIR - Nothing on grants and subsidies?

Mr DUIGAN - In an area we haven't touched on, which is becoming increasingly more important in the Tasmanian forest sector is that of Private Forest. I am interested, minister, in the role of Private Forest Tasmania to facilitate the expansion in this area and the support the Government provides there.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, absolutely, you are right to identify this as an important area, an opportunity for the future. Private Forest is an independent statutory authority whose core

functions and powers are set out under the Private Forest Act 1994. The objective of the authority is to facilitate and expand the development of the private forest resource in Tasmania in a manner which is consistent with sound forest land management principles. Its function includes promoting, fostering and assisting the private forest sector on forestry matters, providing strategic and policy advice to Government on private forestry issues and representing private forest owner's interests at a local, state and national level. The operating cost for the authority are underpinned by three income streams.

The state Government appropriation this coming financial year will be \$1.745 million, the Private Forest Service Levy and the fees for service. The state Government appropriations provide a significant proportion of the authority's revenue and has contributed more than 80 per cent of total revenue over the past five years. Other sources are variable and largely dependent on industry activity levels. Private Forest Tasmania is co-founded through an appropriation from the Consolidated Revenue Fund, the private forest service levy, fee for services, and occasionally external grant funds for specific projects. The levy income is the next largest source of revenue for the authority having contributed on average just more than 10 per cent of total income over the past five years.

As part of the Climate Change Action Plan, our Government has allocated \$600 000 to support landowners to increase tree plantings on their properties. We've already commenced engagement with PFT around this commitment given their past experience in this area. I should also note that PFT has been effective in leveraging support received from the Government and other sources to secure additional funding from industry and landowners.

I am advised that in the last financial year, this co-contribution was in excess of \$1.5 million and a sign of the value of our private forests and Private Forests Tasmania. The authority underpins its fixed cost with state government appropriation and tailors project work and new initiatives commensurate with the level of resource generated from industry activity.

The authority has a small number of staff located in offices in Launceston, Burnie and Hobart. Regional representation facilitates ongoing access for stakeholders to the organisation as we roll out important projects around Tasmania.

DIVISION 10

State Growth

Output Group 4 - Resources Policy and Regulatory Services

4.2 Mineral Resources

Mr ELLIS - To my left here is Brett Stewart, Deputy Secretary, Resources Australia, in the Department of State Growth. I have Kim Evans, Secretary of the Department of State Growth and I have Ben Waining down the end, from Mineral Resources Tasmania.

CHAIR - I'll move straight into this. In budget paper 1, page 117, notably, the budget last year for 2022-23 was \$56.8 million revenues on an estimated outcome of \$52.3 million. As the footnote suggests, this is related to -

Mr ELLIS - In terms of royalties?

CHAIR - Yes, in regard to the royalties. It suggests using commodity prices. Do the mineral royalties forecast for this year include:

- (1) the operations of Group 6 Metals on King Island?
- (2) MMG's continuing operations that may need to slow if there are further delays in the building of the new tailings dam?

And what other assumptions are factored into that assessment?

Mr ELLIS - I'll pass over to the team from the department to add to my remarks, but first it is important to note that when we have mines that reopen or begin operating for the first time, that's a big opportunity for the Tasmanian Budget because it means that they can continue to make a contribution through the royalty system, and that helps to pay for a whole range of things, such as health, housing, police -

CHAIR - Yes. I understand all that.

Mr ELLIS - When we restart mines, that means that we have sources of royalties; you're also right to identify that if there are risks to the continuation of mining, for example with MMG at the Rosebery mine, then that has a significant effect on the Budget as well.

CHAIR - Yes. I'm interested in what's been factored into the assumptions that sit behind this.

Mr ELLIS - Sure, and broadly speaking, we've had some good prices for some of the suite of commodities that Tasmania produces. Obviously, predicting future commodity markets can be a challenge and it we take a conservative approach. I might pass over to the team to add to my remarks on some of the assumptions.

Mr STEWART - Each year, MRT consults with all of our major mineral producers as to their projections for the future years. That is then factored into calculations that are done with assistance from Treasury and that's where those other more speculative are taken into account, like commodity prices et cetera. As the minister mentioned, Treasury takes a conservative view. My understanding is that both group 6, going to the specifics of your question, production and MMG's production would have been factored into those projections.

CHAIR - What other assumptions in regard to others? Are we factoring in CMT getting underway?

Mr ELLIS - Probably too early to say about CMT but it's certainly a very interesting opportunity because this mine has paid an extraordinary amount in royalties over more than 100 years. We know that they've roughly mined about half of the resource that we're aware of under the ground there - and that's after 100 years. We still have another half to go so we're really supportive of that mine.

CHAIR - They were a little bit slower in mining 100 years ago than what it is now, in terms of mining practices.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - That's correct but in terms of the resource, 50 per cent is out of the ground; 50 per cent is under the ground; and there is more exploration that can be done. It's an extraordinarily productive area, the Mount Read Volcanics, that has spawned so much of the west coast's mining capability. It has made it an extraordinarily prospective for a range of different opportunities.

Other mines have also come back into production over the last few years. If you look at Henty, which was closed, and it's now open. If you look at Hellyer, that was closed and it's now open and there are further opportunities there; Avebury, closed but now open.

CHAIR - Avebury didn't really get in amongst it when it was open.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly, whereas now it's producing so that's the difference. Even when they were open in the past, some of these ones didn't really get off the ground. We have 200 people working onsite at Avebury; they are producing.

Exciting news, I note in our shared electorate on King Island, tungsten concentrate coming out of the Dolphin Mine this week for the first time in more than 30 years. It's really showing that the broad trends I spoke to earlier in my opening remarks about Tasmanian mining are starting to come into play. Our extraordinary suite of minerals, particularly critical and other key minerals that we have here in Tasmania -

CHAIR - I will come to some other matters; I just want to focus on the royalties at the moment.

Looking at the projections here over the forward Estimates, last year over 2025-26, a couple of years out, the forecast forward Estimate this was \$34.5 million and, in this Budget, it says \$44.5 million, an extra \$10 million. What assumptions are sitting behind this? If this is entirely a Treasury document I would have asked them but I don't believe it is. I believe it's driven by this -

Mr ELLIS - We spoke before about the need to be conservative in this space because we are dealing with volatile commodity markets and you're better off under-promising and over-delivering. Broadly speaking, that's the strategy that -

CHAIR - I'm sure the Treasurer likes that idea but the assumptions that sit behind that?

Mr ELLIS - It's good for budgeting as well. I will pass over to the team to add to my remarks.

Mr STEWART - We work with Treasury; they're Treasury numbers at the end of the day. We have an influence over those numbers -

CHAIR - You must provide advice. Treasury are not going to figure it out on their own.

Mr STEWART - As I mentioned before, we provide advice; we gather information from our major producers. That's the majority of our advice; that's the intelligence that comes from MRT. I don't have an exhaustive list of all of the assumptions and inputs into that calculation that Treasury use. We can attempt to get that for you from Treasury but in terms of what we provide, we talk to the individual producers -

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Can you provide a list of the producers who are paying royalties in this current year, or the current year we are in - we are not quite into the new financial year yet - and who you expect to pay?

Mr STEWART - We provide an aggregated figure because those -

CHAIR - I'm not asking how much they're paying; I'm asking who's paying mineral royalties at the moment?

Mr STEWART - I would have to take that one on notice, as to whether we might need to receive some advice as to whether we can release individual company names.

CHAIR - Surely, these companies all report publicly.

Mr STEWART - Not all of them.

CHAIR - Not all of them?

Mr STEWART - Only listed companies report publicly.

CHAIR - I thought they public.

Mr STEWART - There are mum and dad companies, all different sizes, companies that produce gravel, sand, they all pay royalty, or those where the mineral is owned by the Crown, they all pay royalty.

Mr EVANS - We can take that question on notice, as the Deputy Secretary has said, we can look at whether or not we can provide that information but we would like to take advice.

CHAIR - Yes, okay. I am not asking for how much. I am asking about how many contributors are there to this, which is an important source of revenue for the state. It is a state-owned resource.

Mr WAINING - Just to clarify, please, Chair, the figure you are looking for are those that are paying royalties to the Crown?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr WAINING - Because obviously some of those gravel and construction minerals, as Brett eluded to, are on private land where that material is owned by the -

CHAIR - I am talking about what comes into our pockets.

Mr WAINING - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - We will work through providing that.

Mr WAINING - All of those major mineral producers. Anyone is producing category one minerals pay.

CHAIR - I think we know who they are. It would be good to have a complete list.

Mr ELLIS - Would it work if we provided some of those figures based on particular mineral categories. Do you really want all the details about mum and dad gravel pits and that sort of thing or are you looking at the more major -

CHAIR - A lot of the mum and dad gravel pits will be excluded through this, won't they? Yes, they are not paying to the Crown, are they? Or they are?

Mr ELLIS - It depends where they are operating.

Mr STEWART - Some of them are. It depends on the land ownership.

CHAIR - Yes. Whether it is on Crown land, yes. Let us see what we can get. I think most of it comes from our electorate.

Mr STEWART - That is definitely true, it is a real powerhouse when it comes to that.

CHAIR - Okay. If I go to the performance information in budget paper number 2, page 266, there is a performance measure about:

Programmed abandoned mining lands rehabilitation projects completed.

It says always 100 per cent, but can you tell me what projects are actually on foot at the moment if any?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. I will provide some raw update. Tasmania's rigorous, contemporary environmental and development approval process for the administration and management of mineral tenements provision for addressing legacy issues resulting from historic mining operations is made through the Tasmanian Government's Mining Lands Rehabilitation Trust Fund. The fund helps support rehabilitation work undertaken on abandoned mining sites in Tasmania. Mining and mineral exploration companies are required under legislation to rehabilitate disturbed land resulting from mining or exploration activities to the satisfaction of the Director of Mines and in some cases, of the Environmental Protection Authority.

This also requires the lodging of security deposits to ensure there are sufficient funds available for the remediation of explorational mining activity. Should the holder default, security deposits must be lodged before any mineral tenement is granted. For the specific operations, I might pass to the team to add further.

Mr STEWART - I might pass to the Acting Director to run through the projects for this year.

Mr WAINING - Yes, there are a number of projects being undertaken by that team under the funding from that fund, that includes the preparation, decommissioning, rehabilitation planned for the Scotia Mine site up in the north east. There are a number of matters there to be dealt with and they are currently undertaking some. That has been a continuation from last year and continuing into this year, doing some testing on the dam wall safety and the water. There are other matters with the water and people involved who are experts in that field.

CHAIR - That is all funded out of the rehabilitation trust fund?

Mr WAINING - Out of the trust fund. That is correct. There has also been removal of Balfour precipitants dam. There was a precipitation dam or a dam that was collecting precipitants and removed based on advice from dam engineers suggesting that was weakened and had some safety issues. That was removed, and there has been a continuation of water monitoring after that.

There has been some clear water diversion and hydrogeological modelling at Storeys Creek, following advice from consultants on that area.

There has been a continuation of the Abbotson shaft capping campaigns where those ones on Crown lands have been highlighted at risk of danger to others.

CHAIR - And animals.

Mr WAINING - And animals. Where we are made aware of them, those risk ratings are done, and those of higher potential risk are dealt with. We had one recently with some radiation potential, so that one was capped off as well. That was highlighted on social media also.

CHAIR - Where was that one?

Mr WAINING - Up in the north-east, in the granite areas.

CHAIR - With the radiation issue, was that because of the mine site? Or because of -

Mr WAINING - No, just the natural accumulation of mineral within that.

CHAIR - Okay.

Mr WAINING - Then there's ongoing maintenance and monitoring of the Aberfoyle mine site in Rossarden, for earth works 2021. There's weed management, monitoring and revegetation maintenance at six sites previously rehabilitated. There's all that follow-up work that is undertaken to ensure those things are working. There's the development of a legacy features database to better prioritise those activities. That's ongoing work.

The trust fund also partners with UTAS to carry out research to improve remediation outcomes, so there's ongoing research into improving the results we achieve from the work we undertake.

There's also the steering committee that oversees the trust fund and the work they do. That's made up of members from Mineral Resources Tasmania; the Department of State Growth; the Tasmanian Minerals, Manufacturing and Energy Council; Cement, Concrete and Aggregates; Sustainable Timber Tasmania; the Department of Natural Resources and Environment; we have a representative from Parks and from the EPA -

CHAIR - Do they get sitting fees? Is that the cost -

Mr WAINING - Not that I'm aware of.

CHAIR - Okay.

Mr WAINING - That's a general high-level picture of the works undertaken during that last period. Some of those are ongoing, and that committee will determine the best next steps or programs.

Mr STEWART - If I could just add to that answer, the funds that the trust fund administer also include, in some cases, security deposits on abandoned mines. The Scotia example is one where -

CHAIR - What about scheelite? Sorry, the schree mine.

Mr STEWART - That is still an active lease, a current mining lease. It's not an abandoned mine. Where we have a security deposit on abandoned mine and work needs to be done, the trust fund administers that security deposit as well.

CHAIR - That just sits in the fund?

Mr STEWART - Correct.

CHAIR - Do you have a current balance of the fund, or you need to wait for the TFR?

Mr STEWART - We don't have a current balance. It's funded through an appropriation at \$150 000 per year, but there are other funds -

CHAIR - All the security deposits. So you don't have a balance?

Mr STEWART - Correct. We do have a total figure for security deposits held, but they're not held by the fund. They're held in total, across all sites - including mostly active sites. We could see if we could get a current balance for the fund. We might not be able to get that until -

Mr ELLIS - Did you want that as at today?

CHAIR - If you can. I can find it in the TFR, but that might not be until October. We don't get that.

Mr STEWART - I could probably get that for you.

Mr DUIGAN - I have a question around exploration, which is obviously a vital part of ensuring that Tasmania's resources sector goes forward. I'm just wondering what developments are in that area, and what that looks like.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely, and thank you for the question. Mineral exploration in Tasmania is now at its highest level on record. The latest mineral exploration figures released by the ABS show that reported exploration expenditure in Tasmania was \$44.5 million over the 12 months to March 2023. This is a 93 per cent increase on the preceding 12 months period and a sign that our Government's approach is working. We know that the world will need the

key and critical minerals that Tasmania has to help power the global shift to renewable energy and support defence manufacturing.

This is exactly why we are backing in the industry to grow through programs like our popular Exploration Drilling Grants Initiative (EDGI) and geoscience initiative. EDGI, for example, provides co-funding for greenfield's targets that may lead to the discovery of Tasmania's next new mine. Since the program started, there have been eight rounds released, with funding provided for over 14 000 metres of drilling. Our \$2 million geoscience initiative is providing new data to underpin and de-risk the next generation of mineral exploration here in Tasmania.

Pleasingly, this week's ABS data also shows that, when calculated on a basis of spend per kilometre - I know you love your metric stats, Mr Duigan - Tasmania's exploration ranks third in Australia. People in the south may not realise that Tasmania is a mining state but we certainly are and with more than 50 per cent of our exports, it is our number one economic earner. When it comes to exports, the mining and mineral processing sector contributes more than \$2.9 billion per year in exports and we want that to grow even further. It supports more than 5900 jobs, many in regional and rural Tasmania. Our Government is the strongest supporter of Tasmania's world-class mining and mineral processing sector and we are really pleased to work in partnership as the industry continues to grow.

CHAIR - Good. I have to find the questions on notice as well as do this. In your opening comments, minister, you spoke about the importance of some of the minerals that we mine here for the decarbonisation of our future. You also mentioned some of more rare minerals, particularly, rare earth minerals. I understand we do have some but I also understand that they are extraordinarily difficult to extract and quite costly. How do you see the future of some of these, particularly high-value minerals, being economic for this state to extract and process to the point of at least being able to be used by someone?

Mr ELLIS - There are a few separate categories that we are talking about there. The big opportunity for Tasmania is in critical minerals. This has come, particularly, off the back of COVID-19 with a realisation that we need to harden some of our global supply chains. The more production that we can have in Australia and in our strategic alliances for some of these critical minerals are really important.

Australia has national list of critical minerals. Other countries have similar, but not the same, minerals on those lists. In terms of Tasmania, our biggest opportunity, in my view, is in the world's most critical mineral, tungsten. It is both extraordinarily hard and extraordinarily difficult to substitute for another mineral. Tasmania is Australia's largest producer of tungsten. King Island Scheelite, Kara Mine near Hampshire. There are other opportunities in terms of ventures. Tin tungsten deposits that they are looking at Mt Lindsay as well.

Much of the mining operation that you see there is pretty standard, underground mining, that we see it at the Dolphin Mine, more open cut as we see at Kara. That is a huge opportunity for Tasmania. Speaking more broadly and in a policy sense, with our critical minerals strategy, the other part of what we are looking at is not just what happens when we mine the minerals and sell them in their raw or concentrated form but further downstream value adding as well.

For example, one of the next parts in the chain would be developing an ammonium paratungstate plant to further provide value and to further bolster Australia's capability in that

sense. Currently, 80 per cent of the world's tungsten is produced by China. Very little tungsten is produced, for example, by the United States and in other parts of Australia as well. There are other critical minerals that Tasmania potentially has access to in some of our other deposits.

For example, at the Rosebery mine, like other zinc deposits, there is the presence of critical minerals like germanium and indium - those have previously been almost effectively a waste product as part of the broader zinc production that they undertake further downstream, but as the world is realising that we need to have a strong, stable, secure source of those minerals, there are opportunities to discover new value and unlock new value within those.

In terms of, say, some of our rare earth specifically, I am aware ABx are looking around rare earths and there are different suites of what comprises rare earths. Another opportunity are the things that are found in our tailings dams, for example, and some of our producers have cobalt. Many people will be aware of cobalt as a key input in battery manufacturing -

CHAIR - And where most of it comes from.

Mr ELLIS - And where most of it comes from, sadly, are places like the Democratic Republic of Congo, where there are massive human rights and environmental issues that can fuel conflicts. Myanmar is another source of critical minerals as well. Ultimately, this is part of the broader story which is not just that we need these supply chains to be on-shore for our own strategic and manufacturing prosperity, but also that we have a responsibility to mine at the lowest impact globally. If we're fuelling civil wars and conflicts by some of the commercial consumption choices that our community around the world is making by going to Third World countries rather than going to responsible Tier 1 Jurisdictions like Tasmania, we're missing out on huge opportunities.

CHAIR - My question was really, we know that some of these minerals are expensive to extract and expensive to process.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sure.

CHAIR - In your role as Minister for Mineral Resources, is there a plan to work with these companies to try to find ways to enable greater downstream processing on-island? The last thing we want to do is just dig it up and ship it.

Mr ELLIS - That's a big part of what we're looking to develop as part of this Critical Minerals Strategy that the Premier announced in his State of the State work. There are two sides of things, as I mentioned. There's mining and we need to gain more access to these resources to reactivate and unlock new value. Often critical minerals come in mineral categories that have been neglected in the past, for whatever reasons -

CHAIR - Undervalued, I'd say.

Mr ELLIS - Potentially undervalued. There are certain market-distorting behaviours of producers in other countries, for example, as I mentioned, tungsten. The market for tungsten broadly in terms of our global export supply market, because it's been dominated by one player and a highly state-run, state-controlled player in China, it's meant that other producers in the west, for example in Tasmania, we have not had a consistent supply of tungsten. We typically

see, as you will probably know, Chair, for example, the King Island tungsten mine operates when there is a war happening and, thankfully, -

CHAIR - Some of it won't just require war in the future. It's really important to decarbonise in the future, not just when wars are on.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly. That's a big part of the defence manufacturing shift with resources like tungsten but it's also a big part of, say, the shift when we look at the Avebury Mine as a key producer of nickel. There is more nickel in a lithium ion battery than there is lithium. That's one of the extraordinary important opportunities as well that we have in Tasmania, not just that we have some of the resources that we need for global decarbonisation, but that when we mine it we have some of the lowest carbon content of any place in the world and that would be similar with Avebury. That's part of what has driven Avebury to begin production again. The opportunities are for places like Avebury that are reopening but also for new mines as well because when you invest in Tasmania, you're investing in a place that is 100 per cent supplied by renewable electricity and also that is currently net-zero.

CHAIR - It's not why we're still importing energy. Let's not argue about that.

The Critical Minerals Strategy - where is that at?

Mr ELLIS - We announced at the state of the state, which was in February, we are working closely with the department around the work to develop this. I envisage it will be happening over the course of about 12 months. Broadly speaking, from a strategic sense, the direction that I've set from the department is that we need to be focusing on the Australian Critical Minerals list and working with what is on that list and playing our part to feed in information to the broader -

CHAIR - That is the list and strategy, I am talking about.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, the strategy is important in you need to target particular kinds of minerals because a critical mineral has to be something. The something we are looking at is what is on our national list. There are other arguments about whether we should look to other countries' lists and I am aware that -

CHAIR - Has the work on the strategy actually commenced?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

CHAIR - What stage are we at?

Mr ELLIS - We are looking (inaudible) over the course of 12 months -

CHAIR - Twelve months is a long time. What is guiding that work now?

Mr ELLIS - It is important work and you would agree you do not want to rush it.

CHAIR - Yes, but I am trying to understand what -

Mr ELLIS - Particularly given this is important for not only our state's prosperity, but our -

CHAIR - Tell us what progress has been made on it to date?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. I'll pass over to the department to add to my remarks further but one of the things we did to begin the process was to bring in a critical mineral loading when looking at assessing Exploration Drilling Grant Initiative grants, for example. Previously there wasn't one. This new round developed, includes a criticality loading and has produced four recognised critical minerals targets that have been funded and some broader ones that have critical minerals as part of the suite of resources we are looking at. The work has begun and it is already starting to have results in different parts of our work. I will pass over to the department to add further on some of the work.

Mr STEWART - Our initial focus, after consultation with the minister on this was to ensure the EDGI program guidelines included a loading for projects looking at critical minerals.

CHAIR - Have you got a copy of those guidelines?

Mr STEWART - I do not have them with me. I think they are on our website. I can go through them, Chair.

CHAIR - No, but you can forward the link to me to make it easier to find it. Carry on.

Mr STEWART - That work has already been undertaken. I will pass to the Director on the drafting of the strategy underway.

Mr WAINING - We have certainly commenced work. Chair, we have commenced work on the development of the strategy. It is work in progress and we hope to have it in play before the 12 months, as the minister discussed. There is certainly good scope in Tasmania for attracting investment and for discovery of some of those critical minerals, including the rare earths as you have eluded to, as well as the other minerals the minister mentioned, associated with a lot of our polymetallic deposits. The strategy will be looking at those key advantages that Tasmania has, that is that long history of polymetallic deposits, the nature of those deposits and the extent of those types of things.

We have the Core Library and some spectacular machinery in there that goes bang and does some hyperspectral analysis of core and may well find the next ore bodies in the Core Library. That's the sort of things we will be working towards. The advantages that are renewal energy with the environmental, social and governance principles very high on the agenda for most companies nowadays and the focus will be along those lines.

Mr ELLIS - The other thing I might add, Chair, is Tasmania's work comes in a broader national context. We had our National Resources Minister's meeting recently and critical minerals was the core focus of that discussion on how we can work together at a national level on encouraging the development of mining, mineral processing and downstream manufacturing as a country and where each state can play their part. We have another meeting coming up in the next few weeks and already some interesting trends emerging as part of those discussions. For example, if you look at the Commonwealth's potential support for enabling infrastructure, is a great example.

You and I both know in our shared electorate; the port of Burnie is a really key mineral port for Tasmania with the rail line that goes down the west coast. Other parts of the country have similar dynamics, looking at what further investment can be placed in key areas so we can improve the critical minerals supply chain and, therefore, make it more competitive for our producers. You mentioned before sometimes the high cost or limited markets they operate in. A big part of that is how do we enable that through common user infrastructure so when we're investing in improving the critical mineral supply chain, it works across the whole suite of the supply chain, all the different producers. So that's rail, that's port, road access and infrastructure.

Another thing to look at that we've worked through here in Tasmania involves the finance side of things as well. We've provided important support to the King Island mine in that case, and I should say as well, important electricity infrastructure too, to support the work-

CHAIR - They had to fight to get that. That was more with Hydro than perhaps with you.

Mr ELLIS - It's important for all of us to work through these things and realise, what is the bigger picture? The bigger picture in the case of tungsten is we need to have defence manufacturing in this country, because that's really important for our national sovereignty.

CHAIR - We're running out of time, there are other areas I want to go. If I can just go to the Group 6 Metals mine on King Island. There was a considerable lack of engagement across government businesses to assist them with the energy. I'm not going to go into that now, it does show a lack of broader government looking at this particular issue.

What I want to know from you as the minister for Resources and working across portfolio for the betterment of the state, we know the Group 6 Metals in 2024-25, 2025-26 is going to have significant overburden, there's an opportunity here for them to relocate that inert overburden - nothing nasty or toxic about it, no acid in it, inert - to put it out in the ocean there and create an all-weather safe harbour. Despite this, the Infrastructure minister continues to claim that Grassy Harbour is an all-weather safe harbour. Currently, TasPorts have run directions that deny ships access depending on the swell and the wind speed. Several ships have been denied access in recent times, so that is not an all-weather safe harbour.

Here we have an opportunity to work across government to enable Group 6 Metals to deal with their overburden in a way that works to support the redevelopment or construction of a new all-weather safe harbour that actually shields weather from the other direction. What will you do, in your responsibilities here, to work together with the minister for Infrastructure, who's in charge of TasPorts who seems to deny the reality -

Mr ELLIS - First, I reject some of the assertions. We work really closely with Group 6 Metals; this mine has been closed for more than 30 years and it is open now.

CHAIR - We know that.

Mr ELLIS - It is open now, under our Government, and as well, you mentioned before, and so did I, support from Hydro, support from TasNetworks, they use TasPorts, they use Bass

PUBLIC

Island Line. There's been major support for this mine from government business enterprises and also the Tasmanian government as well,

CHAIR - After they bought a whole heap of generators, yes.

Mr ELLIS - I mentioned a \$10 million loan facility, major support that we're all working together on this, Team Tasmania, that's a really important approach. I speak regular with the mine. They acknowledge the work that we have put in together to get this mine that has been moribund. That was effectively a lake in Grassy until a couple of years ago. And I don't think we should forget that because this will be a critical part of Tasmania's ability to meet global supply needs. As I say, they currently use the port, they currently use Bass Island Line, they work really closely together. As I say, I don't think that should be forgotten when we're talking about the broader picture-

CHAIR - Let's talk about the overburden.

Mr ELLIS - What is our posture with working with the mine to get it up and running. As I mentioned before, a \$10 million loan facility, this mine in full production -

CHAIR - I want to talk about the overburden.

Mr ELLIS - The mine produces overburden. At full production, they'll be producing 2000 tons of tungsten trioxide per annum containing 3100 tons of concentrate. It's a significant quantity of tungsten to supply -

CHAIR - Can we talk about the overburden and the opportunity here?

Mr ELLIS - As you and I both know, the Grassy Harbour was actually built from the overburden of the mine -

CHAIR - Yes. I understand that.

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, the mine will work through approvals process in relation to what it does with its overburden. There are some interesting opportunities there. As I mentioned, the harbour itself was built previously from overburden. I might pass over to the team further regarding other discussions that have happened, what the process might look like as far as dealing with the overburden and any other opportunities.

CHAIR - I want to hear from you, before you pass to the department, how you will engage with the minister for Infrastructure, who has basically said no at this point, to considering the use of the overburden to shore up the current breakwater and Grassy Harbour, or particularly, to build a new one out heading down to the north.

Mr ELLIS - I am not going to go into private conversations with other Cabinet ministers.

CHAIR - I am asking how you are going to work with them on this.

Mr ELLIS - Other than to say that we have worked really closely, as a group, on a whole range of enabling infrastructure projects to support this mine. When it comes to electricity supply, when it comes to TasNetworks and Hydro -

PUBLIC

CHAIR - They had to buy several diesel generators before that even happened.

Mr ELLIS - As I say, that mine is operating and you are asking me about royalties that have not been paid in 30 years from that mine. We have delivered a \$10 million facility.

CHAIR - We are talking about the overburden.

Mr ELLIS - We will work through a process as is proper with that overburden. Now, you are not an environmental scientist, neither am I. It is important that we work through with all of the regulators as part of this process, what that looks like.

CHAIR - I find your comments demeaning. Let us just move to the question here.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, I do not mean to be demeaning. However, I will say that we need to work through a process. That is important. Our community expects that when mines have overburden that it goes through a proper process, particularly when we are talking about putting it in the water.

CHAIR - Of course.

Mr ELLIS - We need to make sure that we are backing in that Island to grow. There are interesting opportunities.

CHAIR - Can I ask about the overburden? The opportunity that exists and how your department might work with the mine, not what they have done already. I am not denying the work that has done already, despite some of the challenges of the future, when this overburden is not available now. They are using their overburden currently to shore-up the seawall. You would know that. I am looking at when the overburden becomes available, that is no longer required?

Mr ELLIS - Sure, would you like me to pass to my department now because I am more than happy for them to add to my remarks.

Mr STEWART - If there is to be a change to the management of overburden there would need to be a couple of different approval processes that would be required. The current mine plan that the site is operating under would need to be changed and that would need to be approved by the Director of Mines. More importantly, the critical step would be the environmental approvals. That would be managed by the EPA through their permit. There may be implications under federal legislation as well for environmental approvals.

CHAIR - The Director of Mines has a key role to play here, in redefining the use of the overburden?

Mr STEWART - Certainly, if the company wanted to change the way that they manage their overburden moving forward, or make a change to their mine plan, that gets approved and worked through by the director.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - The Director of Mines would work actively with them to identify the other areas, like the environmental matters with EPA? We are talking about a collaborative approach to try to make the best of both worlds here.

Mr STEWART - Yes and typically what happens there is that MRT would assist in getting all of the parties together.

CHAIR - You would do that?

Mr STEWART - When there is a new mine or when there is a revision to a mine plan or a closure plan, any of those elements of the operation, the Director of Mines and the relevant inspector from MRT would get together with the EPA, the company, potentially landowners, any other stakeholders, local government and work through those issues, subject to what they are. As I said, there may be implications under Commonwealth legislation as well.

CHAIR - We are running out of time. Does anyone have any pressing questions on this? We will call it quits on this and come back at 11:20 p.m. to do Skills and Workforce Development.

Mr STEWART - Sorry Chair, I do have quick answers to your earlier questions.

The current balance for the Rehabilitation Trust Fund for this financial year, the 2022-23 year, is currently sitting at \$89 480. This is not atypical that a lot of the work happens in summer and autumn. We are working through invoices as we speak, to get them done by the end of the financial year. The other question on the EDGI guidelines, I have sent the link to that to you. You have that.

CHAIR - Sure. There was one other question. I did start asking this one too, and the gender across the department. Are you able to provide that on notice to us?

Mr ELLIS - We might go through this. We can go through that now and can provide that to you.

Mr STEWART - We have the figures for the entire department and also a breakdown for MRT. We can provide either or both.

CHAIR - For the entire department, what does that involve? Is it the whole of State Growth?

Mr STEWART - That is correct.

CHAIR - No. I want those for Mineral Resources.

Mr STEWART - The FTE count for MRT is 49. The gender balance - I've got a percentage - is 56 per cent male, 44 per cent female.

CHAIR - Do you have a gender pay gap assessment of that?

Mr STEWART - No. We don't have those figures.

CHAIR - Can you get a breakdown of the bands that the 49 workers fit under?

Mr STEWART - We can provide those for you.

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

CHAIR - Okay. Thank you.

Committee suspended from 11.06 a.m. to 11.22 a.m.

DIVISION 10

State Growth

Output Group 3 - Skills, Training and Workforce Growth **3.1 Skills and Workforce Growth**

CHAIR - We will move into your Minister for Skills Training and Workforce Growth Area 3.1.

If you could introduce the people at the table with your team. I will also encourage you to give a fairly brief opening statement.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. To my left here, we've got Alex Paterson, Acting General Manager, Skills Tasmania. Down the end of the table, sitting out of order just to confuse me, we've got Stuart Hollingsworth, Director, Jobs Tasmania, Peta Sugden as part of Skills Tasmania, and Elaina Deayton, my chief of staff who might be taking questions today. In terms of a general opening statement, we are currently living through the largest skills and labour shortage in our country's history potentially. Supporting more Tasmanians into training and jobs is critical to addressing the skills needs in core sectors of the economy like construction, aged care and emerging or reemerging sectors like the energy sector. Last year I released ministerial priorities to provide strategic guidance to deliver our vision for a high quality system that is accessible, job focused and responsive.

My ministerial priorities focus on building stronger partnerships, modernising TasTAFE, investing in training for jobs, promoting opportunity and access. All stakeholders have a role in driving training outcomes, including government, employers and industry. Registered training organisations (RTOs) and learners. The Tasmanian Government, as the majority funder, invests more than \$100 million in a year in the training workforce development system.

National skills funding is provided from the Australian Government through the National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development, and National Partnerships linked to specific projects. TasTAFE is a critical part of the Tasmanian vocational education training (VET) sector as the public provider. In 2023, TasTAFE received \$85.3 million via a deed of purchasing agreement. TasTAFE also received additional funding to deliver election commitments, budget issues and national partnership activities. While guided by the ministerial priorities, Skills Tasmania is responsible for managing Tasmania's training and workforce development system, providing strategic guidance to the Government on TasTAFE, subsidising training and workforce development activities that support Tasmanians into jobs, working with industry and other stakeholders to facilitate partnerships and to identify current

and future workforce and training opportunities, managing Tasmania's apprenticeship and trainee system and engaging with the Australian government and state and territory governments on national skills policy and funding policy matters. Building on existing arrangements, work continues to promote high-quality training, increase accountability and transparency and responsiveness to local needs.

Jobs Tasmania was established in July 2021 to work on labour supply issues, connecting people with training and work opportunities in the regions. Jobs Tasmania's objective is to increase local employment, workforce participation and re-engagement with education and training. Jobs Tasmania agenda is delivering for Tasmanian job seekers, businesses and local communities. The regional Jobs Hub network has supported over 3000 Tasmanians into work, this is in addition to almost 5000 who have sought advice and support on local employment and training opportunities and the over 5500 businesses who have connected with a hub to find the staff they need to continue to grow and meet demand. Jobs Hubs have also helped over 1200 people to connect to training opportunities to upskill them for the future, with almost 1500 job opportunities available across the regional Jobs Hub network over the next six months.

This national leading model is continuing to deliver for Tasmanians and we have only just got started. Jobs Tasmania is responsible for nearly \$40 million in programs, such as the regional Jobs Hub network, Career Connect, Dress for Success and many other programs supporting Tasmanians on their journey to economic participation. The 2023 Budget committed \$5.5 million over two years to extend the Jobs Hub initiative and \$1.8 million over three years to the Employer of Choice program. I could go on, Chair, but I understand you would like to get into it.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, Chair. Minister, can I ask you first of all for the same information I asked for in a previous portfolio on expenses or estimated expenses for the year on travel, advertising and marketing, consultants and ministerial and senior executive salaries, please.

Mr ELLIS - Sure. I will pass over to the team to provide that update.

Ms PATERSON - In relation to advertising and marketing for the skills and training workforce growth portfolio it was \$150 112. For travel, \$42 661 and for senior executive service salaries, \$283.03.

Ms LOVELL - And consultants?

Ms PATERSON - Consultants, we would probably have to take on notice. I think around \$121 spent for 2022-23.

CHAIR - \$121 000?

Ms PATERSON - Yes.

CHAIR - I might ask for similar information in the gender nature of your workforce across band levels, SES and band levels.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, can I just double-check. Was this for Skills Tasmania and Jobs Tasmania?

CHAIR - Yes, across the areas you are responsible for under this output.

Ms PATERSON - We will get that for you in a minute.

CHAIR - Okay.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. Minister, can the committee have a breakdown of all the subsidised training and workforce development activities over the past 12 months, including the providers and funding amounts?

Mr ELLIS - For every provider in Tasmania?

Ms LOVELL - Yes, all subsidised training and workforce development.

Mr ELLIS - We provide subsidies to a range of different players in Tasmania. We have more than 100 registered training organisations that provide training in Tasmania. The Government's a key funder of that. TasTAFE is the largest, but also mum and dad scale training providers that receive public subsidies. The information we can make available on that, Alex?

Ms PATERSON - Sure. Happy to talk to that. In relation to the breakdown of the current training budget for 2021-22 and 2022-23, is it 2022-2023 you are most interested in?

Ms LOVELL - Yes.

Ms PATERSON - In terms of the TasTAFE deed, the amount was \$85.3 million. In relation to the private RTO funding it's \$37.01 million and that goes to 100 or so endorsed registered training organisations. The details of each funding program and which RTOs receive what funding under each program are on our website.

Ms LOVELL - So, that's publicly available already?

Ms PATERSON - Yes. We have a breakdown by key industries for the 2022 calendar year, if that's helpful.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, thank you.

Ms PATERSON - Probably one of the most important things to note in this breakdown as well is that there is a large amount that goes into 'generalist' or 'other' training because there are a lot of underpinning qualifications that support across a number of sectors. With that in mind, for 2022, it was:

- Advanced manufacturing - \$7.1 million;
- Aged services and disability - \$8.7 million;
- Agriculture, Forestry and Aquaculture - \$11 million;

- Building and Construction - \$27.6 million;
- Early Childhood - \$7.2 million;
- Electro-Tech and Energy - \$10.7 million;
- Information and Communications Technology - \$4.4 million;
- Tourism and Hospitality - \$4.8 million;
- Transport and Logistics - \$2.4 million.

And the rest is 'other'.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, just moving onto another topic - in the Premier's State of the State Address you said that:

Young Tasmanians deserve a smooth pathway from school into the world of work. That is why we are developing a Youth Jobs Strategy. Over the next 12 months, Jobs Tasmania will be working closely with the Department for Education, Children and Young People, the Youth Network of Tasmania, Jobs Hub and other service providers to examine how we can better support young people as they transition from school to work or further education and training.

I haven't been able to find any mention of that project in the Budget. Has funding been attached to that specifically?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I will provide an update more broadly on this as well. Tasmania's unemployment rate is at record lows and we have been seeing significant improvement in the youth unemployment rate, but with workforce shortages likely to continue across a range of sectors, there's never been a better or more important time to focus efforts on further improving employment, education and training outcomes for our young people. To do this, our government is developing a Youth Jobs Strategy to provide young Tasmanians with a smoother, more supported transition pathway from school into work. The Youth Jobs Strategy identifies policy and systemic interventions to increase the level of participation in work, in education and training for young Tasmanians aged 15 to 24 years. The strategy will aim to develop ways to improve integration and coordination of services and supports, to provide young people with a system that is connected and seamless with multiple access points and pathways to fit individual experience and need.

The strategy also aims to increase business confidence and skills for employing young people. Industry and local employers will have a key role to play in creating more entry-level opportunities and making inclusive, welcoming workplaces for young people. The Youth Jobs Strategy will be led by Jobs Tasmania and Stuart Hollingsworth - at the end of the table - in partnership with the Department for Education, Children and Young People, the Youth Network of Tasmania and regional Jobs Hubs and will be provided to government in early 2024. I will pass over to Mr Hollingsworth to add to my remarks.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - In terms of undertaking the work, we have a budget available to support our consultation processes. We're working with independent evaluators

and community service organisations and all of those were listed in the minister's statement. That process is well and truly underway. Workshops with the community and those stakeholders are planned through July and there will be public consultation process. As the minister mentioned, that strategy will be developed and what comes next as part of that strategy will be delivered to government early next year. There are a range of existing activities, already underway. In a number of Jobs Hubs, we have youth connectors already working across the service system. We're working very closely with organisation who had a partnership with schools and are working with young people at risk. A lot of the focus of the work is making sure that system is much more connected and integrated so we're learning from what we're doing well and trying to broadband those efforts.

Mr ELLIS - I might just add to that one as well, specifically on the question what else are we providing? There is \$180 000 from internal Jobs Tasmania resources to support the strategy development to ensure that we've got the right research, data analysis, which I know Mr Hollingsworth is very strong on. Evaluation, consultation processes are resourced as part of this work, as I say, we are expecting March next year.

Ms LOVELL - Can I clarify, \$180 000?

Mr ELLIS - Internal Jobs Tas.

Ms LOVELL - That's for the development of the strategy and the consultation? And that's coming from existing resources, there is no additional funding?

Mr ELLIS - Internal resources, yes.

Ms LOVELL - So existing? There's no.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. It's internal resources.

Ms LOVELL - So there's not been any additional funding provided in this Budget for that strategy specifically?

Mr ELLIS - As we're developing, we've got a policy team that are really keen in developing policy. Then as we make the next steps in terms of what the strategy then delivers on, then we'll work in future budgets on resource allocation. I imagine that some of the really strong focus of this work will be on youth participation and making sure that we address some of those critical parts of our economy.

Tasmania's economy is interesting because historically we have a lower participation rate. As many know, we also have an older population, but that's not the whole picture. We also have a challenging and persistent youth non-participation rate as well. When we're talking about intergenerational disadvantage, that non-participation rate is a key part of that metric.

Jobs Tasmania has been doing some important work in walking alongside young people as they make that journey from school to work or further training. That includes some amazing work done with YFCC in my electorate to provide people who may not have had the opportunities in life or the mentors to begin that transition. Some of the early work, some of the important work that we're doing now, we'll look through the strategy and see where that's

working, what the opportunities are and then as part of future budgets, we'll see what those opportunities are.

Broadly speaking, our community is one of the big drivers in Tasmania. We want to see our young people have opportunities here on the island to continue to build and grow. As I say, we will work through that with future budgets.

CHAIR - If I could take you to the Performance Information on page 265. Graduates employed after training, I'm interested in how you actually measure this, is it a point in time after their training? Some people don't always stay in the workforce. How do you actually measure this to give us a more accurate, if it's a target, not a measure. You have to measure against the target, so I'm just interested in the rigour behind that.

Mr ELLIS - We're really fortunate in the data space in Skills, particularly with strong partnerships with the Commonwealth, the National Centre for Vocational Education Research and others. Building a data picture of skills and training is one the strengths of the system, that we can support that. In terms of the actual kind of rigour and statistical process, I might just pass to the team if they have that information available.

Ms PATERSON - The targets are set using a consistent methodology that takes into account trends and outliers over time. For the 2023 target, that's the three-year trend of the previous actuals, excluding 2020 as an outlier due to the impact of COVID-19, it's not statistically or significantly different to 2022-23 but it is a three-year trend based on actuals.

CHAIR - So that's the target, but the rigour that sits behind assessing it. If it's done on a point in time, then the next day, several people could leave employment perhaps.

Ms PATERSON - Yes. It is a point in time measure. Yes.

CHAIR - So how do you collect the data?

Ms PATERSON - It's an NCVR data point, so, the National Centre for Vocational Research.

CHAIR - So what date do the data collection? Or do they do the data collection?

Ms PATERSON - They do the data collection.

CHAIR - Is that a set time every year? The same date?

Ms PATERSON - Yes, it is. Can I just check that data for you and come back?

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, one of the good things about the data that we collect is that it happens over long periods of time and it has a quite a strong database behind it. When we are seeing the natural statistical ebbs and flows and changes because we have a broader trend that we can identify across that, this assists in providing some rigour in the data.

CHAIR - The point in time could depend very much on what time of the year you do the measure.

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Mr ELLIS - Spot on.

Ms PATERSON - I can tell you that the data is released in December, as to the point of final collection, we probably have to -

CHAIR - It would have to be collected before that.

Ms PATERSON - Yes, an annual survey.

CHAIR - It is not just as all of the school leavers are leaving; if it is released in December, it is collected before that.

Ms PATERSON - I do have an answer for you on some of the earlier questions. In relation to consultancies awarded for the Skills, Training, Workforce Growth portfolio, for consultancies over \$50 000 between 22 July and 23 June comes to a value of \$99 000. Regarding the makeup of Skills Tasmania, the FTE is 60 and 80 per cent female.

Mr ELLIS - While we are on a similar dataset from my previous one, can I please table this information regarding the Department of Natural Resources and Environment? It will have Forest Policy in there, but because we are talking about eight - a very small number - we have not broken it down by SES band in that one, particularly, if that is okay. As we are talking about such a small number, it could identify those people. If it is all right, we have broken it down by band across the department and gender and then broken down by gender in Forest Policy, specifically. I will put it in your capable hands.

CHAIR - I will have a look at it. Thank you. The gender pay gap has not been included in that, has it?

Mr ELLIS - Not in that specifically, as I say, because we have very numbers in Forest Policy.

CHAIR - With regard to the same detail. I think you said there was 58 per cent female?

Ms PATERSON - It was 80 per cent female, that is for Skills Tasmania. For Skills and Workforce Growth, it is 52 females and 20 males.

CHAIR - Do we have the band levels for these as well?

Ms PATERSON - We will be able to provide that.

CHAIR - If you could provide that. Same as the data that we have been asking for regarding forest policy and mineral resources and if there is an identified gender pay gap in that. Maybe, there are so many women, it may or may not. If you pay for women, we will see.

Mr ELLIS - We certainly have a lot of outstanding female leaders in this area as well. On the boards as well - if I might - just to provide that update.

CHAIR - The boards in this area, is that what you are talking about?

Mr ELLIS - If that is of interest. We have the administration of two boards in this Skills, Training and Workforce Growth. TasTAFE board, chaired by Tim Gardner, currently has five members and two vacancies. The Tasmanian Building and Construction Industry Training Board - Keystone Tasmania, chaired by Norm McIlfattrick, with eight members, two committees: the Tasmanian Traineeship and Apprenticeship committee, chaired by Philip Mussared, currently has six members and one vacancy. The Tasmanian Energy and Infrastructure Workforce Advisory Committee, chaired by Ray Mostogl has 12 sector representative members. Women represent 42 per cent of all members. As I mentioned -

CHAIR - None of the Chairs?

Mr ELLIS - No, unfortunately, I think that is also a big opportunity for us too because we have some outstanding female leaders in the VET space who I mentioned previously. Our Government's policy of increasing female participation and membership at the highest levels of governance is really important and will continue to be a focus in all of our recruitment.

CHAIR - With the recruitment to those board positions, are they being difficult to fill? Or is it just a point in time -

Mr ELLIS - No, just a point in time. Different arrangements in terms of people going through. In the case of TasTAFE, we're in a really important phase, the board is quite new and it's -

CHAIR - We've got another separate line item dealing with TasTAFE so I might come to those matters there, if that's all right. Mr Gaffney has the lead on that.

I'll just go back to the Skills, Training and Workforce area, in your opening comments you talked about the real challenges in workforce, attraction, development, all that at the moment and our low unemployment rate. From your perspective, what do you think some of the key barriers are to people who may be able to work in the state, but aren't.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, I should have mentioned before, we're recruiting for the new Keystone board chair at the moment. That's just happened in the last few days, so apologies for the previous answer, but that should provide a better update.

One of the really exciting things about Jobs Tasmania is its strong work to help identify what those barriers are. For example, in our migrant community, barriers may include, language can be an issue depending on their background and previous education. However, there are other matters as well. As you know, we often live in highly-connected communities in Tasmania, so when you're new, coming from outside and particularly coming from another country, that can be a significant impact.

Other things, for example in the youth space, could be public transport or being able to get transport to a job. One of the big pieces that we've been able to identify through some of our regional Jobs Hub networks is our Area Connect program that helps young people overcome some of those barriers to transport. There is a range of complex barriers, particularly in regional Tasmania, when it comes to participating in the workforce.

I might speak particularly about the Youth Connect program. It focuses on supporting young Tasmanians seeking employment, apprenticeships, training, further education in their

local area. The pilot program will be delivered in conjunction with the regional Jobs Hub networks in Sorell, Glenorchy and George Town. Work is underway with the Youth Network of Tasmania and the Jobs Hubs, delivering a model that focuses on regionally-specific interventions. This is one of the important things about Jobs Hubs, they are by their nature, place-based, and help provide local solutions to some of those challenges.

All three Jobs Hubs are currently refining program design and finalising implementation plans. The Glenorchy Jobs Hub Youth Connector service delivery commenced on November 2022 to help inform a delivery model and implementation plan prior to formal submittal. To date, 56 young people have registered with the Hub, 46 have been placed in employment, three pre-employment workshops have been delivered for a total of 36 participants.

Another important example I mentioned before was Fit For Work, the YFCCC, I mentioned, operating in Burnie and Devonport. That program is often about walking alongside young people as they work through what can be a potentially difficult time. If they haven't had great mentors in their life as well, giving people access to that. I might pass over to Mr Hollingsworth as well to provide some further information about some of those other challenges that we're sort of seeing in the participation in the employment space.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - A lot of the challenges involve visibility of jobs roles, particularly in Tasmania, where recruitment is often done through networks and relationships. That's really important in regional communities and what we're seeing is that the Jobs Hubs are creating and connecting some of the dots in those networks at a very local level.

That in itself is driving some really interesting outcomes, particularly for females re-entering the labour force. Losing connections with networks - I know our Jobs Hub on the east coast at St Helens where families have relocated, usually because the male partner has moved there, the partners have been able to go into Jobs Hubs and connect and bring new skills to that community. That's a really powerful way in which we're addressing some of that alignment and matching and the visibility of jobs roles in a way that's not eligibility or compliance-based as well. That's a point of difference between our system and the Australian Government system. That's a really important -

CHAIR - When you talk about eligibility, what do you mean?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - There's no eligibility for Jobs Hubs. Anyone can enter a Jobs Hub and get support for jobs from the Jobs Hub. The other thing is we're navigating that really complex system. All the acronyms we're dealing with - it's challenging for us to keep on top of, let alone someone who's facing barriers to re-entering the market.

We want to really de-clutter this. We think it's a real barrier to unlocking some of the potential in our labour market. That's a real strength in the way we're working. Our independent evaluators are saying that these methodologies are nation-leading, so we're really on the right track there, I believe.

Transport is a common one. The minister talked about our Area Connect program that was trialled, worked, and is now being rolled out across the state. We know driver licensing is a really challenging issue. Addressing that challenge is a key point of our work in our youth jobs strategy. There are a number of programs, but we need to get that working a lot better.

The confidence of employers. Small and micro businesses are really wanting to employ young people, or anyone, but they often don't know where to start, and they need support for that post-placement work. Again, this is some of the work we've seeded and is showing strength. The Employer of Choice program is one that gives those small and micro businesses the tools and confidence to employ, in a supported way, to make sure we're creating those entry-level roles that we really need our businesses and industries to be doing - not only right now, but for the long-term benefit of our economy.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, at the moment we have really low unemployment, and that provides its own specific challenges. The great thing about Jobs Tasmania and the Jobs Hubs is that, say there is an economic shift in the future, they are also able to provide assistance on the other side. One example is the Rapid Response Skills Initiative, which supports people who have been made redundant in the last 12 months due to retrenchment or business closure, with upskilling or reskilling to help them secure employment. Eligible jobseekers can access up to \$3000 towards the cost of training to help them re-enter the workforce.

Tasmania can suffer from dislocation when we have changes in economic cycles, so we're not just supporting people when the labour market is tight. We're also providing the framework and structure so that some of those barriers to participation in a different labour market, or segments of the labour market, are able to be covered so that people are participating more in our economy as well.

CHAIR - I think you've highlighted in some respects, but missed a couple of absolutely glaring things, which I'll come to. This shows the need to have a whole-of-government approach. This is obviously bigger than just your department. A critical issue is the lack of access to childcare, and a lack of access to housing. They are not your portfolio areas, but unless you work as a cohesive government here - for example, we've had medical professionals not come here because they can't get childcare in our area. They'll come down here, but they won't come to the north-west because they can't get childcare.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, exactly. We need those partnerships with the federal government. Obviously, they lead on childcare. One thing we've been quite intent on, particularly in this space, is making sure we're engaging strongly with the federal government around the place-based elements, so that we can feed that back in.

Mr Hollingsworth and his team have been working closely with one of the federal government committees examining a whole range of these matters. They're really looking at what Tasmania is doing as nation-leading opportunities.

The other lever that I have in my portfolio is about training the workforce for childcare, for the construction industry. We can make important contributions there by supporting people to enter into training, so we have more childcare workers available to us in the north-west, as you mentioned.

CHAIR - And construction workers to build childcare centres

Mr ELLIS - Yes, exactly. I might even pass over to Peta Sugden to give us a sense of the industry compact work we are doing in this area.

CHAIR - I am interested in how you are working across the government to address those things. I have communicated with the premier, as minister for Health, on one such issue. The closure of a childcare centre in Burnie because the owner of the building they leased, was going to demolish and rebuild something else and they had nowhere to go. They had all this childcare work but no facility and I was looking for a place the Government might better provide.

Mr ELLIS - I cannot speak specifically to that particular instance, but in the broader framework one of the pieces of work we are doing out of the Premier's Economic Social Recovery Advisory Committee reviews from the COVID-19 era that identified governments and industry need to work more closely together on some of the workforce development training challenges and bring that together with a specific instrument. That is where the industry compact process has been born. We are working through with a range of different sectors. Early childhood is one and the construction industry, in its particular -

CHAIR - Do you have a relationship with Homes Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - Yes of course. We do not have necessarily an industry compact specifically with Homes Tasmania, but more the housing construction industry and its parts. I will pass over to Peta.

CHAIR - Before we go to Peta, if you don't mind, minister, but the issue is Homes Tasmania is now a statutory authority or whatever it is called these days under the Government. It is part of the government still and we know that one of the things they are required to do is provide worker accommodation as well as other accommodation. There is a very direct link here. I would hope there would be a really deep and meaningful connection.

Ms SUGDEN - I might come back a moment and just explain the industry skills compacts, which I do not know if you know, but they are a commitment from PESRAC in order to work a lot closer and develop relationships with industry.

We have been doing that now for nearly a year and working really closely with a number of industries and bringing up issues that relate to workforce. I agree, and as you can imagine, housing and other areas outside the skill portfolio are coming up as significant barriers. At the moment we are developing compacts that will contain broad commitments on a range of areas. For example, working with early childhood as far as the compact goes. That will have priority actions for workforce, that they consider to be their top priority actions. To address your questions specifically, the Department of State Growth is developing a community of practice which will be on workforce in total to bring in other areas adjacent to the skills portfolio but critical in overall workforce development.

Through that there has been some work with Housing Tasmania and that will certainly strengthen and continue -

CHAIR - Homes Tasmania.

Ms SUGDEN - Yes, Homes Tasmania. Sorry.

CHAIR - It is not just a matter of access to childcare and housing to get into the workforce, it is even a step back into getting to workforce training of an education. This is a really big barrier to overcome.

Mr ELLIS - Particularly, some of our regional areas, like you and I both represent the West Coast, that has particular challenges because we have huge economic drivers both for when the west coast is going really well - like it is currently - and when the west coast is not as a result of the global mining industry and a range of those other challenges. I will only speak briefly on this because it is being managed in another portfolio, but one of the key things we are looking to deliver is regional partnership arrangements. The west coast is first cab off the rank in that and there is money in the budget for it. A big part of the reason is housing is such a big challenge and it can become a barrier to growth and investment because, as you are correctly identified, if you cannot live somewhere it is really hard to work there.

Working closer with our regional communities, particularly the local governments, but other key industries, bodies, and their progress associations and others on these regional agreements is really critical. It is a different process, but it is the same thinking of place-based solutions to place-based problems that Mr Hollingsworth and the team at Jobs Tasmania are really focused on with the regional Jobs Hubs. Similarly, with these regional partnership agreements. Tasmania is such a regionalised place, small but so diverse that a solution for housing on the west coast looks completely different to a solution for housing even in Burnie which is not that far away and is a similarly connected economy. It is certainly a big challenge, but one that we've got to work through.

Ms SUGDEN - I would add Skills Tasmania and Jobs Tasmania has a good relationship with Homes Tasmania. From a previous portfolio, there is work being undertaken in this worker accommodation and hoping to link in stronger with our work. Certainly, in the tourism area there has been some initial work undertaken but again, outside the minister's portfolio.

CHAIR - This is where you need a whole of government approach to dealing with it, because it affects all areas of government.

Mr ELLIS - That is part of the beauty of State Growth as a department. There are a lot of interlinkages across the economy at different focuses. In other places, skills may sit with education, for example, or some of the work Jobs Tasmania does. In other parts it actually sits with a different level of government, but also could sit with a different program provider department. One of the things we really recognise is having a broader view on our economy and recognising that participation and vocational education are end users of service, but they are also drivers of the economy in so many different ways. Because it affects so many things, it has put them in a department like State Growth that have the broader view.

CHAIR - Any other question on this line?

Mr DUIGAN - Minister, we are hearing, lots of instances across the state of businesses crying out for skilled works. Can provide an update on training numbers, with our apprenticeship numbers and if there is in fact contained within those numbers, some relief in sight.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Duigan. We are focused on ensuring more Tasmanians can access the training they need to get a job. Apprenticeships and traineeships are a fundamental part of the training and workforce development. They are workers to build our houses, care for our loved ones and support our businesses in our local communities. Pleasingly, the latest apprenticeship, apprentice and training figures from the National Centre for Vocational

Education Research showed an increase over the 12 months to September 2022. The figures from the NCVS show across Tasmania there were 12 010 and apprentices and trainees in training in September 2022.

Importantly, over the 12-month period to September there was a nine per cent increase in apprentice and trainees around Tasmania. Compared with the same point in 2018, there are now over 3000 more apprentices in training, which is an incredible outcome and a testament to the people beside me. The figure also shows a total of 8230 apprentices and trainees commenced in the period, including 3080 trade workers and 5150 in non-trade occupations. This is over 60 per cent higher than in September 2018. These are staggering figures and a testament to our learners and our businesses.

Significantly, in 2022 a total of 96.7 per cent of Tasmanian respondents have found employment after training, compared to 91.8 per cent nationally - a nearly 5 per cent difference in Tasmania's favour. It is a sign that investments made in our vocational education and training system are working. Tasmania also continues to have some of the highest completion rates in Australia. Our plan for the skills sector remains clear. We want Tasmanians to find fulfilling careers that are right for them and to build a workforce to meet the needs of businesses and industry in the years ahead. Our training system is leading to jobs, which is why there are over 50 000 more jobs in our state since 2014 and seeing record low unemployment.

Ultimately, this is about making sure we are building a stronger Tasmania.

CHAIR - Any other questions on this line? We will move to TasTAFE.

TasTAFE

Mr GAFFNEY - I recognise there is no output line.

CHAIR - It is in budget paper 2 volume 2.

Mr GAFFNEY - While the 100 extra TasTAFE teachers initiative was funded in the 2021-22 Budget, how many have been employed? Can you update us on that?

Mr ELLIS - You are right, we made a commitment at the last election for 100 new teachers and this is an important part of the work ongoing. Nationally we have a workforce shortage in virtually every sector of our economy; in Tasmania and in our training system that's no different. Our people and the people that we're looking for are in high demand and we're doing some important work around that. We're very focused on delivering our commitment.

On the exact number employed at the moment, I will pass over to the team if they have that figure to hand.

Ms PATERSON - Excluding sessional and casual teachers from June 2021 to April 2023, there was an increase in full-time equivalent teachers from 408.1 to 422.4. In the same period, the head count decreased from 481 to 476 as fewer casual teaching staff were employed.

Mr GAFFNEY - The question is, while there was funding for an extra 100 teachers, what was the total taking up those numbers of the 100?

Mr ELLIS - It's over a number a years -

Mr GAFFNEY - So, that money is still there?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. It will be rolled out across the forward Estimates. We don't want necessarily employ all of these teachers overnight, but as we continue to grow the workforce, we are continuing to increase the numbers because, as I mentioned, we have had some national labour shortages -

Mr GAFFNEY - The next question is, has TasTAFE utilised its new ability to pay higher salaries to attract teachers in short supply, and if so, have you done that and in which areas?

Mr ELLIS - You are right, one of the critical parts of our reform to TasTAFE was to enable our teachers to get paid more and do more training as well. That's a really important part of the work that we're doing. We're working through a process with the Fair Work Commission at the moment. Existing employees are covered under a copied State instrument, meaning the current state-based industrial agreement will continue to work or to apply to them until a new agreement is negotiated under Fair Work, but new employees from 1 July 2022 are employed under Fair Work agreements. On 22 March 2023 TasTAFE initiated bargaining for new enterprise agreements to cover teaching general staff so that additional capability has enabled us to hire new teachers. We found it to be quite successful -

Mr GAFFNEY - On that, how many more teachers have you on that hire package and in which skill areas? Have you been able to utilise the capacity to do that?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of the particular number of teachers - I am looking to the team -

Ms PATERSON - The most information that the department is aware of is the information set out in the Six-Month TasTAFE Review report. I suspect that TasTAFE are not here yet and they would be best placed to answer current figures.

Mr ELLIS - We're expecting TasTAFE staff to arrive very soon.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay, we can hold that over.

We will go to the Freer Farm. I see that there's an extra \$1.5 million to upgrade infrastructure. Is that expected to be the last that's needed for that? There was \$5 million initially and another \$1.5 million in this next year. Is that supposed to be the end of it or is there nothing for the future Forward Estimates?

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, Freer Farm represents a huge opportunity for TasTAFE in a broader strategic sense, with its assets. I know you have probably been up there, Mr Gaffney. It is a vast piece of land holding. In terms of our development on that site, we think that there is a bigger picture that we can continue to look at we continue to grow investment in that space. Now, the agricultural centre of excellence that we are building at Freer Farm. The delivery of the new learning centre is on track for completion June 2023. It is also being complemented by the purchase of new technology and equipment. We have launched the new Holland tractor up there a little while ago. There are a whole range of other investments that we can potentially make on-site as we look to the future of Free to Farm.

Mr GAFFNEY - Do you have the numbers of the students at that centre? Or will I wait for TasTAFE?

Mr ELLIS - Just give me a tick. As I say, TasTAFE will be coming along shortly. Around 300 per annum. Did you want a more grandular -?

Mr GAFFNEY - No, that is fine. I am interested to know the relationship TasTAFE has with the Tasmanian Minerals and Manufacturing Council, their facility at Wellington Street in South Burnie. I can remember going to the opening of that some years ago. What is the relationship now between TasTAFE and that center? I am thinking that had some Federal money in it, initially. I am just wondering now because Elphinson's group has the main bulk of it. Is that correct?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, they have part/part there. There are also partnerships with TMEC that TAFE help deliver for training in that space. I might just pass over to the team if they have some information. As I say, TAFE should be with us shortly. Do we have anything to hand?

Ms PATERSON - I think only to say that that relationship still exists and is something that we are also looking at strengthening through the industry skills compact process. There has been a new metals and manufacturing short course, which is a three week, non accredited training program, delivered in collaboration between TasTAFE and TMEC. We would expect -

Mr GAFFNEY - Who owned the building to start with? Was it TasTAFE?

CHAIR - Which building are you talking about?

Mr GAFFNEY - The one in the South Burnie, next to the bowls club there. The Wellington Street.

CHAIR - That was Australian Government.

Mr GAFFNEY - That was Australian Government?

CHAIR - It was under some scheme that lasted 10 minutes.

Mr ELLIS - That is, I suppose, a matter for TMEC as the tender or potential -

CHAIR - Australia College thing they called it off. Someone knows what it was.

Mr GAFFNEY - It was federal funding. I went to the opening of it.

CHAIR - Yes and it lasted like 10 minutes.

Mr GAFFNEY - I was interested that it has morphed for as long as TasTAFE is still having input that facility and organisation, I think it is fine.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Sugden mentioned before around the industry skills compact part and mining in energy advanced manufacturing are key parts of the skills compacts that we are looking to deliver through that process. That takes in TMEC, the key word is 'that facility' but

also TAFE, where it is able to provide further support. Peta, did you want to maybe add to that?

Ms SUGDEN - Yes. I might just say about the compacts. The compacts will capture a range of things. One includes increased access to facilities. Facilitating access for RTOs to employer facilities. Also then, facilitating industry facilities into the training centre. TMEC is well advanced with how it does that. In fact, part of its business model is around the access to this equipment. There is a significant relationship with TMEC and TasTAFE and that is continuing.

Mr GAFFNEY - I must admit, comparing the facilities at the South Burnie site compared to Morville site. It is like chalk and cheese. I am assuming that a lot of those infrastructure upgrades will be in places like Morville, Tas TAFE campus.

Mr ELLIS - As in future work?

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, there are a range of different opportunities. The focus of key investments in Burnie over the last 12 months in particular have been around Freer farm because of the nature of that site, there is really interesting opportunities too. In terms of that facility in Burnie at Mooreville Road is also an important capability for TAFE.

CHAIR - Three farms on Mooreville Road too.

Mr ELLIS - Yeah exactly on the other side of the road, so, yes. So it's an important educational precinct.

Mr GAFFNEY - If the 1.5 of the \$1(?)million dollars is for the Friar Farm. The priority of infrastructure upgrades in this year the million dollars, compared to and then the filed forward estimate for next year, where would that be, would that be earmarked somewhere or is that up to TasTAFE?

Mr ELLIS - So are you asking about Friar Farm or the other priority structure?

Mr GAFFNEY - The Priority infrastructure and the extra one for next forward estimates.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, so, that will be across a range of different sites, it's probably less I suppose, site specific and more thematic in terms of providing additional investment on some of the infrastructure within the sites around the state. Obviously there's major new upgrades that are happening at places like the WET centre, over the river here in Hobart, \$5 million more upgrade at Allenvale and Friar Farm is key too. But this will be for our other existing facilities, so you know, key things like air condition upgrades or matters like that.

CHAIR - So not people then? It's investment in buildings and assets.

Mr ELLIS - And we can potentially provide a little bit more information when TasTAFE get here as well.

CHAIR - Surprised they're not already here already, they've let you down somewhat.

Mr ELLIS - Maybe just too busy teaching the learners of the future. Not sure. But we'll make sure they get here as soon as possible.

CHAIR - I wouldn't think your CEO would be teaching too many students, but.

Mr ELLIS - No. But yes, we'll make sure that we can covered off any further information that you're after there as well Mr Gaffney.

CHAIR - You were providing some information about the board in relation to TasTAFE, can you provide that now or do we need to wait for them to come?

Mr ELLIS - Information about the board in-?

CHAIR - No, we're talking about the board positions and TasTAFE. I said that we'd come back to that.

Mr ELLIS - I'm sorry chair, I'm not sure which part of the information of the board

CHAIR - We were talking about boards and committees and that and the gender make-up of the boards and committees and I said we'd come back to that under TasTAFE

Mr ELLIS - On the board itself, I provided the figure previously around the gender breakdown of that boards. Specifically on TasTAFE?

CHAIR - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - We have three female board member currently and two male board members and recruiting for two positions as well and as I say, our broad strategy is about making sure that we preserve and promote the gender balance on that board as well.

CHAIR - So those unfilled board positions, were they people who finished their term.

Mr ELLIS - In the case of Kim Goods(?), I'm aware that she had an opportunity that she was looking to pursue that avenue wasn't necessarily

CHAIR - Presented a conflict?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Presented a conflict.

CHAIR - So she stepped off ahead of the time.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly, so, we've just done natural recruitment. But we've progressed as far as our recruitment in that space, and can I say, we've had some really outstanding people looking to take part, and we will hopefully have some more information on that one pretty soon.

Ms LOVELL - I just wanted to go back to the question about the new teachers, the election commitment around new teachers. To clarify, if we could go back to the figures, the

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FTE and the headcount figures that were provided, so I've got the figures of 408.1 increased to 422.4. What date were those figures from?

Mr ELLIS - My comparison I've got here, and forgive me Alex if I'm wrong, June 2021 to April 2023, increase of FTE teachers from 408 to 422.

Ms LOVELL - June 2021 to April 2023.

Mr ELLIS - Correct.

Ms LOVELL - So that was a commitment made at the 2021 election, is that right?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - When is the intention that those 100 new teachers will be delivered by?

Mr ELLIS - The funding is provided over the forward Estimates and that will enable those teachers to be appointed to the full establishment of 100. They will be appointed over a four-year period.

Ms LOVELL - So, it was essentially over that term - 2021-25? Is that the four-year period or is that four years from now?

Mr ELLIS - Not four years from now.

Ms LOVELL - So, by 2025.

May I confirm also - we have the FTE figures which show an increase of 12.3 FTE, how many teachers have left in that time and how many have been employed? We have the increase and it's a net increase; what's the total movement in and out?

Mr ELLIS - I will look to my team here if they have further information but TAFE will be arriving shortly so we can provide further updates on that specifically.

CHAIR - I acknowledge our program said 1 o'clock for them. I was misreading it.

Mr ELLIS - I had a feeling that they weren't being tardy. We can provide that later when TAFE get unless you guys have that information to hand.

Ms PATERSON - Yes. The most relevant details the department is aware of are as set out in the review document from earlier this year so if you want more up to date figures it would be best to wait for TAFE.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, that's fine.

May I ask around the commitment - it was 100 new teachers? Is the commitment intended to be to just employ 100 new teachers or is it 100 additional teachers from the 2021 workforce figure?

Mr ELLIS - Additional.

Ms LOVELL - So, a net increase of 100.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, exactly. We're thinking in terms of strategic focus across a range of key industry areas - construction; allied trades; electro technology; and plumbing which, obviously, is close to my heart; nursing; aged care; disability; alcohol and other drugs; engineering and metal trades; cyber security in Blue-tech in the marine space. Obviously, we're looking at those as, say, crucial skills in terms of the growth of our economy, hence, the growth of our tailored workforce as well.

We're envisaging it will enable TAFE to meet increasing student numbers and to deliver expanded courses as well.

Ms LOVELL - I have some questions around the agreement negotiations but that might need to wait until TAFE get here.

I have one other that the minister might be able to answer. In the Premier's State of the State Address, minister, he said:

Over the next 12 months the Government would set up TasTAFE's first ever cyber security operation centre.

Where's the funding for that in the budget?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of our cyber centre - projects jointly funded by TasTAFE and the federal government - the Cyber Security Operations Centre being built at TasTAFE's Campbell Street Campus will provide state of the art training and cyber security centre. It is scheduled for completion in June 2024 -

Ms LOVELL - Approaching 2023?

CHAIR - It should be nearly finished now.

Mr ELLIS - Any day. We might invite you all to the opening, given your interest. Training will commence 2 September 2023.

Ms LOVELL - Was there funding for that in this budget or was it in last year's budget?

Mr ELLIS - This year's budget, obviously, starts in July 2023 so it will be completed by then.

Ms LOVELL - Is there funding for the ongoing operations of it?

Mr ELLIS - That's part of TAFE's broader -

Ms LOVELL - Existing budget?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. In terms of the infrastructure, that's been funded previously and it will be delivered this financial year so there is no capital expenditure in that sense.

Ms LOVELL - But an operational recurrent budget will have to come out of TAFE's existing resources?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, TAFE teachers, students - this will be a place where we teach students so the standard funding that we use across a range of things but I did mention as well previously that there is a focus also on the 100 teachers.

The cyber security arrangement is a growth area for us and in terms of the broad numbers when we're looking to employ new teachers those 100 teachers will potentially include cyber security as well.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you.

CHAIR - I always run out of time for skills training and workforce growth

CHAIR - In Output Group 3, there's a whole range of dot points that talk about what Skills Tasmania does. For example, managing Tasmania's Training Workbook Development system and providing strategic guidance to the government in relation to TasTAFE and a range of other matters, we've already covered a lot of. Besides the performance information, which is very narrow and specific around VET predominantly and apprentices, how else do you measure success? If we're seeing that businesses and industry still crying out for employees to fill their jobs they've got, then you'd argue this is not really working. What's happening? How do you measure success?

Mr ELLIS - Speaking specifically, training, VET education and apprentices - that's extraordinarily important. It's it's a huge driver and I don't think we should discount the key role that has.

CHAIR - I'm not doing that. I'm not suggesting that, Minister. I'm suggesting that's one part of it. There are things we've talked about like women returning to the workforce after having children and the issues with childcare. We've got new arrivals in the state partners of other people who come from work and then look for employment. That sort of thing.

Mr ELLIS - Skills has a skill focus, but Jobs Tasmania has more of that say participation focus.

CHAIR - So how do you measure the success of that? That's not so much focused on the delivery of VET and other training.

Mr ELLIS - No, you're right. In terms of Jobs Tas and I'll pass over to Mr Hollingsworth to add to my answer around some of the work that we're doing in this space. They were set up in 2021 and so they're new part of our government and they also are stepping into non-traditional spaces for a state government. The Federal government, have run the old Job Active Network, now Workforce Australia, and have had a key role to play in that.

In our view they've delivered strong compliance outcomes, but we're really focused on job outcomes and participation outcomes. As we're working through with Jobs Tas around where they can best deliver for our communities that will help us to establish the broader strategic framework about what is the measure for success.

CHAIR - We still don't have a measure then?

Mr ELLIS - Participation rate is a strong one and we've seen an increase in the participation rate here in Tasmania but I think we also need to be adaptive - because it's such a new agency - in terms of giving them the scope to work more closely with communities to bring on those opportunities too. As Mr Hollingsworth has outlined, there's a range of different programs and diversity program that we work through. Did you want to provide a further update, Stu?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Thank you, minister. As part of understanding what these metrics are, we're working with our evaluator, the Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence and the University of Tasmania to understand what those metrics look like for our successful outcomes, for what our interventions are. Beyond that, in terms of some of those broader macroeconomic indicators, we're part of a broader ecosystem, but we're looking at those with a really focus of where we want to take our youth strategy to. That's part of the process for those benchmarks look like around participation, but we're really mindful about there's multitude of [inaudible 12.28.43] in that, but that's okay. We will work through that process. The other key overlay at the moment, as well as the direction of the federal government and the conversations we're having with them, not only about a better working employment services system that's working complementary of what we're doing here in Tasmania and other jurisdictions. We're part of those conversations.

Federal Treasury is also looking at what an outcomes framework looks like. I met with Federal Treasury the other day, as part of some of the forums about what some of the broader outcomes framework look like.

CHAIR - I am glad to hear they're looking at that because we do outputs like numbers of people who got a job. I mean if they don't stay there and then it's a pointless measure.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - These things are hard to measure too about what meaningful long-term employment outcomes look like. The Commonwealth have measures about 22 weeks those sorts of things, so we want to have a longitudinal examination. We're really excited about the opportunity to be playing in this space as a state government that we probably haven't before. There's work to be done, but there's a bit of alignment now and there's a lot of momentum with the work we're doing, not only with the regional jobs hubs, but work with premier and cabinet around some of the pilot work across with Burnie Works for example, taking a really broad community approach and a multiple outcome framework.

CHAIR - When do you expect to have this this work done to the point where it can be applied to actually measure the outcomes?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - In terms of our interventions with the jobs hub framework, we have an interim evaluation report that is imminent to be published to share where we are at with our progress and a final report about that intervention and the outcome measures towards the end of the year early next. As a result, we're running through whole process with the evaluator and communities around that intervention.

With the youth job strategy, around what our benchmarks and what we're aiming to, that again will be part of the strategy development process and getting input from the Underwood Centre, the University and others about what those indicators look like from a young person's

perspective. That will form part of that strategy that again will feed into the government at the end of the year. In terms of that national overlay when we're contributing to what that outcomes framework looks like that the federal government working towards.

Mr ELLIS - We had some quite simple metrics, like I've mentioned before. There's been 3000 people that have been able to get a job by connecting with the jobs hub. There's been 5500 businesses that have been able to connect and it's and those are those are outcomes in say - people getting a job.

CHAIR - No they're not. Not unless they stay in the job.

Mr ELLIS - Sure, but people getting a job and if they stay in it that's a great outcome. Also, this is part of the work with the Brotherhood of Saint Lawrence, we think if we're more intentional and we drill down into some of those numbers because if you look some of the Tasmanian communities that have long term disadvantage those are often some of the hardest people to reach and participate in the job market. So, if our numbers are simply: that person is worth one, in terms of our sense of what success is. Similarly, with someone with a high degree of education, a long job history, they're not, they're not the same in terms of what we're trying to necessarily achieve. So thinking about really intentionally, how do we measure success for that cohort that we're really trying to empower and enable for potentially the first time, but certainly through this framework so that we're not just saying 3000 jobs and they're all the same and that has the same impact. We are saying 3000 jobs: is that someone, is that someone aged 18 to 25 that's never had a job before or do they come from a particular band of disadvantages?

CHAIR - What about a 40-year-old who never had employment?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, exactly.

CHAIR - There's a lot of focus on youth here, which is great, but there are many older people who want re-enter the workforce, like women, particularly, and prisoners on release from prison, and obviously the long term unemployed, particularly the disadvantaged. You know very well, minister, that some of the kids in our electorate have never seen a parent or grandparent work. It's an intergenerational thing.

Mr ELLIS - I spoke in parliament the other day about a great example of this, a lady in Westbury, Ruth. She's 71 and she -

CHAIR - I don't live in Westbury and I'm not 71.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry. I had never thought about that. She was effectively retired then but then saw that there was a lot of opportunities in hospitality that she thought would be a good thing to be doing on a casual basis. She has done a few short courses with VXT, our visitor experience training. Now she's working at a local cafe a couple of days a week and helping us meet some of those workforce shortage problems that we have in hospitality. They are people from all walks of life that can A, benefit, but B, provide benefit for others by going through this process. That's why the evaluation is really important and why we're very focused on strong data collection in this early period so that we can have a clearer sense of what we are driving for and what the outcomes are.

CHAIR - In terms of data collection, do you have visibility of the underemployment rate?

Mr ELLIS - That's published and available on the ABS data.

CHAIR - How do ABS define underemployment?

Mr ELLIS - My understanding is the same way they have used since - I'm just trying to think. Obviously the ABS is federal, but I am pretty sure that information is on the ABS.

Here we go. The Australian Bureau of Statistics underemployment framework classifies persons who are not fully employed according to whether they are looking for and/or available to start work with more hours. The framework also separately identifies persons wanting full-time hours or persons wanting more part-time hours.

CHAIR - How do you interact directly with those people, those who are underemployed? They are another cohort of people who can help fill these workforce shortages.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly right. In some of those different opportunities, we might be talking about young people that are looking for new opportunities, and YFCC, as we've mentioned before, does a lot of that work.

Another difficult factor could be transportation and that you only have limited transportation available to you so if you're a younger person, you may be able to work only during certain times when your parents are available.

CHAIR - Or older people. It's not just young people who have issues with that.

Mr ELLIS - Sure, and that's the thing, this is a really complex picture, so when we speak about example cohorts and demographics, we don't mean this is the whole challenge, but part of the challenge. We need to be mindful of what the full challenge looks like. But Stu, did you want to provide a further update on underemployment?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - We're actually seeing from our Jobs Hubs at the moment, from the early data coming in, the age profile coming in is a lot of older workers reconnecting because, again, they're not eligible for other supports that are available. We also have our Career Connector program which targets people aged 45-plus as well to support them with specialised career advice.

On the underemployment, similarly again, we're seeing, as the Minister alluded to as well. People are going to the jobs hubs looking for additional work. When the Commonwealth adjusted payments for ability for pensioners to earn, we saw in our east coast hubs a lot of older people turn up at the Jobs Hub and go, 'Look, I'm able to work now and earn some more money'. We saw a lot of engagement through that process as well. It goes to the openness of the hub model versus other programs which are really narrow about eligibility. If people want additional work or want a career change, that platform is now available for them. We're doing a lot of work in partnership with COTA around this and have, for a number of years, around changing attitudes of workplaces as well about employing older Tasmanians.

Mr ELLIS - In May, we held our jobs form on the north-west, at Cooe. It was a month-and-a-half ago and that was really well attended by employers and jobseekers as well.

CHAIR - One of the biggest cohorts of homeless people is women over 50, who often are leaving relationships for a variety of reasons and are often done over in that process. How do you directly target women who desperately need work because they can't afford to live without it?

Mr ELLIS - One of the things we might talk about is our fee-free TAFE and some of the target cohorts that we're looking at. Alex, did you want to give an update on some of that work?

Ms PATERSON - In addition to the activities of the Jobs Hubs, Skills Tasmania runs a demand-led system so there's been quite a lot happening in adjusting our programs to the needs of the labour market over recent years. One of those things is including the partnership with the Australian Government in relation to fee-free TAFE. I think the target cohorts for that program offering the fee-free places for VET was particularly around underemployed and women entering the workforce for the first time. It was specifically targeted at offering courses at that level. The course list was designed around that so we offered a broad range of courses that typically are taken up by women.

I've also got some statistics here if it's helpful in relation to the percentage of funding for the VET sector by age group. There is quite a broad range. The highest percentage, particularly at TasTAFE, is in the 20-24 age group, but there is a broad range up to 65 and over.

CHAIR - Is that broken down by gender?

Ms PATERSON - There is a gender breakdown as well. In terms of -

CHAIR - Would you be able to provide that as a table to us?

Ms PATERSON - Yes. The total percentage for the VET sector of males is 48 and of females is 47.5.

Mr ELLIS - One of the interesting parts of our fee-free TAFE is that it unlocks a lot of opportunity for people who maybe didn't have access to funds to provide it. When we look at the data of Tasmanians who access government-funded training and where it leads directly to a job, for example some of those cohorts that are maybe not working or whether it improves your job status, through working more hours or getting a promotion based on the training that you do, Tasmania exceeds the national averages in both of those key statistics. I think its recognition that education, particularly vocational education, is a real driver of opportunity for people from all walks of life. That they can walk into TasTAFE or some of our other RTOs, here in Tasmania and set their life on a different path.

CHAIR - Even if there are other questions on this area, we will go to Sarah who had other some questions for TasTAFE. You may want to bring your TasTAFE to the table.

Mr ELLIS - While we are in the transition, we have the breakdown of skills training and workforce headcount by ministerial portfolio by gender. It will add Skills Tas and Jobs Tas and the bands.

TasTAFE

CHAIR - You have to introduce TasTAFE to the table for Hansard.

Mr ELLIS - We have Grant Dreher, the Chief Executive Officer for TasTAFE. Fiona Le Gassick, Director Future Students and Industry, TasTAFE. Fiona, we have not got you in your acting role on my list here.

Ms Le GASSICK - That is okay. We have Scott here representing that part of the business.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, Scott Adams in his Standing Role.

Ms LOVELL - I just wanted to refer back to the legislative change in 2021 and the debate in parliament where, there were guarantees made by - I will speak to the Legislative Council - being the Chamber we sit in. Guarantees made by the Leader of Government Business at that time that no existing staff or future staff would be worse off under the new structure. We have already had a decision through Fair Work Australia to say new staff need to be paid the same rates as existing staff. That decision was handed down earlier this year. Are you appealing that decision? Is my first question.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, there is an appeal underway.

Ms LOVELL - Why is that appeal underway? Why have you made that decision?

Mr ELLIS - I am not going to delve too much into the until court case itself. One of the things we are looking to do is provide teachers with higher wages and deliver more training. That has been a big part of the reform supported in this and the other place. By increasing the number of training hours our teachers are doing, means we can pay a more competitive wage in the market place. It also means a better output for Tasmanians and Tasmanian students. That comes this year with the number of training hours, but also through the changes we are looking to put in place. We are thinking about more flexibility because that is one of the things we have spoken consistently about in TasTAFE. Is the need to make sure our learners are at the centre of everything we do in TasTAFE.

When our teachers are more flexible, that enables people to get training in the hours that suit their lifestyle. For example, a mother with children that maybe has restrictions around the time she could potentially access training. If TasTAFE is more flexible, it means they can provide that training as part of what meet her needs. I might pass over to Grant to add to my answer on the process.

Mr DREHER - Firstly, I am assuming you are talking predominately about teachers. We would contend teachers are not being paid less. Our figures do not match other organisation's figures. We believe they are being paid more and they are being paid more annually, than people who transitioned on the copied state instrument. We chose to make a recommendation to appeal the Fair Work decision because we think the Fair Work decision was incorrect. We probably cannot say any more than that because we had a hearing two weeks ago and it is currently live, we don't have the result of that at the moment, so I can't say much more.

Ms LOVELL - I've got a follow-up question then. In terms of teachers being paid more annually, what's the hourly rate, what's the difference, are they being paid - and Minister, you mentioned this as well, you said at the beginning of your response that two of the goals were to be able to pay teachers higher wages and deliver more training, so my question is: by saying you want to deliver higher wages, how does that work in terms of the number of hours they would be required to work and their hourly rate of pay?

Mr ELLIS - It's also worth saying that we're going into enterprise bargaining arrangements at the moment and we look forward to working with our workforce. We want to provide competitive wages, conditions and arrangements because we want to attract more people to TasTAFE and that's been a big part of the reforms.

For the specifics, I might pass over to the team to see if they've got those specific figures to hand.

Mr DREHER - It's not quite as simple as the hourly rate because there seven classifications for a teacher and it's the level that you enter that determines how much you get paid at. What the changes to Fair Work have allowed us to do is to pay people at a higher level that we weren't allowed to do prior to that. So someone who might have had to come in at level 2 can come in at a higher level because the organisation can make that decision to do that.

Taking the entry level hourly rate as gospel, we don't bring teachers in at the entry level hourly rate anymore. Most people come in at level 2 or 3 or above, so that ensures that they are getting a higher salary and a higher rate when new teachers come in compared to what they did prior to the changes.

Ms LOVELL - Can I simplify the question then. The teachers that we're talking about in terms of the decision that was handed down earlier this year, are they working more hours to earn more money? I'm unclear on how you're delivering higher wages. If you're delivering higher wages, and people are coming in at a higher level and they're getting paid more, then this reporting of this Fair Work decision that was handed down mustn't be correct because this reporting says that they can come in under lower wages.

Mr ELLIS - What's the source of that?

Ms LOVELL - I'm looking at an article in *The Examiner* right now: 10 weeks leave instead of 11; 38 hours of work instead of 35 hours a week and different break times. The the commitment that was given in the debate as part of that legislation, which was a critical commitment in terms of support for that legislation was that no teachers would be worse off under this new structure. That doesn't seem to match up now with the bits of information we're hearing.

Mr ELLIS - We've said that we wanted teachers to do more teaching so that we could train more people in Tasmania. We don't view providing more training and then being fairly compensated for doing that as being worse off, and, obviously we've got a process underway with Fair Work, but, one of the things that we find in the market - particularly because people who are vocational teachers often have come from industry - is that being able to get paid more and do more training is a better outcome for them. We need to attract people off building sites

in Tasmania that are currently working 38 hours a week. If, under a new structure, they have to work less and deliver less training and provide less training for students. That means that they naturally get paid less.

Ms LOVELL - Not necessarily.

Mr ELLIS - But obviously, as I say, an interesting one, the AEU media release from Tuesday 29 March stated:

Dozens of TasTAFE teachers employed since July 1 2022 will see their pay remain the same but will have their hours dropped from 38 to 35 per week, bringing it in line with employees on the old agreement.

So yes. As I say, you're not worse off by doing more training and getting paid for more training, if that makes sense.

Ms LOVELL - It doesn't make any sense at all, because you are worse off if you have to work more hours to earn the same amount of money.

Mr ELLIS - Well, a lot of our people want to work more so that they can train more students.

Ms LOVELL - They want to work more hours and earn the same amount of money, do they? Is that what you're arguing?

Mr ELLIS - No. They get paid more, that's what we're saying, they get paid more and they do more training, that's the strategy we're looking to implement, get paid more, and do more training.

Ms LOVELL - Not by hour, though, that is not what you're saying. You are saying they will get paid more because they are working more.

Mr ELLIS - Correct. They are doing more training.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, so they have to work more to get paid more. That does not mean they are not worse off. We can move on from that.

I have a further question. The other relevant matter is the better off overall test which applies under the Fair Work Act. Can you confirm in the new enterprise bargaining agreement negotiations you are currently entering into, the better off overall test will apply to the modern award, not to the copied state instrument employees are currently paid under?

Mr ELLIS - Any new form agreement negotiated under Fair Work will be negotiated and voted upon by TasTAFE employees and approved by the Fair Work Commission. That will include the use of the better off overall test. Understand TasTAFE advised staff that formerly initiated bargaining for the two new enterprise agreements. TasTAFE remains committed to achieving a common set of conditions for staff through enterprise bargaining processes that reflect current market conditions and will see our people recognised for their efforts, contribution and commitment. The enterprise agreements will replace state awards,

PUBLIC

copied state instruments and modern awards and will detail key employment conditions such as pay and leave entitlements.

Ms LOVELL - You have not answered my question, so I will re-ask the question.

The better off overall test - will that apply to the modern award or will it apply to the copied state instrument they are currently employed under?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to the team if they have any further remarks they want to add.

Mr DREHER - The BOOT is conducted against the modern award. It is a Fair Work process, it is not our process. It is fair to say if the agreement we offer staff to vote on is not attractive to them, they are not going to vote 'yes'. That is a Fair Work process. That has got nothing to do with how we are negotiating our new agreement for our staff.

Ms LOVELL - I would argue it does have a lot to do with how you negotiate the new agreement, because that is the system the Government has adopted to work under with the restructure of TasTAFE, so it is the system you are working with. I appreciate it is not a system you have developed, but it is a system the Government has elected to work under. I just wanted to clarify that point.

Minister, can you guarantee that no TasTAFE employee, now or in the future will be paid less than they are currently paid for the same number of hours being worked?

Mr ELLIS - There is a Fair Work process under way. We have an enterprising bargaining arrangement we are working through.

Ms LOVELL - Can you guarantee no TasTAFE employer will be paid less for the same number of hours worked? That is based on what the offer is put to them.

Mr ELLIS - Nobody has lost a dollar as part of this process.

Ms LOVELL - Can you guarantee that will continue to be the case with the new EBA negotiations?

Mr ELLIS - We have a process under way, but we want our people to get paid more.

Ms LOVELL - You are not willing to guarantee no staff will be paid less for the same hours worked now into the future under the negotiations?

Mr ELLIS - There is a better off overall test that applies to all of these things. That is the federal process we are working through. We want our people to get paid more, that is why we have brought in these reforms - that is ultimately what we're looking for. We will work through that process, as appropriate.

Ms LOVELL - Okay.

Mr GAFFNEY - What are some of the other issues you found in this transitional period and how has TasTAFE been managing them?

Mr ELLIS - I will add to a previous answer. Anybody employed now will be paid at least the same and nobody at TasTAFE will be worse off.

Of the work undergoing, this is a really important reform for our Government. It is enabling a significant uplift in capability as part of that. Obviously, TasTAFE like every part of our economy at the moment is looking to employ in a tight labour market. That is, by its nature, a challenge. Broadly speaking, at a national level, we are doing some important work involving the VET workforce, in collaboration with my counterpart ministers in other states and the federal minister. We are looking at the way that we do training and assessment and those qualifications, seeing how we can bring on more workforce in that space.

The important thing to note about the VET workforce is that it is an enabling workforce. It helps train workforces across the economy, making sure that we have a contemporary process for bringing those people online. That is really critical. That is an important piece of work that we need to do in collaboration with our counterparts at a federal level, in particular, but at a state level too. Those have been some of the challenges, where, we have done this transition during COVID as well. COVID was an important identifier of the need for this process.

It was part of the PESRAC recommendations that we go down this path and it was strongly supported by industry, by learners, by all parts of our economy. They wanted to see a contemporary public training provider, particularly as we came out of COVID so that we would have a strong response. Some of the COVID supply chain issues have been a challenge as well as we have worked on some major capital infrastructure projects as well.

It is hard to get tractors delivered at the moment. We have a beautiful new tractor at Freer Farm. That is an important part of the supply chain. Our transformation provides a Water and Energy Trades (WET) Centre of Excellence at Clarence. That also has a lot of contemporary, industry-relevant equipment, also, building facilities as well. Working through some of those COVID-related supply chains has been a challenge, similarly with the cyber security centre. I am looking forward to opening that very shortly. As a plumber who believes in lifelong learning, I am really looking forward to utilising its facilities some day in the future. I suppose, those have been two of the really big challenges that we have had to work through.

Mr GAFFNEY - And getting experienced staff teachers to be able to offer those courses in the appropriate manner at the appropriate places, has that been an issue at all?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, as I mentioned, the workforce challenge has been a really important one for TAFE, and for other Tasmanian vocational education providers, and nationally. My counterpart minister at a federal level, Brendan O'Connor, speaks regularly about the VET workforce challenge that we all need to work through. We expect a lot of our vocational education training teachers because they need relevant industry qualifications and they also need a training qualification on top of that.

If you compare that to say, a university, where you may not actually need a qualification to be a tutor at university at all, particularly a training one. We treat VET differently. That is really important too because we want our learners to be learning from people who have industry relevant experience. There would be nothing more disheartening than being a learner and not feeling that the teacher in front of you actually knows what they are talking about and the challenges that you experience on a daily basis in a trade or in the care economy.

Mr GAFFNEY - Have you had to look overseas or for other areas of expertise to try to fill the holes you may have in the workforce.

Mr ELLIS - One of the good capabilities that has been enabled by the workforce reform that we have brought in from TAFE is that we were able to actually provide more competitive arrangements in the national market as well. We have had interstate interest in coming and working for TasTAFE.

Mr GAFFNEY - International interest or not?

Mr ELLIS - Interstate I said.

Mr GAFFNEY - I am asking -

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to Grant in providing maybe a broader picture of how our recruitment looks in terms of that workforce.

Mr DREHER - I will grab the international stuff straight off. It is very difficult to recruit international people into teaching roles in TAFE because you need to have the qualification that you are going to be teaching. You need to hold that first, or a higher qualification in the same discipline area. Quite often, when people come in from overseas they have qualifications that aren't recognised in Australia, so whilst universities spend a lot of time recruiting international academics, it's not something that TAFEs do.

The minister is correct though, we have a very broad recruitment strategy at the moment. We've recently employed two electrical teachers in Burnie who have both come from interstate. We're working closely with interstate recruitment agencies, as well as local, to make sure we cast a wide net to get people to come to Tasmania and come to TasTAFE.

As the minister has said, it is important to note that this is a constrained VET labour market across the country. It's not as easy to grab people from interstate and bring them to Tasmania as it might have been five years ago.

Mr DUIGAN - Minister, infrastructure spending and capital works at TAFE, noting that TAFE has a number of campuses across the state, including in Windemere. There are capital projects happening in particular at the Centres of Excellence in Burnie and Clarence and I note substantial levels of \$1.5 million of infrastructure funding. Can we have some detail about what potentially the infrastructure spend for TasTAFE looks like going forward.

Mr ELLIS - Can you remind me again about the boundaries, Alanvale and Windemere?

Mr DUIGAN - Absolutely, right bang smack in the middle.

Mr ELLIS - I don't know if that's geographically true but perhaps in population distribution. Alanvale is another major place that we're looking to do some significant upgrades, particularly in supporting our care economy. I was lucky enough to be at Alanvale to look around the new facilities, where the opportunity for the new facilities lie and it's a really exciting part of the delivery that we're looking to do.

PUBLIC

A lot of people think TAFE equals high-vis, but it's actually such an important driver of our care economy as well. Our Government is a strong supporter of TasTAFE and its crucial role as the public training provider. We're committed to ensuring that TasTAFE has the infrastructure that it needs to deliver high quality training now and into the future.

This Government has a significant capital infrastructure program as part of our \$118 million plan. We have a proud record of delivering new infrastructure improvements to TasTAFE sites right across the state.

Work is now complete on a new butchery facility at Drysdale in Hobart, converting a training kitchen into a new space for butchery and other hospitality training. I met a few of those apprentices and they are very excited about the new gear they get to work on.

In Burnie, the first stage of the new Agricultural Training Centre of Excellence will come online in the coming months. This is now a \$6.5 million project after the Budget, which will deliver new learning and conference areas, an exhibition space, a mud room for all that beautiful red soil, and upgrades to stockyards and irrigation. There will be new farming machinery and equipment, like that brand-new large tractor that I have mentioned a couple of times that arrived earlier in the year.

We're progressing the Health and Community Services hub, having now identified the right space on the Alanvale campus and we're actively working with key stakeholders like the Mental Health Council of Tasmania and TasCOSS on this rollout. Design work is well progressed and we expect construction to start by the end of the year.

At Clarence, we're so excited by the \$26 million Water and Energy Trade Centre of Excellence to be completed, a project that will be a gamechanger for local students and industry, providing new opportunities for learners to get their start in a world-class facility.

We'll also be getting on with our new learning hubs at Alanvale and Clarence, delivering welcoming, modern, integrated student service areas that have a strong focus on technology and supporting our learners to thrive.

I mentioned this before, Campbell Street, TasTAFE's first-ever cybersecurity operations centre is nearing completion in June in partnership with the federal government meaning small business operators, apprentices and paraprofessionals will be able to upskill and access training in an area where the number of jobs is only growing by the day.

Next year, we will be commencing work on our accommodation upgrades at Burnie and Clarence as well.

Ms LOVELL - I want to come back to the questions I asked before you had your TAFE people at the table about those teacher numbers. We had the FTE figures for June 2021 compared to April 2023, but I wanted to know how many teachers have left in that period?

Mr ELLIS - So you're after net movements, correct?

Ms LOVELL - No. We've got the net. I was after the total movement.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sorry. I'll pass over to the team. No, that's alright, we'll follow those up. We'll try to get that answer to you by - remind me please, Chair, when does this session go until?

CHAIR - Notionally 1.30 p.m., but we might run out of questions before then.

Ms LOVELL - I'm happy for you to take it on notice and come back.

CHAIR - We might end there, minister. We'll write to you with the questions on notice so that they're clear, with the date we need your response by. We are not scheduled to resume until 2.30 p.m. I was wondering whether you would be able to contact your Police people to come in early? If not, that's fine, we'll leave it at 2.30 p.m.

Mr ELLIS - As first responders they have pretty important roles. Is it okay if we leave it at 2.30 p.m., just out of respect for the work they do?

CHAIR - Yes, that's fine. We'll resume at 2.30 p.m.

The Committee suspended from 1.06 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

DIVISION 8

Police, Fire and Emergency Management

Output Group 1- Public Safety

1.1 Support to the Community

CHAIR - Welcome back, minister. We are now into the Police, Fire and Emergency Management area of your portfolio responsibilities. I invite you to introduce the members of your team, including our very new - well, not very new now but for this period of Estimates - Commissioner. It is very exciting to have a woman as the Commissioner and the rest of the people at your table. I then invite you to make an opening statement if you wish and then we will have some questions.

Mr ELLIS - To my left, Donna Adams, Commissioner of Police/Secretary, DPFEM; Jonathan Higgins, Deputy Commissioner of Police; Mandy Clarke, Deputy Secretary of Business and Executive Services, DPFEM. To my right, my Chief of staff, Elaina Deayton.

First of all, I would like to thank all of our first responders, today being Thank a First Responder Day. Our emergency responders are amazing people. They go to work each and every day or volunteer in our communities, without knowing what they are going to face. All to ensure that our communities are kept safe. I also want to mention our outgoing Chief Officer, Dermot Barry, and thank him for his service to the Tasmanian Fire Service and State Emergency Service and to the Tasmanian community. Mr Barry has been with our emergency services for two years and will be missed by our colleagues and volunteers. I want to thank him for his contributions to keeping Tasmanians safe and wish him all the best.

PUBLIC

Throughout my first nearly 12 months as Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, I have been constantly impressed by the dedication and commitment of our career and volunteer personnel. I visit many police, fire and SES stations, brigades and units. Our people are truly committed to their communities and our beautiful state.

Chair, our Government is embarking on bold reforms for our emergency services. Following more than five years of independent reviews, our Government is taking action to strengthen our emergency services. The Tasmania Fire service and State Emergency Service will soon come together as part of the Government's Stronger Together reforms. Reviews of the Fire Service Act have consistently found that inadequate governance arrangements within the emergency services and this is the key motivator for change. With the increasing frequency and severity of natural disasters, it is important we take action today to empower emergency leaders for tomorrow. That is what our reforms are about.

Chair, in the 2023-24 Budget, we are also investing more than \$3.2 million to support a crackdown on sex offenders, which follows the Tasmanian Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Response to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings. A sex offender disclosure program will be established where parents and guardians can make applications to Tasmania Police to obtain information about a specific person who has regular unsupervised access to their children. The investment will also fund five new dedicated police officers to increase compliance capability for registered sex offenders on the sex offender register, to continue to closely monitor convicted criminals.

There is \$4.1 million allocated to upgrade the Tasmanian Police Academy to boost our strong recruitment program and \$4.28 million for interview and cloud service technology and body-worn cameras. More body-worn cameras will be distributed to our police officers to ensure that they have access to this critical workplace safety device.

Successful recruiting is already growing our officer numbers and we are on track to have added an additional 334 Tasmanian police by July 2026. That is a 31 per cent increase. Our Government is focused on supporting our officers. We will continue our investment of \$3 million per annum for the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management health and wellbeing program, which provides invaluable support for our emergency service workers. We will also invest \$19.5 million across the forward Estimates to support our injured police officers and State Service employees who have worker's compensation claims in place.

The Tasmanian Liberal Government has invested over \$100 million into the capital program to upgrade police and emergency service infrastructure since forming government in 2014. This work continues in 2023-24, with an additional funding for police housing upgrades, taking total investment in this initiative to \$24.9 million, and \$3.3 million in funding to support the purpose-built \$6.5 million Emergency Operation Centre.

In closing, our Government maintains its steadfast commitment to our emergency services and this can be evidenced through our continued support and investment in Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Thank you.

CHAIR - Before we start, I have a question relating to all the output groups. I'm wondering if it's possible to get the estimated outcomes for each of the output groups.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - The estimated outcomes? Sure, I might pass to the team to provide some comments on that.

Ms ADAMS - To clarify, are you seeking an understanding of performance measures and where we're at?

CHAIR - No. The estimated outcomes in terms of the revenue appropriation.

Ms ADAMS - Okay, I'll hand you over to our deputy secretary, Mandy Clarke.

Ms CLARKE - Would you just like me to go through, output by output, in terms of variations?

CHAIR - Yes, slowly enough so I can write them down, if you don't mind.

Ms CLARKE - The major differential between 2022-23, apart from new revenue income attached to new initiatives, is that there have also been some existing initiatives that have carried forward from previous years in budget estimates. There's also some other injection of major funds, which explains some of the differentials. Do you want me to work my way through some of those?

CHAIR - No. I am looking for the figure of the estimated outcome for line item 1.1. Do I need the finance people to provide this?

Ms CLARKE - Our estimated outcomes are based on our accruals through to 30 June in that figure.

CHAIR - So you have the figure?

Ms CLARKE - Can I ask to the table our finance manager, Scott Wilson-Haffenden?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Thank you. Through you, minister, with respect to our budget position, we're expecting to achieve our overall budget. There are some carry-forwards, and these are associated with the Tasmanian Government radio network in the multidisciplinary centres.

We don't budget on a monthly basis by output - it's a summary by business unit. Effectively, it means we will be achieving the total across the total output groups.

CHAIR - I'm just trying to understand - I ask this every year in Health, and they can provide across all line items. There were significant increases in their estimated outcome, but it was not a final figure, and I absolutely accept all of that. Are you saying to me that, notionally, the estimated outcome will reflect the budget for this year?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - That's correct. As I said, there will be carry-forwards associated with the Tasmanian Government radio network.

CHAIR - Where does that sit? Which line item?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - That will sit in output group 1. One of the issues associated with the Policing output arrangements is that a general duties police officer, for instance, will work across multiple outputs. They are not strictly costed by output and recorded output by output throughout the year. It's an allocation basis, which sits in the background.

Essentially, overall, we will achieve our budget, noting that we will have carry-forwards. The predominant carry-forwards are associated with the Tasmanian Government radio network, which we're estimating will be in the vicinity of \$15 million, and that is due to the timing associated with the milestone payments. The second one is associated with the multidisciplinary centres.

CHAIR - They sit under 1.1 as well?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Ms LOVELL - Minister, as you know, the doctrine of the separation of powers is very important in the management of the police force, ensuring the police remain at arm's length from government. Questions have been asked about the dual role of the Commissioner of Police and the Secretary of the department. Can you advise the committee exactly what powers and authorities does the Commissioner of Police use that are delegated from the Secretary of the department?

For example, employment authority, financial management, and do you believe that the Secretary of the Department should have authority over the Police Commissioner?

Mr ELLIS - In this case, the Secretary of the Department is the Police Commissioner. In terms of delegated authorities do you want to make -.

Ms ADAMS - I will make some comments in relation to that. My role as Commissioner of Police, I derive my powers through the Police Service Act. I am the employer of police officers, I have responsibility for work health and safety as the Commissioner of Police and also responsible and accountable for the allocation of resources across the Tasmanian police service.

In my role as secretary, I have the functions as set out in the State Service Act and the delegations that are provided to me on behalf of the head of the state service, where I have employment functions for state service employees. I am an officer in accordance with the work health and safety responsibilities and that will extend across state service employees across the department. I also perform the functions under the Financial Management Act as the secretary responsible for the budget only for the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management. I do not have any responsibilities in terms of the state fire commission.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. My next question is in relation to the performance information on Page 193 of the budget papers, table 8.3. A number of those targets for 2022-23 are based on national averages or three-year averages and then the actuals for the previous year we have a number. This makes it a little hard to track to compare how we are tracking or how we might be going towards meeting those targets. Do you have figures for those averages where they have been stated as an average?

Mr ELLIS - As in, do we have additional information on?

Ms LOVELL - Yes, for example, satisfaction with police services, you have an actual for 2021-22 of 80 per cent and the 2022-23 target is greater than or equal to the national average. What is the national average? What is that target?

Mr ELLIS - It depends when data comes through and we need to make sure that policing here in Tasmania is reflective also of dynamic policing arrangements in other states. If we have that information, we are talking about targets here rather than the actuals and the actuals have specific figures.

Ms LOVELL - It is the targets I am after. And if you do not have the targets for this year because of that data collection, do you have the targets for last year so we know whether you achieved your targets or not.

Ms ADAMS - The information we do have is for the survey period of April 2022 to March 2023 and I can read through the results that were reported through that survey. There was 79.3 per cent of Tasmanians have a general satisfaction towards policing services which was higher than the national average of 74.2 per cent. 83 per cent of Tasmanians agree police perform their job professionally which was higher than the national average of 80.3 per cent

Ms LOVELL - Sorry to interrupt. It is just each of the targets in that table I am after. The next one would be public place assaults. The target for that is less than or equal to the three-year average.

Ms ADAMS - As at the 6 June we were at 1075.

Ms LOVELL - Do you have the figure for the three-year average of the target?

Ms ADAMS - No, I do not have that for public place assaults. I will get Assistant Commissioner Adrian Bodnar to come to the table who has that information.

Mr BODNAR - In relation to the public place assaults, our target for this financial year was for 877 public place assaults or less. That is what we were aiming for.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. Public order incidents the next one.

Mr HIGGINS - We do not set a target for public order incidents, but we look at the trajectory of that. As a corporate management group, we set targets for 15 performance indicators. Through things such as total offences, where we have a range of total offences across the state over a financial year period, and base these targets we set over the three-year average, if that makes sense.

Ms LOVELL - It does make sense; my question is then why are these in the budget papers? It is a bit hard to look at performance indicators if there is no actual measure. For example, public order incidents, you have an actual for 2021-22, presumably, there will be an actual in then next year's budget paper for 2022-23, but the target is less than or equal to the three-year average. Without knowing what the three-year average is, how do we know whether you are meeting those performance indicators?

Mr ELLIS - Ultimately, that is the thing with adaptive management, particularly when it comes to a dynamic field like policing, national averages are an important benchmark for us to work against.

Ms LOVELL - I am not arguing that or the measure being used. My point is, if you are recording this in the budget papers, it is difficult for us or anyone to see whether those targets are being met. They might all being met, which is fantastic, but we do not know that from looking at the way it is been reported here.

Mr ELLIS - Your preference would be to have a static number?

Ms LOVELL - No, my preference is that when I ask you what the three-year average is, you are able to tell me so we know whether you are meeting that or not. Otherwise, what is the point of having these performance indicators in the papers.

Mr ELLIS - Because they are adaptive. Our actuals will then be reflected. Tasmania Police provide corporate performance reports on a whole range of data that is publicly available and reported on a regular basis and we continue to work on that. Policing's obviously dynamic. A good example of a major trend that has changed in our society is the big increase we are seeing in the reporting, for example of sexual assault. That is what we ultimately need to be doing as a community because we had a problem underreporting. If we maintained a target that was not reflective of changes in our community, we would have potentially quite different results and we are not dynamically responsive.

Ms LOVELL - That is not what I am asking minister, that is not at all what I am asking. What I am asking for is when you have set the three-year average under your target in 2022-23, what is the three-year average?

Mr HIGGINS - I can go through each one up until March.

Ms LOVELL - That would be perfect, thank you.

Mr HIGGINS - Our target looking at that national average, the greater to or equal to the national average was 74 per cent satisfaction for police services. We are currently at 31 March, 79 per cent. Public place assault, the target was 653, and we are at 848. Public order incidents, was less than or equal to 13 086, and as of the 31 March, we are 15 898. Perceptions of safety in a public place during the day was greater than or equal to 91 per cent, and we are 92 per cent as of 31 March. Perceptions of safety in a public place during the night, greater or equal to 54 per cent, and we are at 58 per cent. Perceptions of safety at home alone during the night, greater or equal to 88 per cent and we are at 89 per cent as of 31 of March.

Ms LOVELL - Depends on what scary movie you have watched that night.

Mr HIGGINS - Family violence incidents, less than or equal to 2963 and at the 31 March we were 3492. Offences against the person, less than or equal to 3729 and as of the 31 March we were 4524. Offences against the person clearance rate, greater than or equal to 87 per cent and we were at 84 per cent.

Ms LOVELL - What does that mean, clearance rate?

Mr HIGGINS - A report of sexual assault in our offense reporting system, whether it's - a clearance can be by arrest summons, withdrawal -

Ms LOVELL - Yes, that makes sense.

Mr HIGGINS - The next few are not Police ones.

Ms LOVELL - That is fine, that is all good. Thank you. That is all I had on that, Chair.

CHAIR - We need to understand what the target actually is to make any observation about whether we are doing a reasonable job. The police only respond to what is happening at the time, which is part of societal pressures, perhaps. We are seeing a lot of these measures higher than we would expect. Some of them, particularly, relating to personal safety and family violence. People feeling safe at home is good. If you do not watch scary movies on your own. It might depend when and largely how you ask the question on those. Minister, does this concern you that we seem to be going backwards?

Mr ELLIS - If there is any time that our community is feeling unsafe -

CHAIR - I am talking about the other measures. Not the Safe at Home ones.

Mr ELLIS - Sure or if there is an increase in public order incidents, it is really concerning for us. Policing has a strong role to play in that space. We have no tolerance for crimes committed against people, whether it is violence or against property, all of those sorts of issues.

As we are coming out of COVID, our community had restricted movement and we saw very low rates of crime. We are seeing a spike as we come out. Tasmania is in a much better position when you compare to, say, Queensland, the Northern Territory, where they have, in part, serious breakdowns of law and order. We want to make sure that we do not get into that situation, which is why we are redoubling our efforts, particularly, with our Back to Basics policing strategy.

We have a range of different task forces that have been highly effective, for example, in putting some of the recidivist offenders that we have here in Tasmania before the Courts. We know only that a small number of people commit a large number of offences in Tasmania. We have a major investment in more policing, more capability and more officers on the beat. That is a really critical part of our response. We do not want to get to a point where we are like other jurisdictions.

As I mentioned before, there are some reports of sexual violence. Family violence is in that category as well, where, we historically have had significant under-reporting. The growing trend of reporting, while it is extraordinarily tragic, any incident of family and sexual violence is just devastating for those people. It is also important that they are reporting and that they feel comfortable coming forward, which has been a big part of the investments that we have made, for example, in our 'Arch' Centres for victims/survivors that are coming online very shortly. Also, our new Family and Sexual Violence Command.

Crime has gone down. It has halved in the last 20 years. That has also been correlated with our strong investment in policing. As I mentioned before, major recruitment, hundreds more police on the beat here in Tasmania then when we came to government.

Whenever there is a spike in crime that we see in our community, we need to make sure that we are responding and addressing that as well. Part of the solution is policing and law enforcement. There are other parts of the community that are really important too, in the youth crime space, particularly providing services for these young people to get them back on the rails too. Commissioner, did you want to add anything further to that?

Ms ADAMS - Just to make two additional comments. Certainly, as the minister has indicated, COVID has had a disproportionate effect on our rates of crime and public order incidents. With the lockdowns that have been associated with the lack of movement around the community and public spaces and that has impacted -

CHAIR - The inability of victims of family violence to report because you are living at home with the perpetrator and cannot get out.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, that is absolutely true. For the next 12 months and probably the next 24 months, we will see an impact as those offences and public order incidents grow from a low base, as the minister has said. We will expect that this is a trend that is likely. It is also a trend that is being experienced in other police jurisdictions because when you use a three-year average, that will include the period of COVID.

What is really heartening for us, is that Tasmania Police has always compared favourably in national surveys. We have strong levels of support from our community for the delivery of our policing services. I think that's a really important indicator that needs to be considered in terms of how people feel safe living in Tasmania.

Mr GAFFNEY - Following on from what the honourable member has highlighted, do you think there's a better way for us to have that information presented next year? If we have you again next year, we'll need to know. I'd like to think that you guys might go away and think, okay, how can we present that better, so it makes more sense? Instead of us sitting here going through a whole list of numbers again. For next year, maybe there's a better way of presenting that.

Mr ELLIS - It's an interesting discussion to have. As I mentioned, there is strength around having an adaptive framework that we can work to, to make sure our data is contemporary and compares. We are actually really focused on how we can better leverage data to ensure our policing efforts are as strong and responsive in our community as possible.

We're also doing work around our corporate performance report data, thinking about what are the key measures that mean we're doing policing well in Tasmania. Safe homes, safe roads -

Mr GAFFNEY - I agree with all of that, but from our point of view, we just want to be able to see that there, knowing that work has been done, so we don't have to sit here next year and go through the same numbers again.

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Mr ELLIS - Yes, I'd be interested to look at it, happy to consider it as part of the work we're doing. There are good reasons why it's in there as it is, but always happy to take feedback on board.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you.

Mr HARRISS - Minister and Deputy Commissioner, can I just clarify, are the target numbers on those figures for end of year, or to March?

Mr HIGGINS - To 31 March.

CHAIR - The ones you provided?

Mr HIGGINS - The ones I provided.

Mr HARRISS - So the provided target number was also to -

Mr HIGGINS - Yes.

CHAIR - Thank you. Just a couple of other questions in this area. Again, they relate to the whole section, and you're probably ready for the questions now. We're after a gender breakdown of the workforce across the DPFEM, particularly the Police aspect - if you can keep that separate that would be great - and the employment of staff across bands, and any identified gender pay gap.

Mr ELLIS - While the commissioner is searching for the data, one point I will make is that Tasmania Police has one of the highest rates of female workforce of any state in Australia. That has been driven by some really strong work we've been doing, around recruiting, around rostering, to make sure Tasmania Police is a really attractive place for women to work, offers an outstanding career, has a range of important mission-driven characteristics to the work, but also diversity within roles.

CHAIR - The previous commissioner, too, was very focused on that

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we really want to acknowledge the work of former commissioner Darren Hine, as well as the outstanding leadership of our current commissioner and Tasmania's first female police commissioner, Donna Adams.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you minister, and through you, from a sworn employee perspective, we have 543 female police officers and 941 men. From a state service perspective, I don't actually have a breakdown for below band six, but I have a breakdown for band six to band nine, across to our professional award levels with our legal practitioners and allied health professionals.

In terms of employees in those categories, we have 112 females, 108 males.

In our SES levels, from head of agency through to SES levels one, two, three and four, we have six females, and six males.

Mr GAFFNEY - Chair, I'm interested to know, on the last intake of possible recruits, how many males and how many females actually applied for the program, and what was the end result?

Ms ADAMS - Thank you minister, I don't have the number of applicants in terms of a gender breakdown, but I certainly do have a breakdown of the current recruits we have. Assistant Commissioner Glen Keating can come to the table and provide you a breakdown with each of the programs we have at the moment.

We are very close to 50-50 in all of our recruitment programs. We are looking for the best recruits for a diverse Tasmania Police that is going to be representative of our community and seeing that in our recruiting programs. If you actually want the specifics for each of the programs we have now, Assistant Commissioner Keating can give you that detail.

Mr GAFFNEY - That would be good. I am also interested to see in the wider community if we have 200 females applying or 100. It is good we are doing 50-50 but, we have to say what interest is there in the gender balances for those roles. That interests me.

Mr ELLIS - Certainly, and our recruiting campaigns rolling out at the moment have been really well recognised and received among the community. There is a strong focus on making sure we are projecting a Tasmania Police that looks like a welcoming, inclusive place to come and work too. Do we have that data?

Ms ADAMS - We do not have the data at the moment, Mr Gaffney, you have asked two questions on reporting. There is a body of work at the moment on reporting. We report on 170 KPI that look externally across the community in terms of public order, crime, traffic policing. We are trying to provide a focus to our frontline staff on what will make the most difference to their local communities. As the minister has already talked about, we are going to align the most critical reporting on Safe Homes, what makes safe communities and what makes safe roads.

To come to the point, you have made in relation to our recruitment. One of the new introductions to our reporting will be people indicators which we will see kick off on the 1 July. We want to understand the service delivery impacts upon our own work areas through a number of people indicators and how do we measure whether we have proactive workplaces and a really positive workplace culture. The third part of our new indicators will be business indicators. The academy at the moment is putting together business indicators. The number of applications, the demographics of people applying for Tasmania Police is going to be part of those indicators and more than happy to provide that to you next year.

Mr ELLIS - I actually think we have some data for you, Mr Gaffney. Tasmania Police recruit course of 80 commenced on 3 January 2023, Tasmania's largest ever recruit course. That is going to be very exciting to be at their graduation and a moment state significance. There are 20 people who are Launceston based, because geographic diversity is important. It includes 43 men, 37 women; the youngest recruit, age is important, is 18, oldest is 49. Between 1 January 2020 and 8 February 2023 Tasmania Police received 2794 applications for appointment demonstrating the strong interest our community has. That includes 310 applicants for people who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse, 11 have participated in recruit training course and 1 is about to undertake a fitness test as part of their selection process.

There are 177 applications from people who identify as being Aboriginal, but not Torres Strait islanders, 7 have participated in recruit training course, 2 are in the selection pool for recruit training course and 9 about to undertake a fitness test as part of the selection process. We have 22 applications from people who identify as being Torres Strait islanders, 2 have participated in the recruit training course.

CHAIR - Do you have any information about the members of the LGBTIQ+ community?

Mr ELLIS - You are testing me now, we will get back to you on those applications. That is also a strong part of the work we have been doing. Commissioner Adams and former commissioner Daren Hine are really strong in making sure we are appealing to as broad a cohort as we possibly can, because policing is such a community based, community driven line of work and making sure our community sees that reflected in their own Tasmanian police is very important.

CHAIR - Is Mr Keating going to eventually provide some information to us? He was called to the table at some stage, weren't you?

Mr KEATING - He has covered it all but I can indicate from those trainees that are currently going through the training process at the moment, 47 per cent are female.

CHAIR - Do you have other diversity measures in that data?

Mr KEATING - No, I do not. Sorry.

CHAIR - It would be to report that also, multicultural, gender diversity, all of those matters because we need to reflect the society, as you said.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. That was part of some of the numbers I provided. In terms of the LGBT community, we can follow up on that as well. Noting, of course, that some people may not necessarily prefer to identify through that process, so there are some limitations in that data.

CHAIR - If it is made easy for them to identify in the recruitment process, you will find they will. If it is an inclusive and safe place to do it, they will.

Mr DUIGAN - A bit of a generalisation.

CHAIR - If you engage with the community, I think you will find that. If they feel safe and included, they will do it.

Mr ELLIS - People want agency. If they feel comfortable reporting, many will. Some will still choose not to but making the process open, collecting better data, all that is really important in our work.

CHAIR - Has to feel safe. Can I have an update on the multidisciplinary centres of care that you are progressing and where they are at?

Mr ELLIS - This is a really exciting investment and I pay tribute to my predecessor in this role, Jacquie Petrusma, the former minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Jacquie as a victim/survivor herself was instrumental in driving this approach forward.

Tasmania has not led the nation but we are at the forefront of the national work on multidisciplinary centres. They provide a place where police officers, support services, counsellors and others are all within one centre. Community members can approach those centres if they concerned about family and sexual violence and receive the support that they need based on their agency and their choices. Whether they initially want to go down a law-enforcement path or a social support and others.

Both builds are very well progressed. We launched our new family and sexual violence command in the southern MDC just the other day. That is almost ready to have its doors open. We were also on site in the northern MDC about two weeks ago. Progress is coming along really well in that space. It is a total investment of \$15.1 million all up. I might pass over to the team if there are any further updates you want to provide on time frames.

CHAIR - Staffing the centres as well.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister and also our director of our new part of the project and our Assistant Commissioner, Robert Blackwood. I will throw to him in a moment. I will make a couple of opening comments. As part of our new strategy, we have made some structural change within Tasmania Police to make sure that our structure aligns with our strategy. That is why we have introduced a new family and sexual violence command. It will bring together family violence responders and dedicated specialist sex crimes units and our Arch centres will form part of this particular command.

It will include 20 new police officers, who have been funded through the government and it will also include five additional investigators who will manage the reportable offenders on the sex offenders register. It will bring a holistic approach, where, victims will be at the centre of our decision-making so that we have the right supports in place.

Now, Assistant Commissioner Blackwood can give you further detail on when we look to see the Arch centres fully operational and some further detail on that project.

Mr BLACKWOOD - We hope to open early-mid July when the building work finishes. All of the police will come over to the new command later in this month. The first step will be there. They are already work-shopping through the training with the other service providers. In the south that is SASS and Laurel House in the north of the state.

I will talk you through the experience of a victim arriving at one of these centres. They are a trauma-informed design. When a victim/survivor first enters, they are met and greeted by an intake person who talks them through their options. These options are to go and talk to someone from SASS. If they want to talk to a police officer, if they want to talk to someone from family violence counselling services, they're all there. They may choose to talk with all of them. The facility will also have options that include certain forensic examinations that can be undertaken there. There's what we would call a soft interviewing room. Sometimes in police stations we have what you'd call cold rooms, where it's a table and chairs and a video camera, but this is about creating an environment where people feel comfortable to talk about their stories and what's occurred.

There will also be technology there in terms of downloading phones and gathering evidence and things like that. The key part to all of this is, it's about informing victims of what their options are and giving them options so they're not being passed off from one service to the other, they're getting a real wraparound service and are fully supported throughout the whole process.

CHAIR - In terms of the allied and helpline staff, will you have specialist family violence counsellors on site all of the time or will they be called in when needed?

Mr BLACKWOOD - No, whilst the centres are operational, there will be staff there in the south, say, from SAS; Child Safety Service.

CHAIR - SAS don't provide family violence support, but they are for sexual assault.

Mr BLACKWOOD - Family violence counselling services will be there as well.

CHAIR - Who will be providing that? Full declaration: I'm on the board of Engender Equality. Who will be providing the family violence support?

Mr BLACKWOOD - The family violence counselling services that we currently use.

CHAIR - And the forensic services, they will be there full-time, too?

Mr BLACKWOOD - Not our actual forensic police officers. If we would need to call someone in for obtaining an exhibit or something like that, from forensics, they would do that. But generally, that's also something a detective can do. But there will be scenarios where -

CHAIR - There will be female detectives there for that?

Mr BLACKWOOD - Absolutely, there are. But there will be times when a victim/survivor will need to attend the hospital for an examination as well.

CHAIR - But they'll be escorted and assisted with that?

Ms ADAMS - They'll be supported throughout the whole - and I think you'll appreciate that many victims will come forward and they're not sure about the journey that they want to take. They want the support and it might be two years later when they feel the courage that they want their matter to be investigated by police. These centres will provide the support that they need but also will allow us to pick up an investigation because we've got the information at the first time that they come into a centre, or when they feel able to tell their story.

CHAIR - I do acknowledge the work of Jacqui Petrusma around that, we've had her across this table before explaining that.

Mr ELLIS - We're making some major investments as well in the back end of that as well - Forensic Science Services Tasmania with their exhibit and DNA storage - so that there's a long time period that we'll hold onto that important -

CHAIR - So there is still the forensic material for some period?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, exactly. It's all about providing agency to victims/survivors because often, in that experience, it can be incredibly disempowering when you're the victim of these crimes and so giving those victims/survivors agency about how they might choose to engage with law enforcement is extraordinarily important.

CHAIR - When you see how publicly some of these people are treated in our current system - and that's not necessarily the police system, it's the court system that's more the problem, but that's not your area - there are improvements to be made there, too.

You've talked about the sex offender register; can you explain to us how you see that working?

Mr ELLIS - We're working through this important matter. There's \$300 000 available to develop a sex offender register as part of this Budget. It's for when people want to identify whether someone who has regular and unsupervised access to their children, that they will be able to apply to Tasmania Police to get information around their sex offender register status. Obviously we do not want convicted sex offenders having access to children and making sure that we have strong reporting arrangements and strong enforcement around that as well, with \$2.9 million in the Budget. What we'll need to do to develop this disclosure scheme is (a) make sure that the service and capability is available - that's what the Budget is about - and (b) make sure that we've got a legislative structure that supports that as well. Currently, police have a very limited capacity to disclose that information and it will need to be targeted and contemporary in the way we are providing that information. Particularly, where we are providing it to members of the public, for example, family members of children that there may be some concerns around a sex offender having access to them.

CHAIR - What do you mean a sex offender having access to them? The children or the data?

Mr ELLIS - The children. Also, on the backend arrangements, enabling better, clearer disclosure from Tasmania Police to other parts of Government. Critical parts of Government, for example, Child Safety is one example. Making sure Government is empowered to have the information needed so they can protect children in these cases. The legislative work will be ongoing. We will be consulting widely with our community, victim/survivors, support services, a whole range of others.

CHAIR - What you are saying, minister, correct me if I am wrong, is there will be legislation brought forward to give effect to this and until then, it will be as it is with limited capacity for police to share data. In your view, what is the benchmark here? If I am a mother of two or three-year olds and there is a man who lives on his own next door and I am bit worried about him. Can I come to the police and say I want to know about this guy?

Mr ELLIS - Do they have regular unsupervised access to your children?

CHAIR - Well, let us say they do. They go to play in the backyard because he has a nice swimming pool there.

Mr ELLIS - If someone has regular unsupervised access to your children, that is where it would be.

CHAIR - Would you not want to know that before you let them have regular unsupervised access?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. We can work through a range of those particular matters and it would particularly be in relation to reporting on those incidents. One of the things you do not want to do is some of the old examples. America has quite a few of these public registers where any sex offender in the neighbourhood is all publicly available.

CHAIR - You are not looking at that?

Mr ELLIS - No, we want a much more contemporary targeted approach. It will depend, of course, on the applications made to police and the judgements they make on that. It would also depend on the consultation with the community on where we target it. For example, the clear example we use is a single mother with children that has any partner. We know, sadly, with a high rate of recidivism amongst sex offenders, there are convicted sex offenders that do target those family structures so they can get access to those children. There have been cases in the past where this has happened and persistent abuse of children has occurred by convicted sex offenders on the register and the parents had no ability to access that information. That is the core example. I might pass to the team to add to my remarks on some of the policy development.

Ms LOVELL - It might add to what the Commissioner is going to explain. You mentioned you do not want it to be any kind of public register, but will there be measures in place to stop someone given this information putting it on Facebook for example or going and telling people about it. How will that be controlled?

Mr ELLIS - There are other jurisdictions in Australia, Western Australia has one of these registers. South Australia is doing work to develop it. New South Wales is also working on a right to ask for family violence. It is really important we do not let vigilantism happen in our communities as that is a crime also and threatens public safety. Where these registers are available there are also parts of legislation that prevent and discourage vigilantism. I might pass to the Commissioner to add further.

Ms ADAMS - It is really important to understand this particular disclosure scheme will be something we will work with the key stakeholders to build the scheme together.

CHAIR - Who are the key stakeholders as you see them, Commissioner?

Ms ADAMS - There is the community. There will be range of particular stakeholder groups, the Commissioner for Children. It is a broad conversation across the community. We have seen a community protection disclosure scheme worked particularly well in Western Australia. Assistant Commissioner Blackwood can give some detail, that safeguards are included in their scheme, which includes anyone disclosing information been provided to them, and the rigorous application process that needs to be justified where we can assess the risk and think yes, the threshold of risk is there we need to be providing that disclosure.

The scenario you provided in relation to someone in the back yard, if they are on the register, most likely they are a reportable offender and have conditions themselves they need to comply with. That includes notifying the registrar of their access to children. What this is

doing is further strengthen our approach to keeping children and where we have reportable offenders that fail to comply with their reporting obligations, what this is doing is really ensuring we are removing that risk through this scheme. Again, I will throw it to Assistant Commissioner Blackwood to add some further comments about the work already done on the scheme.

Mr BLACKWOOD - Looking at the Western Australian model, it is actually an offence to make a false application. Things included in that Western Australian process would be not just there had been a backyard you are concerned about some of that behaviour of the person next door and things like that. It actually builds up enough information for an event to be assessed.

I suppose what it also does is, if that question is being asked, it may also raise other flags. Maybe this person is not on the register, but a referral child safety service is appropriate in that circumstance. A particular issue for us at the moment is our ability to share information with other government agencies. That is a key one being proposed to be changed so we can share that information more freely about who is on the register and the contact they have and how they may be breaching.

Ms LOVELL - Can I ask a question about that? How does that work currently between government departments? For example, Child Safety or Education or Health and Police. What data can be shared in those instances? How does that happen?

Mr ELLIS - Capacity for police to share that data is much more limited. Commissioner, or the team, talk through, what the disclosure looks like across government.

Mr BLACKWOOD - It is difficult. There are circumstances where we can do it, but I suppose. The current legislation uses the word 'may' about sharing information, we want to move to a place where it is a 'must' and that sharing is something we are doing proactively when concerned about someone not abiding by their conditions on the register. The example the minister used about someone meeting someone online who has a young child at home. It is those sorts of circumstances that are then outside their reporting requirements and what they are required to do that we want to be alerted of. Child and Family Services are involved with that. The mother and the young child, they're coming to us and going 'hang on, we're concerned about that', and then we can freely share that information.

Mr ELLIS - Similar structures when it comes to family violence, with a Safe Families Coordination Unit and finding that is a powerful tool to make we protect families, because there's so many different touchpoints across government, Child Safety. The Commission of Inquiry's been working closely with the Department of Education, Children, and Young People, Health. The coordination task can be quite complex ensuring maximum ability to do that among trusted partners and government is really important.

CHAIR - This obviously has very important connections with justice. We do not want to have a situation where the judiciary think 'well, I won't put this person on the sex offenders register because the risks associated with that to their personal safety', for example, even though questionably, children should be protected more.

Mr ELLIS - The victims should always come first.

CHAIR - That is right. How does your department work with the Attorney-General and Justice on this? I assume you will lead the legislation or will that be a justice piece?

Mr ELLIS - The Community Protection Offender Reporting Act, which is the act administered by police. We work really closely with our Justice partners, the Attorney-General, I am aware she was answering questions on this herself. Ultimately, as a government, our focus is making sure that we are putting the protection of children ahead of privacy for sex offenders. That's a really important thing for us all to remember in this discussion: the victim has to come first.

Of course, we're consulting -

CHAIR - Potential victim is what you're talking about here, potentially.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly. Unfortunately these aren't just potential hypotheticals. There are real faces to this. We've had 14 people in the last 12 months who have been on the register who've been charged with further sexual crimes as well. We have this recidivism problem. We have to make sure that we're protecting children. Even if one child is saved from these horrible crimes as part of this process, it will have all been worth it.

We're going to be working closely with the judiciary, Justice, and others. When we're consulting broadly, we mean with our community partners and stakeholders, but also our internal government partners. Justice is a key part of that.

CHAIR - Clearly, recidivism is a real issue and I don't doubt what you're saying is correct and it may be under-reported, or undetected, as yet. Who knows? Where does the support come from for perpetrators to stop them reoffending? Surely, we need to invest in this as well? Prevention is far better than trying to pick up the pieces afterwards

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. This is about being tough on crime but strong on rehabilitation, and making sure we're -

CHAIR - Where is the 'strong on the rehabilitation' bit?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Corrections is managed by the Attorney-General as minister for Justice, and she'll speak broadly about some of this. I think I'm right in saying that she is the first Minister for Corrections and Rehabilitation to have 'Rehabilitation' in her title. She's very focused on this. I know, say, in one of my other portfolios as well with Skills and Training, it's about making sure that people have good opportunities when they're in prison to learn new skills so that they're more work-ready. The nature of sex offending, unfortunately, is that there is also a higher rate of recidivism as well. Safeguarding is critical.

CHAIR - There will be unless we actually directly and in an evidence-based manner deal perpetrators.

Mr ELLIS - You've got rehabilitation. That's key. Safeguarding is also key as well. That's why we have, for example, our Working with Vulnerable People arrangements, because we don't want to see that kind of abuse occurring in the workplace and in institutions. We have seen that with the commission of inquiry.

CHAIR - You don't want it in the home either.

Mr ELLIS - This is about making sure it doesn't happen in the home. That key balance, so that all of the layers are working closely together to make sure that we're protecting our children. I mentioned before the safe homes and safe communities. That's really critical because the impact that these horrible crimes can have on individual children is far-reaching. It is a life sentence for some of these children when they fall victims of this. We need to make sure as a community, as a parliament, frankly, that we're stepping up and doing what we need to do to keep them safe.

Ms LOVELL - My question is about what you're doing as minister and what your department is doing and, potentially, what parts of this scheme could do to ensure that we're not going to give people a false reassurance that they might rely on that turns out to be wrong. This scheme would only pick up people who are on the register.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly.

Ms LOVELL - I would hate there to be a scheme established that led people to believe there's no record of this, and they think, 'okay that's fine, everything's fine'. Then that person does turn out to perpetrate a crime against children. What measures are in place to prevent people... that's a risk with a 'yes or no', and what protections are being put in place about that?

Mr ELLIS - Assistant Commissioner Blackwood touched on this, and I'll get him to add to my remarks in a moment.

That's exactly right. We need to be making sure that convicted sex offenders aren't committing crimes. We also need to gain an understanding and come alongside people who are potentially fearful that something might be happening in their home, to their children. We know as well that grooming behaviour by sex offenders can be extraordinarily pernicious and victims/survivors or their loved ones can be groomed in those situations. When people come forward to report that they want some information from the sex offenders register, it's important that as we provide that information, we're also asking questions.

We don't want that to be the end of the conversation. That needs to be the start of the conversation, so that we can work through those concerns. I might pass to Assistant Commissioner Blackwood to add to my remarks.

Mr BLACKWOOD - Thank you, and through you minister, I suppose part of that application process, we would outline what the concerns are, and why the questions are being asked. Yes, it's quite possible the person isn't on the register, but with the information that is in the application that sparks the investigation, I think it's appropriate that it sparks a referral on to Child and Family Services, if that's the next appropriate step, or a conversation with police attending.

It also might make up a really good intelligence picture about what this person is doing, because it might not be the first time questions have been asked about that person. Them not being on the sex offenders register does not mean that our process and what-have-you finishes at that time.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. My question then is what investment is there in this? You've said a lot of the right things, but where's the investment from the Government to make sure this is actually being resourced adequately?

Mr ELLIS - We covered some of this. There's \$2.9 million in the Budget for five dedicated officers who will be particularly targeted under this scheme, but that is part of broader works. As you would have seen, the other day we launched our new Family and Sexual Violence Command, headed by commander Debbie Williams, who the Chair would probably know well. She has worked closely in the western district.

That broader new command, as the Commissioner mentioned, houses a range of our key capability there - our new multidisciplinary centres, our Arch centres for victim-survivors. That's 15 new police officers, \$15.1 million worth of investment in that space.

It's also giving us additional capability to house Australian Federal Police officers within that command so that Tasmania police and the AFP are working more closely together. In the space of child exploitation, for example, we know that a lot of that happens online and through online communication links. That's where the AFP coming in to be a dedicated house as part of that command will be a really critical part as well, so we can respond to 'contact crimes', as they're called in this space, whereby that crime is physically committed against a child, and online crimes as well.

Bringing together that whole picture is really important, and that's what that investment is driving. It's also a further opportunity for us to learn and invest and grow our capability in this space. As the commission of inquiry reports, we have acted ahead of the commission of inquiry on a whole range of matters, but we also know we need to learn even further as that reporting process happens into the future. We know there's so much more we can do to make victim-survivors feel comfortable coming forward, to make sure perpetrators are behind bars, and that when they're back in the community they're not reoffending. That we are rehabilitating them to best practice, so that ultimately we can keep our children safe and community safe.

I'll pass over to Commissioner Adams, if you'd like to add anything further.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. The additional five police investigators are going to be most welcome. In the past 10 years, we've seen a doubling in the number of reportable offenders on the register. I can't give you the number, because obviously there are confidentiality requirements around the management of the register.

At the moment, investigators and frontline staff are undertaking combined responsibilities to ensure those reportable offenders are complying with their requirements.

What this will do is enable us to have dedicated investigators to actually ensure compliance by reportable offenders - some of them high risk - and ensure they are maintaining their reporting obligations, such as telling police when they change their personal details, change address, change employment, when they have access to children, travel overseas. There's a whole range of reportable obligations that an offender may have, and it's important that we have a really robust compliance regime that supports that.

These investigators will be well and truly appreciated and will help in maintaining that compliance responsibility. Thank you.

CHAIR - Any other questions on that one? We'll move to output group 2.1

Output Group 2 - Crime

2.1 Investigation of Crime

Mr HARRISS - Minister, it might be handy at the start if we have the member for Rumney's target 2022-23 figures relating to the investigation of crime.

Mr ELLIS - We have Assistant Commissioner Adrian Bodnar coming to the table.

Mr BODNAR - Thank you, minister. In relation to our crime indicators, I can provide the committee with our targets up until 31 March this year. Our final result will be announced through the annual report later this year. For total offences, our target until 31 March is 19 408 and our actual offences to that period of time were 23 959. Our total clearance weight, we were aiming at or about 50 per cent and up until 31 March our clearance right was 49 per cent. In relation to serious crime, our target for 31 March was 539 serious offences and as at the 31 March it was 721. Our clearance rate for serious crime, we were aiming for 78 per cent as at 31 March and we had achieved an 83 per cent clearance rate, which was very pleasing for us.

Looking at the offences against property, our target until 31 March was 39 per cent and we managed to achieve 39 per cent. In relation to offences against property clearance rates -

Ms LOVELL - I think that might be what you just gave us.

Mr BODNAR - I just went through that, my apologies. Offences against the property our target for 31 March was 14 727 and our actual result was 18 286. In relation to the serious drug offenders, our target was 200 and to 31 March we had achieved 178.

Mr ELLIS - For the committee's benefit I mentioned before the corporate performance report is publicly available and regularly updated. Assistant Commissioner Bodnar, is it monthly or quarterly?

Mr BODNAR - Monthly.

Mr ELLIS - It is available monthly because I have to sign off on these things and they make for really interesting reading. There is information that is available and an even deeper breakdown on some of these statistics and that is part of the work that the Commissioner was talking about to contemporising our data release to the public. We always release a lot currently but how we can do it even better so that they are able to glean some more information from it too.

Mr HARRISS - Recently, we have just had the CBD taskforce come up, how is that actioned? When you are talking about budgets and appropriation where does that sit and what comes first, I suppose?

Mr ELLIS - There is a broad pool of funding for the operational work that police do. When you see specific task forces or operations, often that is within the work that Tasmania Police does. You are right, the CBD taskforce in Hobart has been really successful already. We are a little over a month in and already 21 arrests have been made and those offenders will be put before the courts. We saw in Launceston, Operation or Taskforce Viper, more than 100 offenders arrested and many more offences than that committed by that group, largely of recidivist offenders. We will see, for example, drugs or firearms busts as well, significant work that happens in those matters.

In terms of the development of these task forces and how these operations come together, I might pass over to the team to add further.

Ms ADAMS - I will make a few comments and then I will hand to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar. Our district management groups monitor their crime performance, and public order performance on a weekly basis. That is overseen by the Deputy Commissioner, Mr Jonathan Higgins, in terms of our performance.

When we see trends going the wrong way, we will work together, whether it's to establish a task force, we will look at a specific response to respond to that particular trend. You're correct in that we've seen some concerns expressed by business owners in the CBD in Hobart, in particular, in regard to youth crime and we've introduced a number of strategies to try to ensure that we're very responsive to that level of offending, but also to provide the level of reassurance that the business owners should have that police will be there to keep our local community safe.

As I said, Assistant Commissioner Bodnar, who's worked with a lot of the local government areas over the last few months, can give some specific detail about how we respond to that.

Mr BODNAR - Yes, thanks, Commissioner, and through the minister, going back several months ago, I met with the mayor of Glenorchy and also the mayor of Clarence and we had some other staff who were representatives from the City of Hobart. As the Commissioner was saying, that was about getting back to basics and listening to the community and identifying where those concerns are.

Prior to that, around mid-December last year, we reintroduced Operation Saturate and we've publicised that quite well through the media. That's a team of police officers dedicated to concentrating on antisocial behaviour. We have a number of young recidivist offenders that we know go between Hobart, Glenorchy and Bellerive, so we enact certain proactive measures to try to reduce the incidence of antisocial behaviour, particularly through the City of Hobart, around stealing as well.

We have seen an increase in stealing, particularly from the shops, and we know some of the shop owners have been quite challenged with it. Pleasingly, this month I've been privy to two emails from shop owners in the city about the good work that our members are doing. They are working particularly well. It was really pleasing to see that written feedback about the fact that the police are out, the police are being seen.

CHAIR - Visible presence.

Mr BODNAR - Yes, the police are engaging so that's working really well.

In addition to Operation Saturate, on 1 May we also started another task force for the City of Hobart as well. At the moment, we use Saturate between Hobart, Glenorchy and Bellerive and some other taskings based on the demand at the time.

There was another task force of uniformed members commenced on 1 May and, as a result of that, we'd seen something in the order of either 42 or 44 'move on' directions that were given in that three-week period. It was in the order of 21 arrests as well throughout the city.

CHAIR - Is that because they refused to move on? Half of them didn't move on when directed to?

Mr BODNAR - The way the legislation works is that if a police officer has grounds to believe a person is committing an offence, he has the option of giving somebody what we refer to as a formal direction, and a person can be directed to leave a public place for a specified period of no less than four hours.

In essence, if we identify an offence, we'll go and approach the person. An option we have is explaining to the person what they've done. We believe it's an offence and then we can give them a formal direction to leave that area.

In the City of Hobart, we might direct people to leave the central business district and we'll explain the area we want them to leave. There are probably different scenarios but that's the legislative basis behind what we can do to move people on - and we only do it where we identify offences being committed.

CHAIR - Not if it just looks like they're going to do something.

Mr BODNAR - Chair, to be honest, we have to identify that an offence has been committed to use the legislation.

CHAIR - Yes, I was just joking. Even though they might be well known to police.

Mr BODNAR - As I say, there were a number of recidivist offenders in there. Some of those young children are on bail conditions not to be in the CBD as well, so we have to take some action.

To be honest with you, the last thing we want to do with children is to see them enter the criminal justice system but, as a policing service, we have an obligation to protect the children but also the people that are moving about in our community so people can go about their lawful business unimpeded and we want them to feel safe. That's really what it's about.

When we talk about those national satisfaction surveys and policing results, we see a really good result for our staff across the board.

CHAIR - If I might, you talked about the increase in stealing. The cost-of-living pressures is hitting really hard at the moment. I'm not sure what it's like for people in Hobart in particular but I know what it's like in my area. People are being put into positions where they see no other options. From a policing sense, acknowledging these very real pressures -

another interest rate rise yesterday, which inevitably flows through to everybody, one way or another. Do you think this is part of the contributing factors to this?

Mr ELLIS - The first thing to say is there is no justification for illegal behaviour. Everyone in our community has a right to feel safe, whether they own a shop and sell to the general public or whether they have a home with goods and contents. All of those people should be protected.

CHAIR - So should the homeless people who have no home and have no money.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely, we do not want to see anyone stealing from them, particularly, because they are in a very vulnerable position. That is the first point to make, is there is no place for illegal activity in our community. Where we need to be stepping in is by providing supports, cost-of-living relief, significant cost of living relief in this Budget.

CHAIR - You have not got a mortgage because you have not got a home, so that does not really help, but anyway.

Mr ELLIS - If we are talking about homeless support. There is significant support in housing, our Safe Spaces investment in Burnie, you would be aware of others around the state. Whereby, people, if they do not have a roof over their head can go to get support. For example, food relief is a really critical investment Government is making. Loaves and fishes and others, that people have food in their bellies.

CHAIR - The question was, we are seeing an increase, do you think that is a contributing factor? When the police while doing their job come to deal with these individuals, who, for whatever reason, are trying to figure out what is going on for them.

Mr BODNAR - There are a lot of complex issues to lay it on the table. It is difficult to sit here and say there is one particular factor creating a rise in the stealing offences, if we use that as an example. We could look at homeless, we could look at drug and alcohol abuse, we could look down breakdown in the family relationships or whether it be some form of cognitive impairment. There are a number of reasons. One thing I have certainly learnt over 30-plus years in policing is crimes rates do ebb and flow. Hopefully, through the introduction and the continued work of our staff through these areas that are being targeted - for want of a better term - we will drive that rate of crime down. However, it is quite challenging for us. Particularly, when I look at some of the statistics on youth offending, if I may and we look at 2022, where, youths aged between 10 and 16 were responsible for over 3000 offences committed in Tasmania.

CHAIR - Some of those youths are doing it more than once, but not individual youths?

Mr BODNAR - That is correct, Chair. Interestingly, 43 per cent of those youths that we have charged, half of those charged had also been involved in the commission of crimes and offences in 2021. The key thing for me, is that 40 children, or thereabouts, were responsible for 50 per cent of those offences over that period of time. We are dealing with a small element in the community. As a policing service, we are doing the best we can to support those people. Diverting them is where we would like to go, but in some cases we cannot. We have to make an arrest where -

CHAIR - It is not entirely the police's job to manage the diversion, I would suggest, is it? Surely, the justice system has a role in that as well as our other homelessness, all of those other services.

Mr BODNAR - It is but one of the criteria is the youth has to admit their offending, I suppose and that is where part of the challenge lies.

Mr ELLIS - To assist, can I provide copies to members of the Committee that have some important information. I would happy to share it. It has some important information on this. We publish a performance report data that is a really critical aspect of understanding what is going on. Assistant Commissioner Bodnar identified there, for example, one of the different approaches you might take, for example, in Tasmania you have a small number of offenders committing a large number of crimes. Looking really closely at that rather than, for example, people stealing a loaf of bread they can eat. For example, this highly recidivist offender committing theft of a whole range of goods, stealing motor vehicles, committing assault in the process, potentially, firearms offences you treat that differently. We are working through that and is part of the reason to contemporise our data. We already have some good data available but doing some further work on that is a really exciting opportunity. I might just pass to the Commissioner to add further as well.

Ms ADAMS - Just two additional things, the infographic that we've provided, there's one addition or piece of information that is relevant. We've actually increased our youth diversions by 17 per cent, and we'll update the infographic to include that, but the important thing for us and the Assistant Commissioner Mr Bodnar articulated it really well: police do not want to see young people entering into the criminal justice system. We do everything we can to divert young people from the courts. It's important to understand that for us to be able to divert young people, we need them to acknowledge and admit their offending and that at the moment, in some instances, is particularly challenging.

CHAIR - That's explained to them?

Ms ADAMS - Yes. Absolutely, and, you know, it's a much better pathway for them in some cases not to have a criminal conviction. It goes back to the actual question about the CBD. We're finding that the majority of issues that we have at the moment in public order are driven by young offending. They're young people; some are in organised gangs and they seem to frequent the business areas of the Hobart CBD. That's where we're seeing most of our issues at the moment and that's why we've invested in the task forces that we have to ensure that we've got high visibility policing.

I've also got the feedback that Assistant Commissioner Mr Bodnar has received. When I walk around and talk to business owners, they're really seeing a difference in the police presence and that responsive nature to their concerns.

Mr HARRISS - Minister, the closest up-to-date figures, they're taken into account when the appropriation is made? To see what trends are increasing or decreasing to the appropriation amounts?

Mr ELLIS - As in while we are working through the budget?

Mr HARRISS - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We provide that detail publicly and also then internally as well. Having a data-driven approach enables better policing and it also enables us to better target resourcing as well. Some of the particular matters that we're talking about, say, in the specific appropriations are also driven by the observational data that we collect through policing work as well. The new family and sexual violence command for example, has dedicated resources in the appropriation. It's driven partly by the fact that we know that this is an increasing area of need in our community as well.

Ms ADAMS - I will just make an additional clarification, it's a really interesting one in the way in which our output groups have presented. As we indicated at the beginning, a uniform officer is also an investigator of crime, and also performs traffic policing and may also be involved in marine policing. It's really hard to say, well, you're looking at a particular allocation and that's all, it is actually across every police officer.

Output group 2 Crime

2.2 Poppy security

Mr GAFFNEY - This one won't take very long. It looks as though there's a reduction in the number of poppy growers in Tasmania because of the worldwide bounce and the downfall. An average increase over the next four years of about 33 000, 34 000. It looks as though also that there's been a reduction in plantings have seen a drop off in poppy head theft and crime. I'm assuming - and you might be able to say yes or no - because of the smaller number of growers and the smaller areas to supervise, it hasn't been as difficult and we've got a decrease in the number of thefts?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I might go straight to Assistant Commissioner, Mr Bodnar.

Mr GAFFNEY - Are you sure you don't have a comment to make?

Mr ELLIS - Other than that you and I both live in the beautiful municipality of Latrobe and that's the poppy growing heartland, and we need to make sure, this is an important economic driver for our regions. It can be a dangerous material if not treated with the care that it needs and the enforcement that it deserves.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you minister, I feel better now.

Mr BODNAR - We have seen 2777 hectares harvested for 2022-23 and quite rightly, that's a large decrease from the previous year of 6042 hectares. That certainly has an impact and I also note the number of growers as decreased from 243 down to 162. We have had about 9 individual interferences - very small numbers - which is pleasing to see. That plays a big part in it, less being harvested, less being grown. Our former detective inspector from Southern Drugs is a member of the Poppy Control Advisory Board, so we do have good linkages in there and obviously, through NRE with security and things of that nature.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. Is the \$42 000 increase in funding is just a natural increase in what it costs?

Mr BODNAR - As we know, things do grow up here, go up every year. Quite clearly.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thank you. There is nothing more there.

CHAIR - Have you had any serious illnesses or fatalities in the last 12 months?

Mr BODNAR - Very good question. I am certainly not aware of any presentations to hospitals in relation to people taking capsules and boiling them and things of that nature.

CHAIR - It probably stopped while the international tourists weren't here. They're the ones who used to do it.

Output Group 2 - Crime

2.3 Fisheries Security

CHAIR - Move to fisheries security

Mr DUIGAN - Fisheries security. Thank you, Chair.

Mr ELLIS - It is the best job in the world: the professional recreational fisherman.

CHAIR - He has the boat to do it.

Mr DUIGAN - I will start this area by asking in the area of fisheries security. We have the actuals and the 2022-2023 target. Can we have a look at the 2022-2023 target? Have you got that?

CHAIR - What a Dorothy Dixier.

Mr DUIGAN - We will commit to getting it for you, Mr Duigan.

Mr DUIGAN - I would be very interest to know.

CHAIR - Let's just mark that down.

Mr ELLIS - We do have it.

Mr BODNAR - My apologies. For marine offenders our targets through to 31 March was 914 or greater and we have actually achieved 872 and slightly under where we would like to be as at 31 March. I apologise, minister.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you. Minister, I recognise the Government has made substantial investments in policing it, and particularly, in the area of marine policing, with rebuilding our capability on the water and replacing our large vessels. How is that funding helping with marines policing and fisheries security.

Mr ELLIS - Very good. Thank you, Mr Duigan, noting your longstanding interest in this area. Our marine police officers undertake very important roles in policing commercial and recreational marine activities on a state-wide basis. There are 32 police officers attached

to marine and rescue services and they perform marine enforcement duties state-wide. The officers protect Tasmania's immensely valuable maritime resources by enforcing the provisions of the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995. In respect to the large vessels, this involves frequent 5-day patrols of all fishing areas on a state-wide basis to ensure compliance. Vessels that make up the DPFEM's large vessel fleet are bespoke vessels, as they must be custom built to meet Tasmania Police's highly technical specifications including construction, layout specific technical equipment requirements that make up the state-of-the-art fit-for-purpose operational vessels. This is why our Government provided \$24.6 million for the three-phase large vessel replacement program since 2014.

Phase one and two are complete now with the successful construction and commissioning of the PV *Cape Wickham* in 2017 and the PV *Dauntless* in 2021. The \$8.6 million Cape Wickham is a 23.95 metre aluminium monohull offshore police patrol vessel and capable of patrolling 200 nautical miles off the Tasmanian coast in the Southern Ocean and Bass Strait, with a patrol distance of 1000 nautical miles. Serious capability. The \$3.6 million PV *Dauntless* is an \$11.9 million fibreglass monohull vessel fitted with state-of-the-art equipment. This includes a forward-looking infrared camera which enhances capability during water search and rescue operations and a diesel-powered jet-propelled craft with a top speed of more than 40 knots.

The phase three Project Discovery includes the replacement of the PV *Van Diemen*. In May last year Tasmania Police advised that the contract for our newest \$13.4 million offshore patrol vessel had been awarded to Fine Entry Marine to replace the PV *Van Diemen*. The new Van Diemen vessel will be a 23.95 metre monohull offshore patrol vessel capable of 30 knots, with the ability to travel 200 nautical miles from our shores. This vessel is expected to arrive in Tasmania in early 2024 and we will be sure to invite you to the christening. These vessels are a significant and important investment in our marine police so they can undertake their duties to keep our waters safe and to enforce our marine and fisheries legislation.

Mr DUIGAN - Thank you.

CHAIR - I would not want to be out on 200 kilometres offshore, that's for sure.

Output Group 2 - Crime

2.4 Support to Judicial Services

We are going to have a break in just a moment, but I will just move to 2.4 Support for Judicial Services. Any questions there? No. We might just go to the break then. There is a couple of questions on traffic policing, so we will have a break, come back at 4.15 p.m. There is a cup of tea in the Ante Chamber if you like.

The Committee suspended from 4.01 p.m. to 4.15 p.m.

Output Group 3 - Traffic Policing

3.1 Traffic Policing

CHAIR - Welcome back, minister. We covered some of the issues around serious crash statistics and challenges there with the minister for Infrastructure yesterday, whatever day it was - Monday. From your perspective, we are still seeing tragically high rates of serious crash

numbers, including fatalities as well as serious injuries. We know that some of the measures that have been taken around that. Can you say where your focus is in trying to address what we know as the factors behind this?

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. You're spot-on to identify that coming out of COVID-19, with our community moving around a lot more, again, which is a good thing, but unfortunately we've seen a big spike in our road crashes. Last year was a devastating year for fatalities, an extraordinarily high number. This year, our fatalities aren't tracking quite as badly; though it is 15 currently. The other really concerning trend is that we have an even higher rate of serious crashes. I suppose we can't just look at the fatality numbers, the head-on crashes and say that things are getting better when the big picture is that our road toll is unacceptably high. We work closely with Road Safety in Mr Ferguson's Infrastructure portfolio and noted the new cameras that are being rolled out. That's important for a range of different reasons, but if you look at the fatal five, key ones are speed, seatbelts and mobile phone use. They're three of the key parts of the fatal five.

CHAIR - Inattention?

Mr ELLIS - Exactly. Inattention with your mobile phones, for example. It is mindboggling to me that people are still on their mobile phones. As a younger person, I have to say I cannot believe that we still have people driving around without seatbelts. Sadly, we know that that is one of the very high determinants of when a serious crash becomes a fatality as well.

In terms of enforcement, in the last 12 months, we stood up a dedicated road policing service in Tasmania Police. I want to acknowledge the work that's been done. Deputy Commissioner Higgins as well is critically involved in that work. Tasmania now has one of the highest road policing numbers per head of population of any place in Australia. We are also rolling out a range of different technology, not just for enforcement of normal road users that are committing offences, but people that are deliberately committing dangerous acts of driving, particularly in the hooning space. We've had an \$860 000 investment into drone technology. That's more than 30 drones around our state. That capability gives us a range of different tools when it comes to evading police. They're able to follow at a safe distance, high level, and monitor people as they're moving through the streets or bushland or a range of other behaviours like that.

We've also got a bit of work going on, and I announced this in the last couple of months in having another look around our hooning legislation, and seeing what more we can do to get dangerous hoons and their vehicles off our streets.

CHAIR - The former member for Windermere would be so excited to hear that.

Mr ELLIS - And he is walking in the shoes of a giant there. We have a particular focus on that dangerous driving behaviour but more needs to be done in our community to spread that message. To make sure, we stood up this new road policing service; they have new technology; they have a range of new, for example, more visible livery on their vehicles so that the community can see that there are traffic police out in the community.

Psychologically, that makes a big difference too in preventing some of that dangerous driver behaviour in the Fatal Five. I might pass over to the Commissioner and her team to add anything further about some of those focus areas as well.

Ms ADAMS - Thanks, minister. I also will have Assistant Commissioner Bodnar give some of that specific detail about some of the operations that we have and our strategy in that space. As the minister has pointed out, we did a review of road policing last year and that resulted in our separation of public order so that we have got a dedicated road policing team. That team is one of the highest ratios of dedicated traffic police in the country when you look per capita compared to other jurisdictions.

As part of that new model, we also introduced a highway patrol and we have been really clear that our strategy for the next six months is around high visibility operations. We want people to believe that if they are out their driving and they are going to be reckless and not comply with the Fatal Five, there is a high chance and high likelihood that they are going to get caught. That included a suspension of our cautioning policy so that police officers issue tickets and do not caution, that discretion has been removed for the moment. We have also done a couple of other things to ensure that our strategy is valid and gives us the best opportunity to change some of that driver behaviour.

An additional thing that we have put in place, we have had a number of police officers - our experienced traffic police officers - who have done observation shifts in other jurisdictions. We have challenged them to examine our enforcement strategies and compare then to what other jurisdictions are doing and then come back. Where there are opportunities for us to continuously improve and pick up on some of those strategies, we will do so. We have also been really active in the use of technology which is allowing members of the community to upload their webcams when they are seeing dangerous driving.

I am sure you have had the opportunity to see that travelling on the Midlands.

CHAIR - Yes.

Ms ADAMS - We now have a portal for people who have webcams to upload that driving behaviour.

CHAIR - Can you upload from a phone? If you are the passenger in the car and videoing, can you upload a video from your phone?

Mr BODNAR - You certainly can upload either through the portal we have on our Tasmania website or through Crime Stoppers portal as well, which is available for use in a number of different crimes and offences, but it also includes traffic policing.

Ms ADAMS - Before I throw to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar who will give you some of the statistics about what we have done in that high visibility space, that has been the focus. We know the automated speed cameras have been out there complementing our work so our work is high visibility. It is back to basics: that people see police officers on our roads, on our highways and on our rural roads and think, yes, I could get caught if I am speeding.

CHAIR - Personally, I have seen a lot more out and about during the election campaign, certainly down on the west coast. They were everywhere.

Ms ADAMS - That is great feedback because that is our -

CHAIR - I commented on it; I haven't seen so many police visibly on the road, there are unmarked cars. I haven't seen any of those because they haven't had to pull me up.

Ms ADAMS - Our traffic sergeants have done a great job in making sure that they are targeted. As I said the Assistant Commissioner Bodnar will give you some statistics about the level of increase that we have had on those high visibility measures.

Mr BODNAR - Thank you, Commissioner. One thing I would like to add is reflecting on that Legislative Council inquiry last year into road safety, one of the things that I took out of that personally and have pondered upon was the fact that there is no silver bullet when it comes to road safety. There is no easy fix. What we need to see more broadly across the community is a paradigm shift in people's attitudes towards road safety and that is what we need to drive down the numbers when we talk about fatal and serious crashes.

Feeding off what the Commissioner is saying, what the Commissioner has been very clear to me and the staff about is that she wants our people to be highly visible out on the rural roads and out on the urban roads. As part of that, we've really increased our high-visibility traffic operations, which is consistent with one of the recommendations out of that inquiry as well.

When I look at our total district traffic operations up until recent times, we've increased those by 245 per cent this year. We've conducted 650 compared to 188 in the same period last year so that's an incredible effort by our staff and it certainly provides some evidence as to what you're saying as well, Chair, about the increase in police.

When we look at our mobile district traffic operation, we've increased those by 234 per cent - in numerical terms, 261 this year compared to 78 in the same period for 2021-22. Static operations have increased by 252 per cent, numerically 388 compared to 110. What's really pleasing as well is that we've increased our joint operations with State Growth through the Road Transport Safety Inspectors and they've increased by 190 per cent, with 32 compared to 11 in the same period last year.

When I look at some of those operations we've run, particularly over Easter as part of our campaigns, Operation Safe Arrival as an example between 6 and 11 April this year, we conducted 6655 random breath tests and 136 oral fluid tests. We detected 32 drink-drivers and 42 drug-drivers. We also detected 25 mobile phone offences during that period, 18 seatbelt offences, 19 drive whilst disqualified offences, and a total of 493 infringements were issued by our members over that five-day period. That's really good. We're out and about and we are being seen.

Certainly, some of the other operations we've done in a smaller area, as an example for the committee, there was one on 27 January between Bridport and St Helens. We conducted 176 random breath tests, 29 drivers were issued fines for speeding, one mobile phone offence was detected, one driver failed to stop for a red light, and two vehicles were found to be unregistered. That's a very brief snapshot of what we've been doing. It feeds in with what the Commissioner and the minister are seeking from us - high-visibility traffic operations, any time anywhere, but also working in with State Growth.

The Commissioner highlighted the mobile speed camera program that State Growth are running. That's really allowed us to shift our focus and move more into this high visibility space because of the work that those cameras are covering for us. The committee is probably aware that it won't be long before the mobile phone and seatbelt technology are also rolled out through those cameras. For us, that's really pleasing and hopefully we see that shift into the future around attitudes towards road safety. That's really what we're seeking.

CHAIR - Until people do it for reasons other than not being caught.

Mr BODNAR - Yes.

Mr GAFFNEY - Every time I drive past this sign where it says, I think it's, '116 you're over the limit' or something I've seen somewhere. That really concerns me.

CHAIR - 'Over is over' it says.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, it really concerns me. I think 111 is over the limit and yet we're saying 116 is over the limit as if you can get to 115 and it's okay. Do you know what I mean? I'm wondering, is that from Road Safety or is that from a study somewhere else? Every time I see it, I think, 'Oh, that doesn't make sense to me'.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, the 'over is over' campaign is run through State Growth. Mr Ferguson would be the best person to answer that but I might pass over to the team for some general comments on it as well.

Ms ADAMS - Minister, thank you, and again I'll throw this to Assistant Commissioner Bodnar, who is on the sub-committee for enforcement and education. The campaigns that the Road Safety Advisory Council implement are normally based on market research and they'll consult quite broadly in the development of a campaign. Again, I would assume that that one was has been informed from market research, but I'll ask Assistant Commissioner Bodnar if he has any additional comments.

Mr BODNAR - I suppose the messaging behind this is, effectively, whether it was 116 or 113, the fact is if you're speeding, you're speeding. If you're doing the right thing, you don't have anything to worry about but I'll take your feedback on board.

Mr GAFFNEY - Thanks for the explanation. I just wondered where it came from. I just thought, '111 and you're over'.

Mr BODNAR - Technically you're right.

Mr HIGGINS - I was on the committee, the Road Safety Advisory Committee when that was decided and that was probably two years ago now. There was some robust discussions in the subcommittee at the time, because, I felt like some of us were a little bit older in the driving and we looked at it that way: 116 with a question-mark. Really? The company that came up with that, it was through market research. They surveyed different cohorts of drivers and came up with that and it seemed to be the hardest-hitting and the most they were able to recall from that. But I fully understand what you're saying when you see it.

Mr GAFFNEY - It's good to hear where it's come from, so it's fine.

Mr ELLIS - It is interesting that you raised it as well, it's clearly shown that it's stuck with you and it's been raised with me among different members of the community. I'm no marketing expert but it is interesting the cut-through that that number seems to -

Mr GAFFNEY - Did it force you to slow down?

Mr ELLIS - So, we take your feedback on board.

CHAIR - We'll move into Emergency management 4.1

Output Group 4 - Emergency Management

4.1 Emergency management

Ms LOVELL - Minister, I want to ask you some questions about the outgoing fire chief and his resignation.

Mr ELLIS - So did you want us to shift from police to our SES and Fire?

Ms LOVELL - I think they're more questions for you than others at the table, but perhaps if you feel like you need to call others to the table we could.

Mr ELLIS - Are we talking Emergency Management or Policing?

Ms LOVELL - How about I start with the questions and if you decide you need someone else at the table you can call them forward?

The outgoing fire chief, as had been made public, resigned from his position on Friday and there is an article in the *Mercury* newspaper this morning. They've called it an email. I'm not sure that it was an email but it's certainly a communication from the outgoing Chief Fire Officer to you as minister. When did you receive that communication?

Mr ELLIS - I'll have to just double check on that day, yes, 16 May.

Ms LOVELL - So 16 May. Just to be clear, this is a letter from Mr Barry and it starts:

Dear Minister Ellis

I'm writing to you regarding my serious concerns in relating to the TFES governance structure reporting arrangements ...

So, you received that on 16 May?

Mr ELLIS - That is correct.

Ms LOVELL - He resigned from his position on Friday. In this document, in this letter, there's no mention of resigning. He seems to be prepared and indeed, expecting to be here at

this table at Estimates to answer questions. Can you explain what happened between you receiving that letter and his resignation on Friday?

Mr ELLIS - I'm not going to go into personal employment matters as part of a budget Estimates process. As I've mentioned publicly in the media when asked about Mr Barry's resignation, I didn't seek his resignation. He offered that and I'm disappointed because Dermot has provided significant service to our community in the couple of years that he's been our chief officer. He's worked during the October 2022 floods, and I think he did an outstanding job.

We're going through an important reform process for fire and emergency services in Tasmania and we'll work through that. Mr Barry has provided advice on his views as the way forward, he's part of the steering committee. On that, he notes his support for the reforms that we announced in January. Those are the reforms that we intend to deliver. I'm aware that he provided advice that he would like to be the secretary of an isolated fire department. My judgment was that that was not the best model for emergency services. The community expects that we don't have emergency services put in silos and that they work best when they're strongly together. Ultimately, these reforms were about a range of different matters, but they will enable the TFES to have the leadership that it needs to take the service forward.

Ms LOVELL - You have had conversations with Mr Barry between receiving this document and his resignation?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

Ms LOVELL - And you didn't ask him to resign, you're saying.

Mr ELLIS - No.

Ms LOVELL - In this letter it does say and you've mentioned that he was supportive of the changes that were announced. He does say that. He says:

As you know, I have been very supportive of the announced changes and as recently as the weekend, used our EM -

I presume that is emergency management conference.

to reinforce the proposed way forward. However, I do not believe the actual changes endorsed by you, in the minute, reflect the spirit of the reforms announced or are in the best interests of the TFS and TFES.

Are you willing to share that minute that he refers to with the committee?

Mr ELLIS - Ultimately, that is advice to government but what I will say, we will be delivering these reforms. We will be bringing them to parliament and our intent will be clear. It will clearly show that the announced reforms in January will be the reforms that we will deliver.

Now, I mentioned there is talk that from advice that Mr Barry that he would like to be the secretary of his own isolated department. My view, as minister, is that that is not the best

outcome for Fire and Emergency Services in Tasmania. That is why we are not going down that path. What we will do is significantly empower the new commissioner of the TFES to take charge of that part of the service, to make sure that they have the capability, the responsibility and the accountability when it comes to budget and finance and when it comes to workforce, when it comes to employment, when it comes to strategy, policy and day-to-day operations. That is what we will deliver as part of these reforms and that will all be publicly available and publicly debated in this Chamber and the other place when we bring it to parliament.

Ms LOVELL - The advice to government that I mentioned earlier, the minute, you are not willing to table that or share that with the committee?

Mr ELLIS - No but ultimately, we will be bringing these reforms publicly. We will consult widely. These are the most significant reforms to Fire and Emergency Services in this state in more than 40 years. They are extraordinarily important when it comes to saving lives in Tasmania and this will be broadly debated because it is critical for our capability. I do not believe that we should be isolating our emergency services. I do believe that we are stronger together. I have received advice and I have made the decision.

Ms LOVELL - You mentioned it is about saving lives and keeping the community safe. There was an interview this morning on ABC radio with two former chief fire officers, Mike Brown and John Gledhill, with Leon Compton this morning. Did you hear that interview, minister?

Mr ELLIS - No, I was preparing for Estimates.

Ms LOVELL - You have not had a chance to listen to it or read transcripts throughout the day?

Mr ELLIS - No, I have been in Estimates but I am broadly aware that they made some comments.

Ms LOVELL - Okay. If I could just take you to some of those comments, in particular, in relation to community safety. This question was posed to Mr Gledhill. I will just mention also we are talking about - we have had Mr Barry who is clearly well respected across the TFS and has been Chief Fire Officer for two years. This interview was with Mike Brown who was the Chief Fire Officer for seven years between 2009 and 2016 and John Gledhill, who was the Chief Fire Officer for 14 years between 1995 and 2009. Some significant experience there and both well respected.

Mr ELLIS - I agree with that. I am very grateful for their service as well as Mr Barry's.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you. The question was posed to Mr Gledhill and I will quote this again and this was so Leon Compton said:

Again, I think when my audience hears this, they will be asking will this make us less safe or more safe? I mean, do you think a case can be made, John Gledhill, that these changes will make Tasmanians less safe?

Mr Gledhill replied:

Well, adding bureaucracy into an agency that has an operational function primarily is dangerous in my view.

Would you like to respond to those comments?

Mr ELLIS - What we are doing is actually taking bureaucracy out of this process. That is what reviews by Mr Mike Blake and Mr Michael Stevens have found is that the current arrangements are highly bureaucratic. The Chief Officer reports to the State Fire Management Council. They report to the State Fire Commission. They report to the secretary of the department, who is the Police Commissioner sitting beside me here. That is a bureaucratic arrangement.

When you look in the police side of the house, the commissioner reports directly to the minister. What these changes will deliver, is a Commissioner of the TFES who can report directly to the minister. We need to be empowering our operational leaders, removing bureaucracy, making sure that we have clear, strong chains of command so that we can deliver fire and emergency services that will save lives in Tasmania. That is not just me saying that. That is review after review for the last five years. It notes that the system that we currently have, has no clear chain of command. It does not empower our operational leaders.

The responsibilities of the State Fire Commission will transfer to the Commissioner TFES who will report directly to the minister. That is why that is a stronger arrangement. That is why it will deliver better emergency services in Tasmania. Any reading of the reviews we have done over the last five years will bear that out. Any people who haven't read these reviews, I really encourage you to do so. These will be the most important reforms in this area for the last 40 years.

We know the response hasn't been good enough in this state over that time, particularly with critical events. The flooding in 2016 in Latrobe. There have been significant inquiries into that. Mike Lake actually led some of the advice. The response in 2022, clearly demonstrates we improved the way we served our community because of reforms that have brought us stronger together.

I have received advice from Mr Barry that we should have an isolated Fire Department. That is not stronger together. Even the United Firefighter's Union, in their submission say we shouldn't have an isolated Fire Department because it has no longevity. It would be such a small department it would be ultimately subsumed under a larger department. We need to make sure we are reforming the system here in Tasmania to have strong police, fire, and emergency managements, that we have stronger together responses to emergencies.

Ms LOVELL - Would you table that advice from Mr Barry? The advice you keep referring to? You said a number of times you received advice from...

Mr ELLIS - They were verbal conversations.

Ms LOVELL - In my understanding, the union is they have actually been campaigning for a number of years now for an independent statutory authority to be maintained, not turning it into an individual department. That is not what they are calling for. The former Premier, Peter Gutwein, at this very table, in fact, in 2021 Estimates, made a commitment his

government, or the Liberal Government, would retain the State Fire Commission as a statutory authority. Why are you not standing by that decision on that commitment?

Mr ELLIS - We are standing by that commitment. What we will deliver is a retained, but reformed State Fire Commission. It will become the State Fire and Emergency Services Committee, so we can expand the membership. We are stronger together. That means TFES needs to include representatives of SES, volunteer cohort, leadership, and they are not currently included in the State Fire Commission. We also need to reform it so we empower our operational leaders as you just mentioned before. Making sure those representative functions provided through the State Fire Commission are retained is really important, but we need to reform how we do that. By empowering the operational leaders, by giving this statutory body an advisory and support role to the people that make the decisions day-to-day is extraordinarily important.

In 2016, when fires raged around our state during that summer, the State Fire Commission did not meet for three months. The people that make the actions are the operational leaders. We need to be empowering those people. Have you read the Blake Report?

Ms LOVELL - I have not read all of it myself, no.

Mr ELLIS - Just while I have it here, can I please table or provide this to the committee for your background? It's the current governance arrangements we are operating under, that we have had review after review and the future plan. You will clearly see a clearer stronger chain of command, a better structure for our emergency services. I commend it as a document to you all.

Ms LOVELL - I will just take you back a moment. You said that Chief Fire Officer reports to the Commission and reports to the State Fire Management Council. My understanding is that the Chief Fire Officer actually sits on the Commission and sits on the State Fire Council, but does not report to them.

Mr ELLIS - The Chair of the State Fire Commission is Mr Allen Garcia. He is the Chair. The Chair of the Safe Fire Management Committee is, Mr Ian Sawyer. He's the Chair. That's our current arrangements. I mentioned the secretary of the department. Those are the people that the Chief Officer reports to. The Chairs of those organisations. That is exactly part of the problem here. Our arrangements are bureaucratic. We need a leaner, stronger, clearer change of command, just as we have on the policing side of the Department of Police, Fire, and Emergency Management, where the Commission of TFES will report directly to the minister. That is what review after review has found. That is what happens in other jurisdictions to help keep people there safe and is what we need here in Tasmania.

Ms LOVELL - Can I clarify this diagram, is that the current structure or the reformed structure?

Mr ELLIS - That is the current structure.

Ms LOVELL - Do you have a diagram of the reformed, proposed structure?

Mr ELLIS - That is the second page, correct.

Ms LOVELL - Okay, so can I ask a question, then and this was also raised in the media coverage. This diagram shows, and I am speaking to the new diagram now, shows the commission of the TFES and the commission of police.

Mr ELLIS - There is no Commission of TFES under the current arrangements.

Ms LOVELL - No, I am talking about the new arrangements and there is a reporting line to the minister, but there is also a line to the secretary, a dotted line, what does that represent?

Mr ELLIS - The secretary retains important administrative compliance requirements under the Tasmanian public service framework, when it matters on the State Service Act and other matters like that, it will work through that structure. The Commission of TFES will have powers over day-to-day operations, strategy, policy, budget and finance, particularly, the ring-fenced funding arrangements we have and will deliver in our reforms, also workforce and employment. This will be an empowered Commissioner of TFES, they will have more power than they currently do by a long way and they will have their stronger, clearer chain of command. Ultimately, the Commissioner for TFES is in charge. That is not the current arrangement, that is what we are moving to and will enable them to save lives in Tasmania.

Ms LOVELL - Can I go to the fire levy, are you committed to ring-fencing that still for being solely for the fire service?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, it would be Fire and Emergency Services, obviously we are working on a broader reform around Stronger Together, that means Fire and Emergency Services. One of the many things in the Blake report, if you had of read it, is our emergency services funding arrangements in this state are desperately inadequate. The SES is the classic example of this.

It should not matter whether you have a car crash in Rosebury or in Launceston, you should get the best possible service, wherever you live. Currently, the service you get is based on the capacity of the council where you have a car crash, that needs to change so we can better save lives in Tasmania. The current arrangements have three different fire levies, they have seven different broader funding streams, and it does not work, there are significant areas of funding neglect among local government for the SES. We are looking to expand the recipients of a reformed levy, a levy structure, and that will include the SES and emergency services in Tasmania, ultimately, that will deliver better outcomes to save lives.

Ms LOVELL - You mentioned the draft legislation before, when are you expecting to have that available for consultation, any idea when, later this year?

Mr ELLIS - Later this year, probably October-November. We will just work through it- I mean, there will obviously be consultation ahead of time.

Ms LOVELL - Oh, sorry, that was my question, so the October-November, that is when you are expecting to have that legislation drafted.

Mr ELLIS - We will be introducing to parliament this year.

Ms LOVELL - Ok, so when will it be out for public consultation?

Mr ELLIS - Ahead of that.

Ms LOVELL - How long for? Do you have a timeline for that?

Mr ELLIS - Probably about five or six weeks as we typically do. This will be an important, broader consultation with the community. This has been one of the most consulted series of changes we have seen in any part of government, but particularly, in Fire and Emergency Management we have seen in many years. Multiple reports, multiple significant pieces of work to look into this area. The community know of the need for this change, but we will provide that back to the community, so they can have a look at where we are thinking.

We would expect broad, bi-partisan support in this parliament on the changes we are looking to bring in, because ultimately; this is about saving lives. We have chosen to act ahead of a royal commission into a mass casualty event here in Tasmania. The review and the reports look very similar in their findings to the royal commission findings regarding the Black Saturday bushfire events in 2009 in Victoria where 173 people lost their lives.

Victoria is one of the most fire-prone places on Earth, but guess what, so is Tasmania. That's why we're choosing to act ahead of an event like that, ahead of the royal commission. This parliament has a responsibility to take that action.

Ms LOVELL - Did any of the authors of the reports speak to any of the fire chiefs, or former fire chiefs?

Mr ELLIS - I'm sure these are all publicly available documents.

Ms LOVELL - But did they speak to them when preparing the reports?

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, there's been a range of consultation. Chris Arnol was consulted as part of the Blake report.

Ms LOVELL - Right. He was the only one.

Mr ELLIS - These are all publicly available documents and they have a broad range of people who were consulted with as well.

Ms LOVELL - Right. Minister, you have two former fire chiefs, and an outgoing chief fire officer, with a combined 23 years of experience - all three of them well respected across the Tasmania Fire Service, and across the community more broadly. All three of them are raising significant concerns with you about this proposal. You've been the minister for less than 12 months. Why are you not listening to them, and what makes you think you know better about this than these three gentlemen, all well respected, and with many, many years of experience?

Mr ELLIS - As I say, Mr Barry supports the reforms as they were announced in January -

Ms LOVELL - But he has been very clear that he doesn't support the reforms that are being proposed now.

Mr ELLIS - I've received advice from Mr Barry that he wants to be the secretary of his own isolates department in Fire. That is not the best outcome for the Tasmanian community. My job, as minister, is to consult widely, consult broadly, take on board the best possible advice and make a decision. I've made a decision that we are stronger together, and that our community won't be best served by an isolated fire department. No one in our community believes that our emergency services operate best in silos. That's exactly the kind of mentality that we're looking at moving away from when we talk about stronger together.

Those are the decisions I've made. They are based on sound advice from expert research across multiple reports. We need to make these changes. I understand the former fire chief wanted to have his own separate department -

Ms LOVELL - When did Mr Barry advise you of that? When did he say that?

Mr ELLIS - In the lead-up to his letter.

Ms LOVELL - In a conversation you had with him?

Mr ELLIS - Multiple conversations.

Ms LOVELL - I have just one last point to make. I do find it interesting that you're not willing to disclose anything of the conversations you had with Mr Barry since receiving the letter and his resignation, yet you're happy to repeatedly rely on this advice that he's given, which is verbal, which you've also said is verbal in a conversation. You've mentioned a number of times that he's told you that he wants his own individual department, but that was also a conversation. I just find it interesting that you're happy to tell us about that conversation, but not other conversations.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, because you have asked me about advice that has been provided to you in a leaked document. I'm providing you advice. I'm not going to go into personal employment matters, as I mentioned at the start. Ultimately, this change is about saving lives and giving the TFS the leadership it needs to take the service forward.

Ms LOVELL - Yes. You have three former leaders of the TFS telling you there are significant concerns with this and how it will operate, and you're not willing to even pause and review -

Mr ELLIS - If you are really serious about this matter, I encourage you to read the Blake report. It will tell you that our current structure does not have a stronger, clearer chain of command. It does not provide the chief officer the capability to act in the event of an emergency, and more importantly to prepare the service for those moments.

Ms LOVELL - Yes, and that report -

Mr ELLIS - I appreciate the advice from a whole range of stakeholders, and many of those have been taken on board in the preparation of the Mike Blake report and the Michael Stevens report. They have shown, clearly, that we need a stronger, clearer chain of command. We cannot stay where we are, and we also cannot set up one of the smallest departments in Australia to isolate part of our emergency services away from the other parts. We are stronger together when it comes to emergency services responders, and I make no bones about that.

Ms LOVELL - Well, you can criticise me for not reading the Blake Report, but you seem to be relying very heavily on two reports that consulted with one former chief fire officer and completely disregarding the valid concerns that have been raised now publicly by three former chief fire officers with a combined 23 years of experience.

Mr ELLIS - It consulted across our volunteers, in consulted across local government, it consulted across our unions. The people who have been providing advice to Blake and Stevens have thousands of years of experience fighting fires in Tasmania and around the country. That is the advice that we received in these reports. Thousands and thousands of years of experience.

Ms LOVELL - Do you have a breakdown of that thousands and thousands of years? That seems a vast claim to make.

Mr ELLIS - You only need to look at our volunteer association for example, where there are 5000 people that get on a truck whenever they are needed in Tasmania and serve our community.

Ms LOVELL - But these same people are raising concerns with you now.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry?

Ms LOVELL - You've also got the workforce raising the same concerns with you now that the former fire officers are raising.

Mr ELLIS - Our workforce broadly believes in these reforms; that's why they were there when we announced these reforms in January. They support the reforms we announced in January. Those are the reforms that we will deliver.

Ms LOVELL - Do you accept that the reforms that you announced in January are different to the reforms that are now being talked about?

CHAIR - I've been listening to all of this. Minister, to clarify, you said that the recently retired fire chief's concern was that he wanted to have his own standalone unit.

Mr ELLIS - Department.

CHAIR - Department that reported to?

Mr ELLIS - The minister.

CHAIR - Okay. And you've said that's not the best approach, in your view. Was that the only matter? There seems to be a bit of a gap in information here because from the information that was provided - or leaked, however it came to the attention of the media - essentially he was happy, well, not happy but he'd voiced his concern and said what he wanted but intended to continue. Were there other matters that he raised, other than having his standalone department - I know that's fundamental, from what you've said - but were there other matters that were of concern to him?

Mr ELLIS - I'm not going to go into personal employment matters.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - I'm not asking about his personal employment matters, I'm asking about whether other concerns were raised.

Mr ELLIS - You're asking me about other matters?

CHAIR - Yes, unrelated to the single standalone department.

Mr ELLIS - I'm not going to go into personal employment matters. But before we -

CHAIR - It's not an employment matter. I'm asking-

Mr ELLIS - As I say, no other matters, but I'm not going to talk about personal employment matters. Just before we move on, Chair, if it's okay, I might ask Jeremy Smith and Michael Lowe to come to the table and relieve our police officers.

I'll introduce Jeremy Smith, Acting Chief of Tasmania Fire Service; Mick Lowe, Director of SES; and, of course, Donna Adams, Secretary of the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management.

CHAIR - I was asking if there were other matters, and you said that you wanted to invite them to say something.

Mr ELLIS - No, just because we've fully moved on to Fire and Emergency Services, broadly speaking, but as I say, I'm not going to go into personal employment matters in a budget Estimates.

CHAIR - I wasn't asking about a personal employment matter. I was asking about the structure that appears to be problematic for the former fire chief. Apart from that single department, for which you've outlined your reasons why that's not a good idea, I'll accept that, but were there other matters in addition to that of concern with this model that's being proposed, or what was announced in January?

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned, Mr Barry was supportive of the announcement that we made in January, and that's the model that we're going to deliver.

CHAIR - He has a different view on that, clearly.

Mr ELLIS - His advice was around an isolated fire department. There are matters in terms of implementation towards moving to this model that we worked through as a broader steering committee on matters to deliver the capability for the commissioner TFES that I mentioned. That is workforce and employment, that is budget and finance, particularly for the ring-fenced funding operation strategy policy.

As we work through that, we have a new Fire and Emergency Services Act. that we are looking to deliver. We have had very little change since 1979 when the original Fire Service Act was brought in. There is a whole range, as I am sure you would appreciate, of legislative frameworks that we operate under in the public service, the State Service Act, Financial Management Act, Workplace, Health and Safety. Working through the implementation of the

PUBLIC

instruments that are required to give the commissioner of the TFES that capability are broadly matters that we worked through with the steering committee.

CHAIR - It seems to me that something, according to Mr Barry, has occurred between - he was supportive for the announcement in January and where we are now, do you understand what -

Mr ELLIS - As I say, I am not going to bring up my personal employment matters.

CHAIR - It is not the personal employment matter.

Mr ELLIS - Well, you are asking me a question and then telling me what it is not. I am telling you I am not going to go into personal employment matters.

CHAIR - But how do you define personal employment matter?

Mr ELLIS - Matters that are related to Mr Barry's employment.

CHAIR - Yes, but I am not asking about that.

Mr ELLIS - Sure.

CHAIR - I am asking you if this model, on the second page, if you say that directly reflects the decision taken and announced in January, you all stood together on that, there must be something else that I am missing here.

Mr ELLIS - As I say, what we have announced in January is what we are working to deliver. That is what we will deliver, particularly when we brought our new Fire and Emergency Services Act to parliament. We expect broad support on that because it is really important. In terms of what we are delivering, working through practical implementation, the instruments that are required to enable the empowering of the commissioner of the TFES and that stronger, clearer chain of command, so -

CHAIR - I do not disagree with any of that. Can you tell us about the funding arrangements that will sit under this? It is going to look a bit different, but can you talk us through that.

Mr ELLIS - We are working through a design and drafting of this. It is really important work that we are doing with Treasury and the Department of Premier and Cabinet as well. The current arrangements that we have for funding our Fire and Emergency Services are fundamentally broken, that is what Blake and Stevens both found. We have three different levies that fund the Fire Service; we have seven different funding streams that come in. That means it is unfair, it is complex and it is unsustainable.

What we need is actually the opposite: we need a simple, fair, sustainable model and as we -

CHAIR - Can you describe what it is going to look like, that is what I am asking.

Mr ELLIS - That is what I am providing for you. The context that we operate in, Tasmania is one of the most fire-prone places on Earth, and we have had three one-in-a-hundred flood events in the last 10 years and the future looks like more frequent and severe natural disasters. The funding model that we are working towards is one that is fairer, simpler and more sustainable.

CHAIR - But what does it look like. I want the detail, not just the rhetoric about it.

Mr ELLIS - As I say, we are working through it and we will release that as part of broader consultation work. I can give you an example of how a funding model, the current funding model that we have, does not work. I will give an example where our thinking is at and why we are moving to a new one. The insurance levy that we currently have; the royal commission into Black Saturday in Victoria found that one of the key impediments to resilience and recovery was relying on insurance levies to pay for the fire service, because it is one of the worst possible things that you can do.

There are enormous loopholes. The easiest way to avoid paying your fair share of the insurance levy is to not take out the insurance that you need, that has catastrophic effects in terms of our community's capacity to be able to recover. In Tasmania, the under-insurance rate for businesses is about 30-40 per cent. That is an enormous loophole, but it is also terrible and we have seen different events in our state as well where recovery has been hampered by people not having the insurance that they need.

CHAIR - That is one area, okay.

Mr ELLIS - That is probably one of the really key areas that we are looking at.

CHAIR - How much does the insurance levy fund now as a portion of the total budget?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of our most recent corporate performance report, just give me a tick because the numbers do change. This is one of the biggest impediments that we have as well is that insurance levies are not predictable. Some years, they go gangbusters and then in other years there is a long-term decline. It is not stable as we go forward. Obviously, we need a stable funding arrangement for our Fire and Emergency Services because we cannot, for example, sack a whole heap of firefighters just because the insurance costs are high this year.

CHAIR - I know, I accept all that. I am trying to understand what percentage of the funding comes from the levy?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. I will pass over to the team if they have the details from the latest year. It is publicly available, we will find it for you to assist the committee.

CHAIR - I would like the answer for the benefit of clarity, so that I can provide the breakdown as various components of the funding and the percentage which they provide.

Mr ELLIS - While the team is working to find that particular number, I will give you some broader background in that the three levies that we have are insurance, which as I mentioned, can have a really detrimental even perverse, outcomes. The other one is a broad-based property levy and that is levied at different rates across the state. Now, there are problematic elements of that. Also, the principle ruling that we should all contribute to keeping

Tasmanians safe is important. Then, we also have the motor vehicle emergency services levy as well. That is levied on motor vehicle registrations. It has some problematic elements as well, in which particular motor vehicles pay that levy. Broadly speaking, our Fire and Emergency Services, our SES, provide road crash services and other operational services in that space. There is some pretty sound reasoning.

Ms LOVELL - I think you have someone here you could help you with that question.

Mr ELLIS - Mandy Clarke, she was at the table previously.

Ms CLARKE - In terms of the revenue that is derived from levies, for the 2022-23 year, in regard to the \$92.6 million, fire service contribution is \$53.587 million; the insurance levy in 2022-23 was factored in at \$29 million. The motor vehicle insurance levy was \$10.088 million. For 2023-24, you would like 2022-23? Yes. Fire service contribution is \$55.998 million. Insurance levy is \$43.969 million. The motor vehicle levy was \$10.963 million.

CHAIR - As proportions of the whole budget that the emergency services operate under?

Mr ELLIS - It changes from year to year, as Ms Clarke outlined. If you look at, say, in the Blake report with the breakdown that they have of the different funding streams. As I say, it depends on the year. We have very choppy funding arrangements. The insurance fire levy is about 25 per cent. I say 'about' because it changes. Motor vehicle fire levy about 10 per cent. Australian government funding, Blake finds zero but depends on the year. Sometimes they make bigger contributions for particular projects, just as they have done recently.

CHAIR - What was that?

Mr ELLIS - In the Blake report, that number changes. Revenue from marketing fire prevention activities, for example, that is our Tasmanian fire equipment capability that we have within the department. Fire service contribution, that is our broad-based property levy, 53 per cent, state government funding; general funding only 2 per cent and other miscellaneous revenue, 3 per cent. That changes depending on the year, depending on different insurance rates and others.

CHAIR - What does the future look like?

Mr ELLIS - The future looks like a funding model that is fair, simple and sustainable.

CHAIR - Like the tax system should be, yes, but tell us what it looks like.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly and that is what we all need to be working towards in this arrangement. If you look at tax principles as well, stability of revenue is a key, equity in terms of the way that we deliver that and the way that we raise those funds. The principles we are working towards are around fair, simple, sustainable. Removing or minimising perverse outcomes like an underinsured community is going to be really important.

We mentioned before about ring-fencing, this is really key too, making sure the levies derived from our community for the purpose of Fire and Emergency Services are spent in that

PUBLIC

place, and the Commission of TFES has the responsibility for spending that so they can prepare the service or services to meet the needs of the community now and into the future.

I appreciate there is more work to do and the committee's keen to understand that work, but we will be releasing that shortly as part of our fire and emergency services reform.

CHAIR - To clarify then, there will be two pieces of consultation. One on the Fire Services Act -

Mr ELLIS - It is one act. The levy structure is actually written into the Fire Service Act 1979.

CHAIR - As part of the consultation, you look at the structure according to your diagram, and the funding model.

Mr ELLIS - That is right. Within the Act currently, there are a range of strange and perverse outcomes that are written into legislation. That is particularly around funding. An example in your electorate, we had a submission on this in Blake, or maybe Stevens, from the Burnie City Council. You know the Cam River? You know it well? On one side it is the city of Burnie. On the other, it's Waratah/Wynyard.

CHAIR - That is what joins it.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly. Properties of the same value on one side of the river are rated at four times the levy as on the other side of the river. However, when there's an emergency response, you will get a fire truck come from Burnie and you will get a fire truck come from Somerset - as long as you can get across the bridge, but won't go into that one - you will get response from both. But we appreciate your work during that significant emergency, Chair, during the October floods.

That is the thing we see with our Fire and Emergency Services response in our community. This is our stronger together work that happens within our service. Gone are the days of a fire happening in another municipality and you not getting fire trucks coming to service that. Our doctrine around rapid mode of attack means we are throwing as many resources at the initial phase as we possibly can, so we can keep the fires small and contained. Obviously, when we are talking house fires, it has less capability to spread. But talking bushfires, fire does not respect municipal boundaries, cadastral boundaries, whole range of others. We need to make sure we have that rapid mode of attack.

The other thing for our community to note is aerial firefighter has becoming far more significant response capability. 50 per cent of the fires we had in Tasmania this summer had an aerial response. Of course, wherever you live in Tasmania, we need to make sure we are providing that. It's expensive as well. Making sure a funding stream in the act recognises that firefighting has changed and all of our community need to make sure they are giving a fair contribution.

CHAIR - I understand all that. On that, are we looking at trying to recoup the majority of the funding from the people of Tasmania directly, one way or another, through a levy that meets a fair, simple, sustainable model? Are we looking at the Government putting more money into it?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. We have three levies currently. We think we can meet the majority of the funding required for the Tasmanian community by making the existing structure fairer and removing loopholes. We want to make sure the ring-fence funding arrangements are as robust as possible so our Commissioner TFES has the capability to plan and prepare as best they possibly can.

CHAIR - The question I asked was is the majority of the funding going to come from the people of Tasmania by way of levies, or are we going to see the Government appropriating more to fund the service?

Mr ELLIS - The majority we envisage will come from the levies, whatever that levy structure look like. We think that reform in the levy space will be able to deliver that ring-fence funding if we do it simply, fairly and sustainably, but also efficiently, that will set up the fire and emergency services to respond in the future to more severe and frequent natural disasters.

Ms LOVELL - Thank you, minister. I want to go back to this proposed governance structure. To be clear and I know we touched on this before, but I wanted to make sure it is very clear, if we are looking at the TFES who has the final decision-making capacity on budget, employment matters and governance matters.

Mr ELLIS - Perhaps we can set this out, budget commission TFES, employment commission and TFES, what was the other matter?

Ms LOVELL - Governance.

Mr ELLIS - Governance, they ultimately are the head of the TFES. Currently, that is the State Fire Commission and the State Fire Management Council.

Ms LOVELL - In the new structure?

Mr ELLIS - In the new structure they will be the governance. There will be oversight under our public service frameworks from the secretary.

Ms LOVELL - Can you talk through what you mean by oversight?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we have a structure we all operate under the state service when it comes to financial management, when it comes to the State Service Act. Some of those instruments that will enable that come from those acts; delegated authority by being an officer when it comes to workplace, health and safety. Ultimately, the Fire Service Act reforms will be able to cover a range of matters that will empower the Commissioner of TFES. Also working within our existing structure as every other public servant virtually does, will be important to identifying those instruments that will empower that role so they have maximum capability to deliver for the future.

A good guide, for example, is the Commissioner or the CEO as they are frequently called of Ambulance and the act that sets out their roles, responsibilities and capabilities. That is a reasonably strong precedent for the work that we are doing. Much like Ambulance we don't

think we should have an operational leader having to report to two different boards and the messy arrangements that happened there. We believe in clear, simple.

Ms LOVELL - They don't report to those boards, they sit on the board, it is a bit different.

Mr ELLIS - Well, who is the Chair?

Ms LOVELL - That is my next question. Why was the decision made by this Government to remove the Chief of the TFS from that position of Chair of the board of the State Fire Commission?

Mr ELLIS - Ultimately, the governance arrangements mean those bodies have effectively governance control of those arrangements. What we see in a range of different critical services is we need to empower the operational leader to make those decisions. We see this in the military, the Chief of Navy, Air Force, and Army. We see this across a range of different matters, we see this is in police in Tasmania. We need to be empowering that role so they can make the decisions.

Of course, we want to retain, but reform the State Fire Commission so the broad experience we have from our volunteers, to our unions, to local government and others is retained so they can advise the Commission of TFES. That person needs to be able to make a call and deliver on it so we can keep Tasmanians safe.

Ms LOVELL - You have completely lost me with that answer. Why did the Government make the decision to remove the Chief of TFS as Chair of the State Fire Commission, currently? In the current structure, not the new structure. Why was that decision made?

Mr ELLIS - Governance principles, you cannot have a Chief Executive reporting to himself or herself as the Chair of a board.

Ms LOVELL - Right, okay. Just to go back a step to be clear under the new structure the Commissioner TFES would have final decision making around budget and employment matters. Is there anything the Commissioner would not have final decision making over? Any matters at all?

Mr ELLIS - As mentioned we all need to comply with the Financial Management Act. We all need to comply with the State Service Act.

Ms LOVELL - That's presuming compliance with pieces of legislations, and that's a given. Are there any matters that the Commissioner would not have the final decision over - not complying with an act but another person or another role being able to override a decision or make a decision?

Mr ELLIS - For example, in the State Service Act, the termination of a permanent employee or status change of a employee from fixed term to permanent.

Ms LOVELL - Those decisions would be made by someone else?

Mr ELLIS - Under the State Service Act they won't be able to do those things. Ultimately, they cannot be delegated. The appointment, transfer or termination of a senior

executive and equivalent specialists or process relating to Code of Conduct including the imposition of a sanction, taking action regarding an employee found unable to perform duties and declaring a permanent employee surplus and recommending redeployment. Those are matters that cannot be delegated under the State Service Act, but ultimately, the broader view is, what does the Commissioner for TFES need to do to be able to run the TFES?

Ms LOVELL - No, that's not my question. Those powers that you have outlined there would sit with the secretary, is that right?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, so they cannot be delegated.

Ms LOVELL - So they sit with the secretary. Right, thank you.

I have one last question. Minister, you said that you didn't ask Mr Barry to resign. Did anyone else ask him to resign?

Mr ELLIS - Not that I am aware of.

CHAIR - Any other questions?

Output Group 4 - Emergency Management

4.1 State Emergency Services

CHAIR - I just want to ask a bit about the training of volunteers. We know that there are challenges in getting volunteers for all areas, but we do a pretty good job of getting them in most areas.

Can you tell me how many volunteers you have across the SES and where the gaps are?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, this is an important part of enabling and empowering our people. I will pass to the Director of the SES, Mick Lowe, in a second. The 'stronger together' reforms that we are bringing about will enable greater back-in work, particularly in the area of training, so that we can build the scale of our two operations, the TFS and SES. They both have different training regimes and structures. Bringing them closer together will enable them to train across. There are a lot of operational efficiencies, for example.

CHAIR - A lot of volunteers volunteer for more than one service.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly. We have so many dual hatters and they're some of our most amazing members of our community. To make that contribution is extraordinary.

Mick, will I be able to pass over to you in terms of the operational side of things for volunteer training?

Mr LOWE - There are 642 SES volunteers across the state and they are divided into 36 locations. That is an increase from last year of a modest but important 23 in the last 12 months. We do have another 26 that we are tracking, who are under probation in various stages of training at this stage.

Ms LOVELL - Are there gaps that you can identify in certain areas? I mean in numbers.

Mr LOWE - Each one of those units across the state is at a different level of capability. We do an audit in terms of personnel across the state to ensure that we have the right numbers within each one of those units and the right level of capability that we can offer the state.

There is a gap analysis that is done across the board. Based on that, a new initiative over the past 12 months has been the use of the Volunteer Strategy and Support unit, to then do targeted recruitment initiatives within those various regions to ensure we are identifying where there is a lack of volunteer support.

CHAIR - Where are they? I'm talking about recruitment here and where we need to focus. We have a role as members of parliament trying to encourage people to put their hands up in volunteering roles. It's a bit hard to know if you don't know where the capability issues are.

Mr ELLIS - Can I say broadly on that, we want volunteers across the state and whether that's SES or surf lifesaving, volunteer marine rescue and others. We can always do with a helping hand because we may have, for example, a great emergency response in a particular area but the burden of that could be shouldered by only a small number of people. We see this particularly in our rural communities. As we've had a long-term decline in the number of people that live in our rural areas because of the changing nature of agricultural employment, those areas haven't become less fire-prone, they haven't had fewer floods.

CHAIR - Some of them are more fire-prone.

Mr ELLIS - Exactly, and that's the challenge we all need to be stepping up in. I'd encourage anyone wanting to become a volunteer with our emergency services to look into it, to please reach out. As we spoke about earlier, Chair, the work we're doing around diversity in the service is extraordinarily important and it's starting to show results. With our new Sorell hub that we set up earlier in the year, we launched that. There wasn't actually an SES unit in Sorell, which is kind of hard to believe - that big growing area and a broader capability gap there. When we stood up the new Sorell hub, that has the Sorell SES unit in there. It started from scratch and we've been able to recruit a number of volunteers. It's had a fifty-fifty gender balance. That's the future for our services in many ways, particularly our volunteers.

CHAIR - Particularly services having good facilities for the volunteers to train in and to be in. Let's talk about King Island, shall we?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, love to.

CHAIR - This is not your area but our ambulance vollies have absolutely sub-standard accommodation and have to use a portaloos.

Mr ELLIS - They are collocated with our SES as well.

CHAIR - With our police?

Mr ELLIS - Yes.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - So they are collocated with police?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and SES are on that same site as well.

CHAIR - SES has collocated with DPIPWE and Biosecurity.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, I'm thinking of DPIPWE. I'm with you.

CHAIR - Yes, to correct you, Minister.

Mr ELLIS - They were previously.

CHAIR - I've had this discussion on various other forums. There's a building in Currie, not far away, that's owned by a state government business, an old Hydro building that could be easily repurposed. I understand that was for sale at one stage and no longer apparently is. But you'd think that government departments and businesses could work together here to make more user-friendly space where at least the ambulance vollies had a toilet, not a portaloo, and the SES weren't so cramped.

Those volunteers have hours and hours of experience. They're highly trained volunteers, particularly in our ambulance sector because they're the only ones on the island, so they are much higher trained than some of the other ambulance volunteers around the state. Will you have discussions with perhaps your colleague, the minister for Infrastructure, or perhaps as the Treasurer stakeholder minister, and the minister for Energy, the stakeholder minister in Hydro, and have a little chat about a vacant building. Let's use it to support our volunteers.

Mr ELLIS - We look at wherever those opportunities lie. Sorell was a great example in terms of a partnership, not with a GBE but with local government. Sorell Council gave us that vast land that the hub was built on.

CHAIR - [Inaudible] looked at that in that situation.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. That was a great opportunity to leverage partnerships for a better outcome.

CHAIR - Here's a great opportunity. What are you going to do?

Mr ELLIS - I'm more than happy to follow up around that. One of the other things in this Budget is there's \$10 million available over two years for better facilities for our volunteer fire brigades and SES units.

CHAIR - There's a building.

Mr ELLIS - We envisage spreading that far and wide around our state, particularly for small projects. It may be a greater emergency response but also a critical part of that is protecting our people from hazardous exposures with PPC separation. One of the other key areas is more inclusive facilities to support our growing female cohort of volunteers. We want to make sure that when people walk into a fire brigade or an SES unit that they feel like they belong, that there's a place for them. Some of the less headline things in that, culture is really

PUBLIC

important but facilities are important too. Making sure that you have modern appropriate facilities to cater for everyone will be a critical part of where we're looking to make that spend.

CHAIR - I make it clear that our SES vollies on King Island are not whinging but I see the circumstances they have to work in and I think there's a much -

Mr ELLIS - Ambulance, you mean?

CHAIR - Ambulance and SES. SES are not as cramped and in less difficult circumstances that our ambulance vollies, but, it's still not ideal.

Mr ELLIS - And as you say, similar thing where they're manning a collocated arrangement.

CHAIR - I think they respond to incidents together.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I've been to the SES unit on King Island and the fire brigade at Currie as well and there's certainly work that we can do there. They also have an innovative arrangement with the King Island Fire Brigade as a concept in that it's not just, say, the Currie brigade and the Grassy brigade now. It's all one King Island Fire Brigade and they manage their resources so that they can best respond.

CHAIR - The fires have got a fair bit of room, they're not cramped. They're on their own, they're not sharing.

Mr ELLIS - In the Currie station. But we have different stations around the place as well, which are rougher, I suppose. It's important that we're respecting our volunteers when they're turning up to serve for us. That's a big part of what that investment is looking to drive and I appreciate you -

CHAIR - Suitable training facilities.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Even in that space, providing training for King Island for emergency services can be difficult. We'll fly trainers over to King Island and bring them also to mainland Tasmania to provide that. We have similar challenges in some of our remote areas. It's important that we're making sure that we're delivering that for our people.

I might pass over to Jeremy or or Mick, if you had anything further you want to provide in terms of, say, remote stations or remote training?

Mr SMITH - Certainly, we understand that better facilities encourages volunteers to join up. There's a classic example, the opening of the Southport Fire Station just recently. We had an additional three to five people sign up on the day because they could see we were investing in that community and the fit-for-purpose development on that site went from a single base station with no facilities.

CHAIR - I think you're agreeing, we're singing from the same song sheet.

Mr SMITH - Yes. I think so. If you've got fit-for-purpose facilities, the volunteers will come.

CHAIR - Well, let's give fit-for-purpose facilities, anyway.

Mr LOWE - I was also going to clarify and say the suitability assessment for that location of King Island is being done. The SES are currently collocated within an NRE facility. That work is being undertaken and is something we're looking at. If I can just highlight and probably a point of clarification earlier, we don't have any capability gaps across the state in terms of what we offer. But what we are looking at, in particular, is to future-proof a lot of our units because the demographic is getting older. What we need to do is rejuvenate a lot of the units across the state. That is the focus of a lot of the work that the VSSU [TBC] is doing with that target recruitment that they're doing across the state.

CHAIR - I did watch an all-girl crew at the Burnie Show cut up a vehicle.

Mr ELLIS - Amazing, isn't it?

CHAIR - Yes, and I had a go with the jaws of life myself. They are heavy. I'll need some more training to be any good at it. Any other questions?

Mr ELLIS - Can I just mention on the jaws of life. This is an interesting piece of intentional work around being more inclusive, even the design of our new trucks. So, jaws of life, extraordinarily heavy. Similar with particular fire equipment. Putting those at a lower height. As we know, females are typically shorter in stature and have smaller upper body mass, so providing the ability to get heavy gear out from a lower point, (a) it prevents injury but (b) it makes people more able to serve just by some intentional design work that we're doing.

CHAIR - Short men, too, have the same problem.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, it benefits everybody but we're noticing a particularly strong response from our female volunteers in terms of making some of those tasks that don't need to be as hard as they are more ergonomically accessible for everybody.

CHAIR - We've also got quite a few volunteers who are getting on in years too and that can be a challenge. I don't think Snow Neilson is still volunteering is he? Or is he? SES in Smithton. He's been there an awfully long time.

Mr ELLIS - It is amazing how people just keep giving and giving.

CHAIR - He was still doing really active things not that long ago.

Mr ELLIS - Interestingly enough, I was at the northern region medal presentation maybe two or three weeks ago and James Smith, from Stanley originally by extraction, joined the Stanley fire brigade at 15 and he is still serving 66 years later with the Prospect brigade. He's not jumping on the truck and running around the bush like he used to but he helps provide operational support and some mentoring in the brigade. He's the first person in Tasmania to receive long-service medal, a new award structure that we have announced for 60 years of service. We are just so blessed with the people we have.

CHAIR - We'll close that one off and move to 4.2 State of emergency rescue operations.

4.2 State security and rescue operations -

Mr DUIGAN - Minister, investment in our state security is important to all of us. This is an interesting output group with involvement in multi-jurisdictional exercises, national counter terrorism arrangements and provision of land, sea and air search and rescue operations. There is \$10 million being expended in these areas. Can you give some detail on where that gets spent?

Mr ELLIS - We are making significant investments in this space. Our Government is committed to keeping Tasmanians safe, which is why we are investing in our Special Operations Group or SOG. The Special Operations Group officers are highly trained and equipped to respond to a wide range of security situations and can be deployed during high-risk policing incidents in response to specific security and safety threats to support criminal investigations.

We have invested \$5 million into capital for the SOG. In 2022 we opened two new SOG facilities: a \$1 million northern SOG facility and a \$3.6 million southern SOG facility. I can't give you any more detail on their locations. The facilities are state of the art and provide the SOG with dedicated training and storage facilities in strategic locations to keep Tasmanians safe.

Our Government has also invested \$400 000 into the specialist equipment for our Special Operations Group officers which has allowed for the purchase of tactical weapons and equipment. We are recruiting to record levels in Tasmania Police with 334 additional police to join the force by July 2026. This includes establishing a full-time Special Operations Group for \$8.9 million provided by this Government. This funding will support 20 SOG officers so we have full-time Special Operations Group capability by July 2024. Tasmania Police is working with the Police Association of Tasmania to achieve this recruitment goal including for the establishment for a pilot recruitment program launched in March this year.

Our state operation centre is also critical to state security and our investment of \$6.5 million into this facility allows our emergency services to streamline the work that they do to keep us safe, including in responding to important events like the October floods. This centre allows coordinated preparation, response and recovery phases associated with major emergency events impacting the state, including bushfires, pandemics, floods and terrorism incidents.

CHAIR - Can I get the number to date or whatever date you have of the search and rescue operations that have occurred this year?

Mr ELLIS - The actual number of search and rescue operations to 31 March 2022-23 is 186.

CHAIR - Quite a drop then.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. The number of exercises managed is 13. The total helicopter hours are at 1117. To assist the committee, we don't have targets for those matters. We respond wherever and whenever is required. It can depend upon circumstances, weather and a whole range of other factors.

CHAIR - The total helicopter hours are a lot higher than actual last year. There has been quite a significant number less for the whole year to the end of March. What's the helicopter doing?

Mr ELLIS - Complexity of operations is an important part of that. I might pass to the commissioner and her team who will provide a further update on that capability.

Ms ADAMS - A couple of general comments. Helicopter hours include search and rescue missions. We also use the helicopter for what we call aerial law enforcement activities. We have had a really serious incident in this reporting period where we had two police officers shot at around New Norfolk. We used the helicopter in response to that particular serious operation.

CHAIR - So it doesn't just take in the search and rescue. It is the other policing activities.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, that's correct.

Capital Investment Program

CHAIR - We have talked about some of these already. I will ask for an update on Project Unify.

Mr DUIGAN - Just around CAPEX. There has been some sporadic discussion around this but could the minister update the committee on the work that has been completed to improve emergency services communications across all government agencies?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Duigan. Previous inquiries and reviews of bushfires have highlighted the need for reliable inter-operability in many facets, but in radio communications in particular to support effective responses to emergency situations. When our firefighters or police officers or SES are responding to emergency incidents they deserve to have high-performing communications equipment to support their safety and the safety of their community. Through a record investment of \$763 million by this Government and user organisations, we are establishing the Tasmanian Government Radio Network (TasGRN).

The new network will provide greater inter-operability, increased coverage, secure encrypted communications for our emergency service workers and will deliver a modern user interface. I have been visiting volunteer brigades and SES units and when I attended the volunteer conference I have been pleased to see these radios in action. They are fantastic.

CHAIR - They have been 100 years coming.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and they are an amazing bit of kit. We're lucky we have developed this capability because technology has advanced in so many ways. I was at my fire brigade training on Monday night and we took possession of our new TasGRN radios at that training. There were some very excited Sassafras Fire Brigade volunteers training on the new gear.

We are transitioning our eight response agencies to the network from July this year. We'll start with Hydro Tasmania, TasNetworks, Parks and Wildlife and Sustainable Timber in July and early August. Our Police, Fire and Emergency Services will then follow.

It is anticipated that all user organisation will have transitioned and the project will be fully operational by November this year. The TasGRN project has created up to 50 jobs during the three-year construction phase, with additional positions to be recruited to help run and oversee the network once it is fully operational later in the year. As an added bonus the TasGRN will deliver improved mobile phone coverage for Telstra users in Tasmania at no cost to the state, particularly in regional Tasmania, such as the beautiful electorate of Windermere.

CHAIR - Earlier I was asking about the estimated outcome. There was an amount that was going to roll forward related to this. What is the amount rolling forward for? Is it the final part of the roll out or what?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I am looking to Scott Wilson.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - In terms of the payment milestones, the first payment milestone is associated with the consoles going live, into each of our control centres. Initially, that was intended to occur this year. That was delayed by some of the technology issues associated with those consoles, and we ensure testing and appropriate controls over those. That delay was pushed out to July 2023. It has not impacted on the go live of any of the services.

CHAIR - It hasn't delayed any.? It has been so long, as long as I've been in this place.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of the actual rollout of the project -

CHAIR - I mean the planning.

Mr ELLIS - This project, broadly speaking is on track for on-time and on-budget, which is really exciting. A financial year rollover. It's going to be a massive uplift for our emergency services and all those response agencies.

CHAIR - Just on project (inaudible). Could you update us on where that's at?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. The Tasmanian government's committed to providing Tasmania Police with contemporary systems and technology to increase the safety and efficiency of our police officers while better protecting our communities. A single integrated system is needed in order that police can access information from a single source of truth. A one-stop shop for policing information which is reliable and accurate. The data only needs to be entered once, and is reused across the system, rather than having to re-key the data or multiple search applications.

The Tasmanian government has provided in total funding of \$59.2 million to Tasmania Police to deliver technology and infrastructure upgrades that support policing operations and to help keep Tasmanians safe. There are a range of different phases of this project. Shortly, I will pass to the Commissioner and her team to provide an update.

Phase 1 is complete. Our initial investment of \$13.1 million in 2017-18; successfully delivered the new system Atlas. Atlas provides police with improved access to criminal intelligence, new approach to the management of warrants, missing persons and searches, and an integrated search application known as Compass. Phase 2, we're moving into as well. In 2020-21, the Government allocated a further \$46.1 million to DPFEM over the forward

PUBLIC

Estimates to upgrade a number of disparate, disconnected and ageing ICT systems that support policing operations and external clients. Project Unify 2 is a major part of the \$46.1 million funding and represents \$34.5 million of the total allocation.

I will pass over to Assistant Commissioner Keating to provide some further details as part of phase 2.

Mr KEATING - Just in relation to Project Unify and the second phase. There are three specific major components of that project, unfortunately, Unify is being used as a whole of the funding model, and that funding model is broken into a number of different projects, as the minister has mentioned. The three major ones are: the continuation of the Atlas development, which is the deploying of the new functional Atlas capabilities and integration across a range of the operational areas, which includes property management, family violence, crime management, offence reporting, custody, and charging, and a number of other disparate systems that will effectively come into a one-stop shop for us.

The other part is Project Recharge, which relates to firearms. That was designed to deliver a replacement firearms management system and an online service portal for licence-holders and dealers. The other major component of this unified funding is in relation to Project Link, which relates to our online crime reporting function, providing some form of contemporary reporting mechanism for the public to come online to report minor crime. That particular one is quite significant for public interface, and also from a policing perspective, will actually decrease the amount of time that operational officers are attending small, value-based crime or minor offences.

Also, on that particular system we see the opportunity in the future for that to expand to incorporate other online reporting facets of policing. For example, road permit closures, charitable collection days, and all those administrative burdens and processes that we undertake currently.

CHAIR - Does that mean that things like your road closures during snow for most of the west coast while I am trying to get down there in the winter. Will that mean that will be more efficient and have updates more regularly? Or is that a separate -

Mr KEATING - No. That is a different system that comes under our (indistinct) reporting system through our radio dispatch area. That is a completely different system. Under the unified process, we have used funding in relation to that particular area in relation to ESCAD server replacements to make sure that they are contemporary and that they are also backed up. That is something that the money has been used to assist in continuing to keep the public informed in times of emergencies.

CHAIR - It is a very valuable website. A lot of people rely on it for that purpose.

Mr ELLIS - And west coast road conditions on Facebook as well. Just a shout out to those guys, they are fantastic. I put up the odd photo of a beautiful west coast myself every now and again.

CHAIR - Yes. With regard to the crackdown on anti-social driving, this is for the drones. I know that is funding is spread over three years, this year coming and the next few years. Is that funding of \$110 000, \$120 000 and \$130 000 is that just for the drones or is that for people

to be trained in the operations of them? Occasionally, drones do fall out of the sky for various reasons.

Mr ELLIS - We actually have a great drone team as well. They are highly trained, there is some amazing capability, these are not your garden variety drones that you are you seeing. They are quite amazing. I will pass over to the team but I might just make mention that it has great crossover capability.

Whether it is dangerous driving on our roads, we use them as well for missing person searches because they have infra-red cameras. The infra-red cameras are also helpful for our firefighting. For example, the Don River railway fire that we had just recently, a really tragic event but could have been so much worse. The capability of having drones in the sky and our new aerial firefighting equipment enabled effectively - I was speaking with some of the firefighters involved - almost like a video game in the process of fighting the fires because the aerial drone could see the hotspots around the internal shed rather than the broader piece. The aerial appliances were able to be located at a height over the fire and target their work to protect their surrounding structure and locate the various hotspots. It actually saved heritage carriages that were less than one metre from the wall of that burnt out shed. They have amazing capability, they have policing applications, search and rescue, fire and a whole range of other things. I will pass over to the team to describe the training and the workforce side of things too.

Ms ADAMS - Since we received the Government funding, we have over 30 drones in our fleet. We also have 24 police officers who are qualified to the appropriate national standards to operate the drones. We have utilised the drones for more than 1470 operations. As the minister said, specifically, we have used the drones for hooning, for drag nights and mini bikes up into the rural areas that cause local communities a whole heap of angst.

It is a safe way in which to be able to respond from a policing response. We have also been able to use the drones to great effect in terms of missing persons. There is again, a recent example which the minister highlighted. It is a fantastic capability that adds to the many specialist capabilities that we have. We will continue with the investment to build on the capability.

CHAIR - Where are the 30 drones located?

Ms ADAMS - They are across the state and we have operators across the state. Ideally, what we want when there is an incident and as we have been working to really good effect that our radio dispatch operator is able to call for a drone capability to assist in a particular incident. That is how they are being utilised.

CHAIR - Can you give us a breakdown by region, Commissioner, about where they are. How many in the north-west, how many in the north, how many in the south?

Mr ELLIS - They are highly mobile as well. While the Commissioner is grabbing that information as well, a great example of this work was 17 July 2022, a drone was utilised in a search for a non-verbal autistic male youth in the north of the state. The youth had been missing for over seven hours by this stage. It would have been quite a critical time. They were located in just six minutes of the drone being deployed through the thermal imaging technology in the

thick bush. The youth was displaying symptoms of hypothermia but, thankfully, due to this work, has made a full recovery, which is fantastic.

Ms ADAMS - I don't have the numbers of the drones per region, but we can get if that's what you need.

CHAIR - Yes, if you can get.

Ms ADAMS - It's definitely a statewide capability.

CHAIR - Can the drones issue instructions? Can you get a voiceover?

Mr ELLIS - We're always investing in new capability. Technology is amazing. We will keep abreast of any developments.

CHAIR - The images are obviously quite clear.

Ms ADAMS - The images are really clear. They're fantastic for evidence.

CHAIR - So, they can be used for evidence.

Anything more on capital investment? If not, we'll move to the State Fire Commission.

State Fire Commission

Mr ELLIS - Just before we begin, I welcome Allan Garcia, chair of the State Fire Commission.

Chair, are you happy if our police officers are okay to finish up?

CHAIR - I don't think we'll need them, but you know better than me whether they're likely to be called to respond.

Mr ELLIS - Not in the State Fire section.

CHAIR - Thank you.

Mr GAFFNEY - I had a follow-on question from yesterday, which Mr Ferrall said would need to be addressed by the State Fire Commission. There's effectively \$10 million in the budget each year for excess firefighting costs. They provided the information that in 2019-20 there was \$29.2 million; in 2020-21 there was \$8.7 million; in 2021-22 it was \$17.7 million; and \$8.8 million in 2022-23. The rationale is, if they need extra money they go to Treasury or wherever they have to go to. Minister, if it's under \$10 million, is that money returned? How does that work? Does that go back to Treasury?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to Mr Garcia to add to my answer but, broadly speaking, when we have large-scale bushfire events in Tasmania - and they can be quite extreme - this imposes significant costs on our fire service, above and beyond what would be experienced in a normal year. Some of these events, particularly our large campaign fires, can have

extraordinary costs because we have a range of specialist capability out in the bush for weeks and months - and we probably will see more of these with greater frequency and severity.

We have seen the Black Summer Bushfires on the mainland. Those events were a rolling catastrophe for months on end - and a range of Tasmanians went over to serve there as well. Mr Garcia, do you have anything further to add?

Mr GARCIA - I am happy to do that. It's surprising Mr Ferrall didn't answer that for you, because it does sit within Finance-General. It is one of those things where as we need the money, we call upon it - so if it was greater, we require greater, if it's less, we require less, so it's a notional amount set aside. We haven't had to call on it to any great extent, because we haven't had major fires. We hope it stays that way, but that's basically how it operates. We don't get the money; it sits in Treasury.

Mr GAFFNEY - Okay. The other side question, and you just raised it, about when we have firefighters who might go to the mainland or even overseas, Canada. How is that worked out? Is that an arrangement with the Fire Commission and our state Government or is that a federal response to international help?

Mr GARCIA - Okay. We have an agreement with various agencies throughout the world and there is a national resource sharing centre. There is a signed agreement which includes daily rates for specific roles and allows for cost recovery of those resources.

Mr GAFFNEY - Yes, thank you. That is fine. That is all.

Mr ELLIS -Worth noting, Mr Gaffney, that it is TFS and the State Fire Commission but also a range of other response agencies, Sustainable Timbers, Parks and the SES also provide important logistical response typically as part of those arrangements. We have just sent some first responders over to Canada as part of the emergency they are experiencing at the moment. Our people are serving in some really arduous conditions. 14 days on, 2 days off, 14 days back on again and often doing it in tents in the middle of the Canadian wilderness or bush. In this forum and I have done it in other places, but I want to pay tribute to them for their outstanding efforts. It is really above and beyond to fly to the other side of the world to help people that you have never met. That is what our people do here in Tasmania, each and every day in their communities and I don't think we should ever forget their service.

Mr GAFFNEY - It is good to see a reciprocal arrangement, when we need them here. Thank you.

CHAIR - We talked about some of this already in other (indistinct) can you indicate the number of road crash rescues the State Fire Commission have been involved in?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. While Mr Smith is looking for the specific data on that, worth noting that Fire is involved as a response agency, particularly in urban areas and then SES provide the response typically in rural and regional areas. That combined effort, that stronger together ethos we have is really critical when it comes to delivering road crash support. I have some numbers here that might help: 31 March 2022 to 31 March 2023, TFS and SES attended 111 road crash rescue incidents. Of these 111 they list TFS as the rescue agency in all 111, 80 as SES and the remaining 20 reports have both agencies as the lead agency. That is why those

numbers sort of add up together. In response to road crash rescue situations, Tasmania Police manage the scenes, supporting public safety and providing incident investigation.

Ambulance Tasmania respond to road crash rescue incidents to provide emergency medical care. All TFS career brigades are trained and equipped to undertake road crash rescue. TFS Triabunna volunteer brigade also undertake road crash rescue functions, particularly given their remote location. TFS participates in national professional development exercises, such as the Annual Australasian Road Crash Rescue Challenge to ensure exposure to new vehicle technology, equipment advances, best practice and technique and safe systems of work. I might pass over to the team if there's anything further to add.

Mr GARCIA - You pretty much covered it.

CHAIR - Can you also tell us how many fuel reduction burns have happened and maybe (inaudible) couldn't get to. I missed it due to the timing of it. And where? I am particularly interested in the west coast but I am interested in (inaudible)

Mr ELLIS - The State Fire Commission or the TFS is one agency when it comes to fuel reduction, but it also happens across a range of other agencies. We will do our best in terms of the data on this one because Sustainable Timbers Tasmania is a really key part of fuel reduction, Parks and also private landowners. In Tasmania we have a nation-leading, tenure-blind fuel reduction program. It's based on strategic risk. We have had a \$155 million investment into that program in our time in Government. The aim of the fuel reduction program is to strategically reduce the bushfire threat in areas of greatest risk to provide the most protection for Tasmanian communities. We invest strongly in fuel reduction, because it works.

We saw this with the bushfire that threatened Dynnyrne and Mount Nelson in 2022, and then in Collinsvale earlier this year. Burns around Zeehan have protected that town from what could otherwise have been a catastrophe.

CHAIR - It nearly was, in Tullah and Roseberry.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, very difficult circumstances there. Sisters Beach, in your electorate, Chair, is another one where significant fuel reduction was important. So far in 2023, the latest figures I have are: 99 fuel reduction treatments encompassing 8 269 hectares have been completed. In 2022, 257 fuel reduction treatments were completed across nearly 32 500 hectares and strategic locations to protect Tasmanian communities.

I will pass over to Mr Smith to add to this, about some of the difficulties that we have; but over the last three years, while we have been fortunate to have mild fire conditions in Tasmania - largely thanks to wet conditions from La Nina - the flip side of that is that has limited the available opportunities to undertake fuel reduction activities. That has contributed to an underspend of allocated funds over the last three years. Now that La Nina has ended, fuel reduction partners will be taking every opportunity to undertake fuel reduction activities. That will be critical for risk reduction as we move into the anticipate El Nino cycle, which means hotter, drier and higher fire danger risk conditions.

Mr SMITH - The Fuel Reduction Unit over the last several years has done a number of burns in and around those communities on the west coast - Roseberry, Zeehan, Savage River,

PUBLIC

Arthur River. Through their assessment they have reduced the risk for fire in those communities by 40 per cent.

CHAIR - What about Strahan? Nothing around Strahan?

Mr SMITH - No.

Mr GARCIA - There has been stuff around Strahan. We met with the Strahan Brigade recently and they were - probably uniquely - working with Parks. They've got some tenure overlap where Parks were allowing them to do small burns around the community. They have identified a number of smallholdings where they are working through making reductions, with the permission of Parks, with the permission of landowners.

They have a program where they are working to reduce significant threat. They are also working with Parks, north of Strahan in terms of that significant bushfire threat that could come through; because it has come through before. That is dependent upon conditions in terms of how quickly they can get to those and how they can control it.

CHAIR - Around Queenstown? This has been raised by constituents in this area. They feel like not enough is being done to protect the towns.

Mr CARCIA - Queenstown; I am not so sure, no.

CHAIR - There are more trees growing back on Mount Owen.

Mr ELLIS - A lot of this information is publicly available in terms of the burns that are happening around the state, and across tenures and services as well. The important thing to remember is that particular communities may have different cadastral land managers in their immediate vicinities. Certain towns may be adjacent to a lot of Sustainable Timber Tasmania land; certain towns may be adjacent to Parks land; others may be private tenures, as well.

We are always remembering as a state, when we are thinking about our strategic fuel reduction policies, fire is tenure-blind. It does not matter what local government it is, it doesn't matter what cadastral tenure it is - we need to be making sure that we have that strong response. Fire is the leading agency in that space, working closely with a range of partners.

CHAIR - What are we doing to protect the TWWHA? It is very dry.

Mr ELLIS - I can speak to this in a limited capacity because the TWWHA is managed by Parks and the Minister for Parks will be appearing in some of these Estimates and they are one of the three key fire agencies. You are certainly right that identifying the TWWHA as a big risk is important because when we talk about the La Nina weather pattern, people think cooler, drier conditions. Well, that is on one side of Tasmania, the eastern side, and so the fire weather actually flips in La Nina to what we normally see, so that is why you are seeing at the moment that the west coast and the TWWHA, particularly in its western extents, have been much drier.

There have been fuel reduction programs planned on the west coast this year during spring that could not go ahead because it was too dry. That is part of when we are talking about more frequent, more severe natural disasters, that is what we are talking about, things that -

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Once it gets in there, it is really hard to control.

Mr ELLIS - Very hard to control and probably one of the biggest fires in terms of land tenure this year was on Parks land in the TWWHA, particularly around the lakes there, so it is important that we are responding to that. In Tasmania Fire Service in particular, we have remote area teams and that new capability is helping to provide some of that strong support into some of those tenures. We have the benefit of a broad range of volunteers that have a reasonably high operational tempo; they go to a lot of fire jobs. The remote area teams are a way of giving some of those volunteers an additional capacity to help out with Parks and other remote area fire response agencies so that we are leveraging our people to provide the best assistance that we can because fire does not respect tenure. I might pass over to Jeremy and anything further on remote area teams and that capability.

Mr SMITH - Currently, we have 70 volunteers that are trained in remote area firefighting. They support the Parks crews that have that capability, including winches. We have been actively involved in remote area firefighting for at least 20 years and have gained a lot of skills, knowledge and experience in those areas.

Mr ELLIS - And Chair, just while we have the chance, drones by region: western - that is north-west coast, King Island, 13; northern, 6; southern, 11; and there are 8 in specialist areas of operation, for example crash investigation services, as well.

CHAIR - Any questions? No DDs, run out? All right. Thanks, minister, we will call it a day and thanks to your new team.

The Committee adjourned at 6.13 p.m.