

Thursday 6 June 2013 - Estimates Committee A (D. O'Byrne) - Part 2

CHAIR - We are ready to go members. Minister, thank you. We will pick up right where we were before the lunch break and still on outputs 1.1 and 1.2.

Mrs HISCUTT - I have a quick question, minister. You were talking about the berries -

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, Burlington Berries from Cressy.

Mrs HISCUTT - They employ 37 people, you said.

Mr O'BYRNE - That is the information they have given us.

Mrs HISCUTT - Are these jobs for local people or are they labour hire, what do you call them - 457 visas?

Mr O'BYRNE - They are predominantly local. One chap is an English guy who worked on one of Driscoll's properties in Kenya, I think. He was a farm manager there and he brought his expertise along. Predominantly, though, they're locals.

Mr HALL - Not at harvest time, though. At harvest time they are virtually all work visa people.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, and the same with Costa's; they move people down from their northern New South Wales and southern Queensland area and I think there are a number of internationals - backpackers. That is the challenge for us in the picking season in the north because you have this massive explosion of work for a short period of time and people are not going to move to Tasmania for a three-month job. What we are doing is working with those industries where we can try to extend the work so it is not just a three-month job or a four-month job, we can try to make it a bit longer and it is hard because you are competing with a whole range of different needs for people.

Mr HALL - Did you say there were 37 permits at Burlington?

Mr O'BYRNE - Thirty-seven permits with a range of full-time and part-timers.

Mr VALENTINE - My question is about innovation, obviously a pretty important thing for this state, especially given that we have so much product out there in paddocks that is almost worthless. I came across this thing which I have handed on to a couple of people regarding nanocrystalline technology, which is all about development of flexible displays for computing and all sorts of things like that. I am just wondering whether, firstly, there is anything being done to look at innovative uses of that sort of product that is currently not quite worthless but it could be. Is there any research and development at all that is going on with other parties?

Mr O'BYRNE - I know through the state's innovation strategy and the economic development plan, I think the prime example of where we are trying to drive innovation is either by the support of the government innovation investment fund but also Sense-T in technology, so working with CSIRO, the University of Tasmania and the various private sector partners they have attracted to that. University representatives are very excited about the possibility of a new manufacturing industry being established in Tasmania based around microsensors. I have given this example in a whole range of forums before where I was sitting down and talking to Professor [To be confirmed.] 2:05:34 from the University of Tasmania.

Mr VALENTINE - He is amazing. I have seen a couple of presentations from him.

Mr O'BYRNE - It is tremendous. When we put an A4 black and white photocopy of a mine in Brazil, he opened up an application on his iPad, scanned it over the map and then all of a sudden there was a real-time map of that mine showing every vehicle, light, medium and heavy, and when it was due for its colour coating, when it was due for a service, what kind of load it had on - no load, some load, heavy load - and all while I was sitting in his office in Sandy Bay. This is the kind of data and technology that we can do in Tasmania. So I think the future lies in IP and in being able to encourage investors to come to Tasmania. We can say, 'Tasmania is a place where we are really developing this space'. There is a potential if we are able to attract investment for and potentially the manufacturing of these sensors.

Mr VALENTINE - I am very much aware of the NBN rollout, and so probably is everybody else in this state by now, but there is not much use in having a major super-highway if you have not got anything to run on it. I am wondering whether there is any money that is being spent in that space to develop product that might be of use across the world.

Mr O'BYRNE - I think it is the role of government to facilitate private sector activity. Through the work with the University of Tasmania and off the back of Sense-T there is a lot of interest in Tasmania becoming a hub for hardware or software development. There are a number of Tasmanian companies that are interested. Based on my briefings from the University of Tasmania, there is a strong view that we can attract significant players in this field to Tasmania.

Mr VALENTINE - I could not see a budget line item associated with innovation as such in here. Is there a budget associated with that for you?

Mr O'BYRNE - The innovation science and technology element of the portfolio is not a separate add-on to the economic development department budget. We have mainstreamed it so it is inherent in everything that we do with the University of Tasmania, the Antarctic community, and the science and research community. Issues of innovation are inherent in everything that we do.

MR KELLEHER - Within the department's arrangement, 'digital futures' forms part of our strategy area. There is a digital futures advisor council that is in place with chair, Paddy Nixon.

Mr VALENTINE - What are they doing at the moment? Can you give us a bit of an understanding as to what they are tackling?

Mr O'BYRNE - Their first iteration was around the NBN and understanding the opportunity in the NBN rollout. We focus their activity on Sense-T and they have been working with the University of Tasmania on realising this opportunity; we are able to leverage a full amount of funds into that. Their work now is on the new strategies that the NBN rollout has accelerated; the Sense-T opportunity is also gaining a lot of interest. Also in the science and research sector more broadly, they are now working on a strategy to recommend to the government how we can leverage off that. So, the Chair is Paddy Nixon who is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of Research at UTAS. On the council we have Garry Alexander from Autec and a whole range of other activities in that space. There is also Michelle Strickland, and Jonathan Spring, managing director of CEOS, and we also have Deb Verhoeven, the chair of the Media and Communications at the Deakin University, Ian Opperman, the director of Digital Productivity and Services Flagship at CSIRO; Hugh Durrant-Whyte, the CEO of National ICT Australia, and Joel Harris, the president of Tas ICT.

Mr KELLEHER - Another example is that we are putting together a submission for one of the 12 or something innovation hubs and we are looking for the digital services innovation hub. We do not know what that outcome will be but we believe that Tasmania is well positioned for that particularly because of the early establishment of the NBN operation.

Mr O'BYRNE - We are also in early discussions with the University of Tasmania about an innovation precinct hub that will be in Tasmania.

CHAIR - Minister, I want to go to major projects. We are, I suspect, languishing a little in the announcement of major projects and new investment in the year ahead. I cast my mind back to a few years ago when Michael Aird as treasurer indicated that we are on the verge of delivering a range of major projects. Have they evaporated?

Mr O'BYRNE - No, they haven't. The global financial crisis and the Australian dollar and a whole range of external factors have had an impact on some of the investment decisions that companies and individuals make. In terms of major investment projects at the time, obviously we have Musselroe, which was a massive \$394 million investment and that is completed. The NBN rollout is a significant investment in Tasmania. We have the upgrade in infrastructure of TasRail and we think that is a major undertaking of government. In relation to the restructure of economic development, we are creating Invest Tasmania. We have the Invest Tasmania website and the Invest Tasmania web map. This new map was launched and replaces the REDI-Map where at any point in time you can access the website and you can click on icons and navigate your way around the state and look at the projects or proposals that are on the deck. There are some significant ones occurring.

We have been supporting the Lion Cheese Factory expansion at Burnie, which is a \$142 million project. The Midlands water scheme is a transformational project for the Midlands and that is \$104 million. We have been working with the Southern Cross Care about their development on the eastern shore. We are soon to complete the IMAS building, which is a \$45 million project, and there is a whole range of projects across the state in mining, dairy and salmon that we are working with. Getting up the Macquarie Harbour expansion is a big one. We have the Macquarie Point rail yards remediation and development that is underway. We have been able to obtain \$45 million to \$50 million from the federal government to pursue that. There is the \$2 billion TasWind project on King Island that is being proposed. There are building proposals around the state. Norske Skog is a big project for us, as is the Vodafone expansion.

Our strategy has been not to accept that one project would save the state so we have been working on a whole range of projects to try to get them up and maximise the opportunity for Tasmania. But, again, with the investment climate in Tasmania, like other regional parts of Australia but also other continents in the world, the value proposition really has to stack up for people. I think the days of the speculation on projects that we saw up until the GFC we are not seeing now. There is a lot of hesitancy in certain investment areas to invest.

[2.15 p.m.]

CHAIR - I will just go to another area with regard to business growth or industry development. Is it your department, minister, that published a report today on the impacts of red tape on business?

Mr O'BYRNE - We conducted a review which I launched in Launceston about three or four weeks ago. It was debated and discussed in Estimates yesterday.

CHAIR - What was the upshot of that report?

Mr O'BYRNE - Here it is; I just happen to have the Red Tape Action Plan handy. We essentially conducted probably the most comprehensive survey of businesses in Tasmania that has been undertaken in terms of understanding the compliance burden. When people say there is red tape we want to know what that means. Is that state government, local government, industry associations, or federal government? We want to understand exactly where the burden lies, which tier of government asked for it and the thought behind it. Tasmania fared extremely well under those statistics. Within Tasmania, hours spent on compliance per week is less than one hour and Tasmania fared the best in all of the states with 38.9 per cent as opposed to the national average of 16.1 per cent when you go through the different hours of compliance. We want to understand the compliance burden on business and how as a government we need to respond to assist companies, individuals and industries in. Some compliance is necessary, such as in food safety processes, and industries

that in one breath say they are worried and concerned about red tape will then lobby you for greater protection on biosecurity, for example.

It is important we understand that certain regulations are in place to either protect people or protect companies and industries. Again we are trying to fully understand the level of compliance we have control of as a state and how we are going to help. To give you an example there was one company that does four different levels of reporting for effectively the same information. They give their industry association information, they give their local government authority the information, they give their state government the information and then they give the Australian Government the information. In my view that is plainly ridiculous so we are trying to understand in which industries that occurs and if we as a country and industries work together. So if you fill out this bit of information for your industry association using a smart form approach so it easily picked up and then populated across other tiers of government you only need to really give that information once and that is circulated amongst the key authorities. It is a stark example but one where we are trying to help to reduce the compliance burden.

CHAIR - Even though you have indicated there was some comparison with other jurisdictions in the commonwealth that is fine in terms of comparison but if there is an unnecessary burden on business what is the government going to do about removing that? My understanding is that there is a significant impost through red tape imposed upon agriculture, fishing and forestry in the millions and when agriculture as an industry operates on a paper-thin 4 per cent or 5 per cent margin they are unreasonable and unnecessary imposts. I go back to the question earlier from Mr Hall about Simplot and the like. If all those things conspire to make any industry unviable in this state we have a major problem, so I guess the question is what is the government's plans in terms of responding to that survey?

Mr O'BYRNE - We have identified a number of industries where we want to sit down and work with them and unpack exactly every piece of compliance and why they have to do it, who levies it, and then if there is any unnecessary compliance or any efficiencies we can implement we will do that. I suppose we have to deal with the reality and exactly what kind of compliance there is. There is a lot of compliance which protects lives and industries. I gave the example that there are industries lobbying for more compliance. It's like a pendulum. If there is a workplace death or poor food handling procedures and people get seriously ill, that has a massive impact on the sustainability of that company, the brand of Tasmania or the industry within which that company works. Not all red tape or compliance is bad; it's about protecting the industry, sometimes from poor practices or protecting workers. It's about how we get the balance.

We are now focusing on different industries and saying you tell us what your level of compliance is and then we can target the ones that we think are either outdated, unnecessary or that box has been ticked by another regulator. With our Business Tasmania website and working across departments within the state government we are trying to get that smart form concept up where information filled out once is retained and can be shared across tiers of government.

If we saw some legislation in the lower House saying there will be no new regulation allowed, no new piece of red tape unless one comes off, I mean that's just plainly ridiculous. You need to understand why the protection of a compliance regulation is necessary. If it is unnecessary, as you say, then let's get rid of it. If someone has already ticked that box then that's fine, we can allow that other government entity or industry association to do it.

We just need to get the balance right.

CHAIR - I suspect that it is not unfair to say that government after government has expressed an aspiration to get rid of red tape. Thank you very much. Are they accessible through your department?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, we have some extra copies here.

CHAIR - I'm sure people will be interested in having a look.

Mr HALL - You mentioned some industries are lobbying for more compliance. Which industries are those?

Mr O'BYRNE - We have had extensive discussions with the food and agriculture, particularly the salmon industry, about some biosecurity laws and making sure that Tasmania is protected from potentially diseased imports. That's the broad-brush approach. There are certain industries that come and want to make sure that their industry is protected.

Mr HALL - On red tape other states, over the last few years, have identified the savings that they have made. They have benchmarks. South Australia's mission to cut red tape is that they are \$18 million ahead of target, for example. The to and froms are 155 million pounds a year so there's some pretty significant figures out there. You would hope to achieve something relative to -

Mr O'BYRNE - It's also your starting point, what point did they start from. You can always improve but the surveys show that Tasmanian businesses and base regulation is far better than virtually every jurisdiction. I'm not saying that we rest on our laurels. That's why we are working hard at drilling down into information by industry. When you say that they've saved you're assuming that we all started from the same point. We haven't. Different states have different regimes and what we're focusing on is working with industry associations to drill down on what are the important things that need to remain to protect industry and people within it and what are the things that we need to improve, which are unnecessary. It's not an easy task.

CHAIR - Leonie, I think you indicated that you had a question.

Mrs HISCUTT - Sorry, no but while we're at it -

Laughter.

Mrs HISCUTT - Is the figure of \$300 million a correct figure when they talk about the cost to private business within Tasmania? Does it really cost us \$300 million in time and energy for red tape compliance?

Mr O'BYRNE - I haven't heard that figure.

CHAIR - I think the TFGA might have suggested that comes out in the report somewhere.

Mrs HISCUTT - I had heard that figure. It is an awful lot of money, isn't it?

Mr O'BYRNE - If it is true. I know with the poppy industry, the regulation and red tape absolutely protects that industry and maintains it value. There is a range of other examples of where certain compliance and regulatory imposts add value.

Mr HALL - And that is imposed upon us from -

Mr O'BYRNE - The chair made the point about necessary and unnecessary and I think it is about us unpacking that. We could go on this crusade and say, 'Right, all compliance goes' and then we completely destroy industries and people's lives, so you have to be careful.

1.4 Regional economic development -

Mr HALL - Minister, would you be able to table the innovation and investment funds - the two

rounds we have had? Could you let us have the quantum, and who received them?

Mr O'BYRNE - The list of successful companies, absolutely. We have put it on the website but we will give you that list. The first two rounds are done and we have now announced a third round of \$2.5 million.

Mr HALL - When is that open from?

Mr O'BYRNE - Soon. In round 2, we had 89 companies putting their hand up to invest but we could only choose 25 with the funds we had, so we know there are a lot of people champing at the bit. It is a wonderful sign that 89 companies in Tasmania want to grow and invest in their businesses. A lot of the investment we have leveraged is far in excess of what we thought we would initially. It was a dollar-for-dollar, but, as I have reported before this morning, for every \$1 the state spends, private sector investment is \$5, within that fund, driving that innovation.

Mr MULDER - I look at the budget line items for that, and in 2012-13 it is almost \$12 million, dropping to \$8.8 million in 2013-14, and then it drops further to \$6.3 million, then \$6.4 million in the out year. So, it is about half, in the future, of what it is today. With a 26 per cent reduction, I wonder whether you are picking the federal pocket by reducing your regional commitments in the wake of the Tasmanian forests agreement?

Mr O'BYRNE - In terms of the profile, we have allocated money under the government innovation and investment fund. We have the \$100 million from the forest agreement in the money we are able to allocate at this stage. In terms of the line items, I will get Mark Kelleher to respond.

Mr KELLEHER - The main movement is because the additional TGIIF amount is for this year. If you take that \$2.5 million off the 2013-14 number, it comes back to a similar order. This has not been an ongoing amount - it has been placed in there at the moment, given the circumstances. Now there is the \$100 million in TFA funds, that money will be available in this area, with an average per annum contribution of \$25 million. The question is: are the resources of the department sufficient to operate in the regions and support those grant funds?

Mr MULDER - So, you are saying the \$100 million in federal money is a justification for keeping this appropriation at about half of what it has been this year?

Mr KELLEHER - Last year's included about double the size of the Tasmanian government's by \$5.5 million, so that is right. Last year's figure is about \$2.5 million higher than this year. This year has \$2.5 million in it. If you take that off you are getting to a similar sort of order as the underlying operational base. Those grant funding programs are not embedded in as a recurrent permanent item, they are brought in as they are required for dealing with circumstances, as has been the case and as we move into the subsequent years those sort of one-off grant programs are considered as part of the budget process. In addition to that, because of the TFA funding, it changes the context a bit, so that is a consideration when you have that \$100 million available over the next four years.

Mr MULDER - If we accept the fact that in 2011-12 the underlying rate, if that is what it was then, before that rapid injection was \$8 million, we went up about \$4 million to \$11 million, but in the forward estimates we are back at about \$6.4 million. You are looking at about \$1.5 million less than the underlying rate over time. Is that attributable to the fact that there is now federal money playing in this space?

Mr KELLEHER - No, that is basically part of the overall department's budget task. Like every department, we have had to absorb operational cost savings in our underlying base right across the board.

Mr O'BYRNE - In the Departments of Health, Education and Public Safety and Emergency Management there is more of a clear recurrent need. What we have done and shown in regional development is that there are times when we need to put some money in to fill the gap that the private sector has left. We have shown that over the last couple of years. To say that the forward estimates will change, would be a fair thing, depending on the nature of the economy at the time, the income and the situation with the state government's debt.

Mr MULDER - The state contribution need is lessened because the TFA is playing in this space?

Mr O'BYRNE - I think partly, yes.

Mr MULDER - Because the alternative means that it was not needed in the first place, the \$100 million of federal money.

Mr O'BYRNE - They are not getting it back. I know the point you are trying to make, but in terms of the issues that are confronting the Tasmanian economy, the assistance to diversify, particularly in regions, is acute at the moment. There are other communities in Australia that are feeling the same pain. We were able, through our negotiations with the Australian Government, to see the allocation of some money to assist us in that transition.

Mr VALENTINE - With the forestry situation and the money that has been provided to assist through the Sorolli project, how do these two line items overlap in terms of the work that you are doing in the department? Do you have good interaction between the people who are working on those two areas or are they working in isolation of each other?

Mr O'BYRNE - I am advised they are the same people. Within the economic development space we have completely restructured the department to support the outputs and the economic development plan. The money that we have obtained through the TFA will continue, has already done, to support the diversification of the economy as outlined in the current development plan. We have all of our people focused on those outputs.

Mr VALENTINE - It seems to me that the line item itself is quite small when you consider it in relation to the regional economic development. I am on page 215 and it looks like it is almost static. It is not indexed as most items are. Given the fact that you have more money, I would have thought it would show up in there somewhere. This is on 1.3 particularly, the line item there compared to the 1.4 line item. It is pretty important work, isn't it?

Mr O'BYRNE - It is and sometimes, I suppose, if the only measure is the money next to it it is probably -

Mr VALENTINE - I understand that but effectiveness is important.

Mr KELLEHER - This is quite a new piece to come in, while the department's traditional work has been very much the traditional hard business, things like that, so what is being introduced as part of the Economic Development Plan is that one now needs to take a more contemporary view of what makes a place work. You cannot attract industry unless you have a broader perspective as well as the brand issues around environmental sustainability. What the plan has done for the first time is introduce that sort of triple bottom line concept. We have introduced it, admittedly, in an early time in a difficult budget context; the numbers are not that big but we are not trying to take the place of those primary responsibilities the federal government or state -

Mr VALENTINE - I understand what you are saying.

Mr KELLEHER - It is really around what we can do to provide the right links as we undertake

economic development, to make sure that social and environmental sustainability considerations are taken into account in those things. It is adding another flavour to something that has not been done and previously there wouldn't be anything on that at all within the budget.

Mr VALENTINE - I am interested in the coherence and the synchronicity of that, how that is working hand in hand with the social inclusion policy that has been developed. I am presuming that is driving a lot of that line item.

Mr KELLEHER - There are not big dollars in it, but for example, as we are looking at different regions and different communities as well as the traditional 'What can we grow here?' and so on, it is also about feeding into that building community leadership the role of social enterprises within that community and to take account of that. It is early days but it is early days from what was previously not done at all.

Mr VALENTINE - You have to start somewhere. I will be interested to see how it looks next year.

CHAIR - We are done on regional economic development, minister, and that clears us off for economic development. We then move to your portfolio as the Minister for Innovation, Science, and Technology, and whilst there is no output group specifically in these budget papers that I can recall -

Mr O'BYRNE - The Innovation, Science and Technology portfolio was always embedded within the Department of Economic Development, and essentially the papers now reflect that reality. By way of introduction, the highlights of the work of that group has been around and responding strategically to the needs of the science research sector. We have launched our Reaching our Potential - Developing Tasmania's Science Research Capability, which is an action plan for our science research sector that attracts around half a billion dollars every year to our economy and high-value jobs. We have also been working around our Antarctic Centennial Year and assisting the federal government in their signing of the memorandum of understanding between the Australian and Antarctic programs. It is the Antarctic gateway space that has taken up a lot of the work of the Innovation, Science and Technology portfolio but also the Digital Futures Advisory Council that we have touched on already this afternoon. Really, the work of the Innovation, Science and Technology portfolio is around science and research. We focus a lot of activity on the Antarctic gateway and making sure that we maintain Hobart as the Australian Antarctic gateway but also collaborate within the science and research community to build that sector within Hobart.

Mrs HISCUTT - Seeing that we are talking about technology, is this a good time to ask you for an update on the NBN and what is happening with those who are stood down? Do you know anything that you can tell us?

Mr O'BYRNE - It is not my ministerial portfolio; it is a matter for the federal government. My understanding is that workers directly employed by the company have not been stood down. I believe some contractors are still engaged. It is not in my portfolio area, although as Economic Development minister, I take an interest and have a concern. I know that the Premier's office and others have been in contact with Visionstream and the federal government to ensure that some of those questions and issues are resolved. I have no further update.

Mr MULDER - A couple of areas in science and technology which cross some of the things we have discussed today and some of the stuff probably relates more but because it is science and innovation. I will raise them here.

The first is the applications that were tried at the Kingston Police Station in relation to police reporting crime, and so on, from the field. I know it is probably early days, but how is that trial going?

Mr O'BYRNE - I am in the chair's hands here, but I think that is more appropriate to be dealt with in the Police and Emergency Management portfolio.

Mr MULDER - I was thinking about science, innovation and technology.

Mr O'BYRNE - There is a link there, there is no doubt about it, but in terms of the responsible agency, Economic Development is not playing a role and it is a part of the Police and Emergency Management.

Mr MULDER - Okay. It is not something in this unit?

Mr O'BYRNE - Not within this unit. We had a question on it yesterday in the police section of the estimates, so we can talk about it when the Commissioner arrives.

Mr MULDER - The other question follows on from the e-TAG question I mentioned this morning. There was also the potential, and this was raised with the Land Information Services, which indicated that they would have a capacity. I am wondering whether you would like to think about the Science, Technology and Innovation Unit getting data from your department relating to applicable speed zones, providing that to Land Information Services in order to provide that data to GPS manufacturers for inclusion in cars. That would have huge road safety benefits, although it might have a fairly severe impact on the inadvertent speeding revenue-raising opportunities of the Treasury.

Mr O'BYRNE - It is about road safety, Mr Mulder, it is not about revenue raising.

Mr MULDER - Of course it's not. That is why you dedicate 90 per cent of enforcement activities in the minor speed zones.

Mr O'BYRNE - I think that has changed.

Mr MULDER - The point is: will the science unit look at the potential benefits of incorporating this data into the GPS devices that all our vehicles have?

Mr O'BYRNE - As I said in the previous output groups, infrastructure is absolutely something that we think has application. There are a number of steps prior to that before we get to that point, and again I keep going back to Sense-T opportunity. At the moment, in the early stages, they are looking at the food industry - agriculture and aquaculture together - and how sensor technology not only lifts efficiency in productivity but quality as well. I think the next level of application is the broader societal issues of concern. Tasmania is big enough to prove it can work but small enough so companies do not lose a lot of dough if it doesn't, so I think we present a unique opportunity. It is not just about the economy but it is about how communities live and move between each other. I think you are right, but at this moment we are not at that point.

Mr MULDER - I would like to put it to you that you are missing the context. It was about eight or nine months ago that either Mercedes or BMW withdrew their Australian trial of this type of technology inside their onboard GPS systems because agencies such as DIER simply said, 'They couldn't get the data in an easy format' and one condition was, 'How up-to-date is it, because it keeps chopping and changing?'. I am wondering whether those sorts of obstacles could be withdrawn without too much work in terms of your various departments, but particularly I think it is a good one to throw at science, innovation and technology. If Tasmania became a trial site for that, it might even develop some IP out of them.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, I am in agreement, there is no doubt about that.

CHAIR - Minister we have finished with Science, Innovation and Technology in your portfolio

area.

The committee suspended from 1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.

DIVISION 8

(Department of Police and Emergency Management)

Mr O'BYRNE - The Department of Police and Emergency Management has contended with significant pressure in the last 12 months. In reducing employee numbers through a redundancy program to obtain the fiscal targets the department is faced with the challenge of restructuring while still meeting the needs of the community. Notably, Tasmania Police has retained the confidence of the community, has maintained low levels of crime and in some crime categories, notably public place assaults, the rate of crime has decreased. I commend the Commissioner of Police Darren Hine for his vision and leadership during these challenging times and I also commend the leadership team across the police districts, within the State Emergency Service, frontline police officers and State Service personnel.

There has been a strong emphasis on ensuring all members of the department, both police officers and State Service personnel, are supported and business is considered in light of diminished resources. The commissioner has sought to ensure that frontline policing services are supported and appropriately resourced with a plan for all Tasmanian police officers to be prepared to contribute to frontline service delivery as required. To support this focus and in line with further reduced police numbers, this year the Tasmanian government announced a new recruit course. The course will contribute towards maintaining police numbers at an appropriate level.

More than ever before, technology is being embraced, and increasing use of contemporary data platforms is enabling police officers to remotely access and enter data, ensuring that police time is more effectively and efficiently utilised. Importantly, given the extreme weather conditions in January and February of this year resulting in the devastation bushfires, I would also like to acknowledge the significant role that Tasmania Police officers, SES staff and DPEM State Service employees played in assisting the Tasmania Fire Service in the emergency response to the fires and in continuing to assist in the recovery effort.

The Department of Police and Emergency Management continues to conduct its business appropriately and we welcome this opportunity to demonstrate how the department has met appropriation in a highly transparent and accountable way.

Output group 1

Public safety

1.1 Support to the community -

CHAIR - Again we will just work progressively through the output lines. Output 1.1 is public safety and that may embrace a range of the others with investigation of crime in particular, so we will go to Mr Mulder first.

Mr MULDER - Mine is actually of an overview question and it is now the third time I have asked about this. Section 9 of the Police Service Act makes the commissioner in charge of the police force subject to the direction of the minister. We had a meeting where you and I discussed this and you advised - which was later recorded on *Hansard* - that the Solicitor-General said it was not necessary but you gave an assurance that you would consider it, given the fact that several interstate jurisdictions have the requirement that limits that direction of the minister to a policy direction. At last year's estimates, a year later, when asked what progress there was on this consideration you

advised that the discussion paper was with cabinet and that the decisions would be advised and released publicly soon. Twelve months later, have we got it out of cabinet yet?

Mr O'BYRNE - There has been consideration at that level and whilst we haven't ruled out the changes we believe there is no compelling reason for a change at this time.

Mr MULDER - So that has not been advised publicly?

Mr O'BYRNE - No. When we have been asked a question we have responded and that is the formal position of the state government at the moment.

Mr MULDER - Can I ask why it is not considered necessary?

Mr O'BYRNE - We believe there is no compelling reason to move at this time, but we won't rule it out. So we are treading water, I suppose, from where we were last year.

Mr MULDER - We will wait for the half-time siren to end and move on and hopefully it won't be in the circumstances which led to this issue. Moving on to support for the community, there was recently a little publicity about a rumor going around the community of Sorell that there was some suggestion of station closures. I read between the lines that was not planned; it was a temporary measure for half time. I would like some confirmation that is the case, that the Sorell station in particular will remain open even if it is part-time and that there are no suggestions that other stations might reduce their state servant support.

Mr O'BYRNE - There are no plans to close any further stations. We have closed the Lilydale, Risdon Vale, St Leonards and the Avoca station. Those decisions were made in previous budget cycles. There is not intention at this stage; I understand your questions around state servant support.

Mr MULDER - The administrative support and opening the office rather than closing the operations of the station.

Mr O'BYRNE - I might get the Commissioner to respond but given the extra resources that we have put into the budget this year we intend to maintain our sworn officer numbers at 1 120 and we believe through a combination of that decision, and the current level of public servants that we have, that the services across the state will be maintained. There was an issue around annual leave or sick leave coverage at Sorell at that period but I might ask the Commissioner to answer that.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - I was aware of that rumour. With our state service positions, in light of the budget reductions, we are putting in vacancy management control which means that any state service position that becomes vacant, the funding for that goes through a process, through HR, to re-allocate that funding to the position. That is all it was. It was a fixed term position coming to a halt because of that employee's circumstances and it was a process to have that funding re-allocated to Sorell. There was no intention of withdrawing the funding for that position.

Mr MULDER - I took some comfort from it but the broader thing is that there is no such similar plan in terms of vacancy control for other stations.

Mr HINE - There have been occasions where someone is sick or cannot be replaced or goes on annual leave and there is no allocated budget to replace them and the operating hours of the station will be reduced or closed because the state service is not available to do it but the attitude is, it is much better to have the police officers out on patrol rather than waiting back in the station waiting for the call because we know, and we well advertise, that it is much better to call the 131 444 number to get the police attendance either at the station or to the house, to provide the service they want. We are doing a state servant review across the whole organisation to make sure we have the right state servants in the right positions. We did it with the police positions; we are now doing it with the state

servant positions so we can land on those positions that will remain into the future, similar to what we did with the restructure for the police side of things.

Mr MULDER - I take some comfort that you recognise the importance of, albeit a state service presence, but a person in some of these communities that are further out. If it is for emergency services but often it is information and things like that. Having the station open, preferably manned by a state servant, because it is a lot cheaper.

I was going to ask about the police involvement in the radio network but it is probably more appropriate under works and services even though there is not much money in that item but the police involvement in that project will be better discussed there. Do you agree?

CHAIR - Works and service or capital investment?

Mr MULDER - Capital investment.

CHAIR - There is no capital investment allocation for the 2013-14 year.

Mr MULDER - That is the point I am making but there is, not through this agency, but there is towards a project that this agency has a huge involvement in.

I will move on to the other one - the apps at the Kingston trial. How is the trial going?

Mr HINE - We have launched a trial of tablet devices at Kingston. We have a number of desktop computers that are due for replacement so we are looking at replacing those with tablet devices. We want to do a trial down at Kingston. There were 40 tablet devices given down there. We chose Kingston because it is a non-24 hour station that involves smaller stations, some day and afternoon shifts and a single officer on an island. We thought that would be a good division to trial it in.

The feedback has been really good. There were some connectivity issues with the 3G and the WiFi but that is largely resolved and the feedback has been really good. But we need to do a full evaluation. We had an example given to us the other day where police officers dealt with a family violence matter. It was estimated that between four and six hours, or even more, was saved by using the tablet device to deal with the family violence matter. That was just one little example of the time saved.

Mr MULDER - Are you running proprietary applications on the tablets, or are you just using internally developed forms? The word was a couple of apps had been developed to run on the tablets.

Mr HINE - What you get on your desktop at a police station now, you get on the tablet device. Whatever you can see on your desktop at the station, you can see on the device, but there is a quick page available on the tablet. There have been some modifications but the tablets have what you can normally get on your desktop.

Mr MULDER - Is that work done internally?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - We have gone through a process of upgrading the infrastructure sitting behind the police systems. Things like our offence reporting system, and our online charging for family violence. They are now on a consistent basis - a web browser basis. The applications are really just a link through to that browser-based information, all done internally. There may be a point in time where we may use some consultancy apps to assist in some of the development, but essentially it is done internally.

Mr MULDER - For all the world, it looks like an app but it is just a front end to your system?

Mr HINE - Just what you saw then. That's the launch page that you can get on your desktop or you can get on your tablet device. It is a launch page. Basically, you can get onto the same things you can access at the office. So far the feedback has been really good.

Mr MULDER - Is there any intention, whilst we are looking at these things, to create a website where the public can report information or observations? I am not sure whether you are aware of a little experience I had recently where I could not even get you the photograph of a car you were looking for, despite my knowledge of people within the police department. When I went to Crime Stoppers, they said they didn't take online stuff. It seems to me that with modern technology, if people see something suspicious, or see a car or a person the police are looking out for, they could take a photo, email it straight to a website and the police have got it. The example I used the other day was that I saw a car that matched the description of one which, admittedly, they later they found burnt out, but which at the time was still live. I saw it at a hardware store within a few kilometres of the area where the incident happened. I took a photo of it, pictures of the people getting in the car, its registration plates and everything else like that. I tried to send them to Crime Stoppers and could not. I sent them to the District Commander, whom I know personally, and did not get any answer back. I sent them to another senior officer - I am not sure whether he is away or not interested - and I still do not have anything back. I reckon you'd recovered the car, and the information was unnecessary, but I wonder why we do not have the capacity to link into that modern technology. Why wouldn't you be encouraging people to take pictures because they would add a little bit of veracity to any witness statements you might get from them.

Mr HINE - They are all very good questions because I know that sometimes people ring you up when you are on the other side of the world, not realising you are away.

Mr MULDER - Which is why I went to the district commander this time.

Mr HINE - Crime Stoppers is not part of the police department, therefore that is not in our domain. Even though I sit as a director on Crime Stoppers and Crime Stoppers is looking at online reporting. If there is an incident, we all know that the police radio room is the conduit for any communication with the police department. As far as reporting things online is concerned, it is a matter of having the capacity to deal with it.

One of the first areas we are going down is the virtual crash reporting system. I know it not quite what you are asking, but it is about where people can report those things online where they need reporting. They do not have to come into the police station. They will have the ability to do that and we will be launching it very shortly. Our police officers can do it - it was deployed in April - and the next step is for the public to be able to do it online. So far as sending pictures and information online, there is a Facebook page - that is interactive. We do not want people to report things on that, we would much rather they go through the radio room because that is the conduit for all information to come into our organisation.

Crime Stoppers is looking at how they do things on line so they can provide that information. I am still not sure exactly how Crime Stoppers would hit that scenario.

Mr MULDER - I was thinking more about someone in the State Intelligence Service who every couple of hours wanders in and checks the information reports. I can see there may be some issue there about obtaining the right information but the thing is if you need more you have the Internet email connection to go back and ask them.

Mr HINE - All the back-end systems to handle that information - as soon as one bit of information is lost in there to say, 'Yes, I want an immediate reply' and someone has not checked it,

we are in the radio room and we have to deal with all those issues. I believe that is the way of the future. Are we ready for it? No, we are going down the virtual crash reporting first. Crime stoppers is looking at the online reporting. I do not think any police service has full online reporting because there have been various instances where things get lost.

Mr MULDER - The other area was in relation to the location of the Dunalley School. I note from last year's *Hansard* we were very prescient in identifying you would not have built the Dunalley police station had you had your time again. The good Lord fortunately gave you your time again and I see you co-located it with the school.

Mrs HISCUTT - Do you have the number of FTEs who took voluntary redundancy in 2011-12 and 2012-13 to date and the total cost of those redundancies?

Mr O'BYRNE - People who accepted voluntary redundancy, in terms of sworn officers, there were 49.

Mr HINE - That was the 2012-13 period. There were redundancies from last September.

Mr O'BYRNE - We only had one round of redundancies. There were 49 sworn officers and 25 State Service employees. The cost of the redundancy program was \$8.1 million. It has realised a net savings of \$3.5 million for this year and a saving of in excess of \$4 million per annum thereafter.

Mr DEAN - Of those police and State Service staff receiving redundancies, how many were close to retirement age, say within three to four years of retirement?

Mr O'BYRNE - We do not have a mandatory retirement age. There are some people who make a decision to retire earlier or later.

Mr HINE - Sorry, minister. We could not discriminate because there are a couple of different things. There are a couple of preservation age and then those close to retirement, which is 65, and we did not discriminate between them.

Mr DEAN - Can those details be provided?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - There are four at 60 or above. We can get you those breakdowns.

CHAIR - That is a request, Ivan?

Mr DEAN - Yes, some more information if you do not mind.

Mrs HISCUTT - With regard to the firearms review - I do not want to lose my licence -

Mr O'BYRNE - There is no threat at this stage, I think everything will be okay.

Mrs HISCUTT - Have you finalised that review?

Mr O'BYRNE - We have been consulting extensively with the Sporting Shooters Association and a whole range of key groups. There was a slight delay to the work that we were doing with the federal minister. Given some incidents that happened interstate, in New South Wales, there was a view that a national approach was best and he wanted to bring ministers together to talk about some of the things that are happening in the national space so that delayed our consideration. We did not want to work counter to the national agenda and it is important to have a level of consistency between the jurisdictions. We have a meeting of ministers early next month but we hope to finalise

the review of the legislation in the coming months.

Mrs HISCUTT - Are you saying that you are hoping to follow a national guideline?

Mr O'BYRNE - No, it will be a state-by-state regime but it is important that we accommodate and acknowledge what is happening nationally to try to gain some consistency.

Mrs HISCUTT - The U-Turn project; where did the \$850 000 that was allocated to that go to?

Mr O'BYRNE - It is not a line item, it is part of the overall budget strategy savings. The government sees U Turn as a valuable program but in terms of the outputs and payment we do not believe Tasmania Police, on their own, should pay so we are in discussions with other ministers, for example Justice, the minister for Children and the minister for Education, because there are a number of numeracy and literacy programs that are delivered within U-Turn. We are working as hard as we can to see if we can save that program.

Mrs HISCUTT - Just one other thing, the secondment of the deputy commissioner, Scott Tilyard. Is the police department still paying him or are you getting that money back from where he has gone - DHHS?

Mr O'BYRNE - He has taken leave without pay to second across to that role and they will fund his position and we backfilled the position.

Mrs HISCUTT - This department still kept the money?

Mr O'BYRNE - He is working with that department and they have the responsibility for his wage while he is there and we have backfilled his position, as you would do in the normal chain of command.

Mrs HISCUTT - On ballistic vests, do they have an expiry date? Do they cost a lot of money?

Mr O'BYRNE - They are not cheap.

Mr HINE - Ballistic vests do have an expiry date. The plates that are in them have an expiry date and the vest itself has an expiry date and 2015 is when our current batch expires. We are looking at an all-purpose, load bearing, stab resistant ballistic capability vest.

Mr VALENTINE - It is made from nanocrystalline technology. I had to get that in.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, good work.

Mrs HISCUTT - Minister, is the money allocated for that in the 2015-16 budget?

Mr O'BYRNE - We are working through a procurement and we need to consult with the PAT and others about the capabilities of those vests. In 2015 or so they are due to be replaced. We are just going through a procurement process so we are not sure exactly how much it costs.

[3.30 p.m.]

Mrs HISCUTT - So you have not set aside any just in case?

Mr HINE - There is some money allocated in the budget for the replacement of our current issues but we are going down the track to get a request for information. Then before we go out to tender we will look at maybe personal issues, which is part of our front-line strategy as well.

Mrs HISCUTT - What about the police houses at Bicheno, St Helens and the west coast? Are

they being upgraded or being sold off?

Mr O'BYRNE - We have been running a police housing project for a number of years now. We have opened up just recently a house at Dunalley which made it through. We have just opened up a new station and house at Cygnet and we are working around the state as we go as part of the upgrade the police housing project.

Mrs HISCUTT - Are you going to upgrade these other ones at Bicheno and down the west coast and St Helens?

Mr O'BYRNE - The next one that we have identified for an upgrade is at St Marys.

Mr HINE - To give you a wider background, it is a self-funding project. We have disposed of a number of surplus properties and we have identified 33 surplus properties. So far we have sold 19 properties and we have got \$3.7 million so we are using that to go through various lists of houses. As the minister said, Dunalley was first, then that up at the moment. At Smithton we are in the process of purchasing a property. We only have so much capacity to manage these things into the future. Queenstown is then high on the list. The Glenorchy station will need a bit of work, and we have Devonport on the go as well. We have only a certain amount of ability to manage all these projects but we do have a list of the ones we are going to have to replace and change. People have to live in a house and those stations should have decent accommodation. It is going to take us a number of years to go through them all to upgrade them. Dunalley was certainly first on the list and we are just moving down through those properties. We are really pleased so far to get the houses up to a contemporary standard.

Mr O'BYRNE - They were all built in 1950s weatherboard and their time is up, so progressively we will work around the state to upgrade.

Mrs HISCUTT - Minister, is it possible to get a list of your program for housing?

Mr O'BYRNE - Once it is finalised. At the moment we are focusing on St Marys and Smithton and then we will be finalising the Devonport build and on to Glenorchy. Have we made any decisions beyond those?

Mr HINE - Queenstown is the next major piece of work. We have a number of houses down there and there are a lot of issues around them. Beyond that we have a list and we then have to see which is the next most urgent. We do have some rentals and lease agreements within that on the east coast. We are quite confident we can go through it but it is a five to 10-year project by the time you work through all of these houses.

Mrs HISCUTT - Do you have any on the redundancy list that you are going to sell off?

Mr HINE - We have 33 in total on that list that we will work through. Nineteen properties have been sold, four properties are under contract for sale, four properties are vacant waiting to be sold, three properties are still tenanted and three properties are held at this stage pending a review.

Mrs HISCUTT - So that is information I can get if I want it?

Mr HINE - Which ones they are?

Mrs HISCUTT - Yes.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - In respect to St Helens, because they have a number of officers around there, that is one area where there is a strong rental market and we have a number of officers in those rental accommodations, which obviously gives us some flexibility and we can determine the

standard of the rentals. We have one owned property that has been identified as being surplus. We will look at the disposal of that at some point in time in the future. Whether we replace that with a rental property or a new property of our own is a decision that will be made.

Mrs HISCUTT - A lot of decisions to be made.

Mr HINE - Basically, if there is a strong rental in an area, for example we had houses in Burnie, Devonport and those sorts of places, then that is where our surplus would probably be sold because there are rental opportunities. But with those stations where police officers must live in the house, that is where we have concentrated to make sure there is a contemporary standard of housing.

CHAIR - Minister, can I go to a matter which I think was reported by the ABC just yesterday or today, about the proposal, or what the ABC understood to be a proposal, for allocation of night patrol officers to the waterfront as opposed to other areas in the CBD and the impact of that - am I understanding that correctly?

Mr O'BYRNE - I will get the Commissioner to answer it. It was put forward on the ABC - and unfortunately they get a lot of stories wrong - that there has been an increase in public place assaults and that is clearly not true. Over the last three years there has been a reduction in the average number of public place assaults - for example, on average per month in 2010 in the area there were 23.4, in 2012 there were 20.6, and so far from July 2012 to May this year there has been an average of 18 public place assaults recorded in that area in the Hobart district. When you look at the statistics, each incident is of concern but to say that there has been an increase in certain areas, the stats do not bear up. In terms of the decisions to deploy staff around, I will allow the Commissioner to answer that question.

Mr HINE - I will hand over to the acting deputy to explain.

Ms ADAMS - Thanks, Commissioner. As the minister said, there was an error in the information that was provided in what we call a tactical report, which each district produces for each Tuesday for the management group meetings that basically inform the deployment of our personnel. Incorrectly it had been indicated that there had been an increase in public place assaults over the last three weeks. Unfortunately, that report was provided to the media and unfortunately for the media reporter, she did not get the follow-up email which obviously identified that there had been an error in those figures. In actual fact, as the minister has already highlighted, there had not been an increase in the public place assaults.

At that group meeting, as always happens every Tuesday, there is a deployment of resources and the management group will consider where they are going to focus their efforts, certainly over the weekend. For the next three weeks, it has been determined that there is going to be an emphasis back down at the waterfront with one patrol sergeant and three constables who are going to work with our road and public order team of another eight personnel to basically gauge the compliance with the licensing and general public order. The suggestion that it is leaving the Hobart division short is incorrect; there are numerous other patrol officers in the Hobart division. There is a Hobart crime car, there is also a VSRT - Victims Safety Response Teams - car, there is a burglary taskforce that is occurring. Bellerive uniform and Glenorchy resources have not been touched and will also provide support to the Hobart division and there are Hobart patrol officers available to also respond. When the change of shifts occurs there is also a three-hour overlap in shifts where there are an additional eight personnel on the Hobart division to respond to jobs.

As with all of our deployments, the sergeant and supervisors who are managing the operations have responsibility to move resources around if the need arises and if there is an emergency somewhere else, those resources will be diverted. This strategy, which is a high-visibility strategy, is about gauging the public order compliance and licensing compliance down at the Hobart

waterfront over the next three weeks. Unfortunately, it has been portrayed in the media as being a non-response to an increase in public place assaults, which has been incorrect.

Mr O'BYRNE - For the year to date to April, public place assaults are down 18.5 per cent across the state, so that is a significant reduction. Unfortunately, when things are sensationalised in the media and the Hospitality Association on the news last night are the ones that have been really heavily lobbying on behalf of their members in the Salamanca area for more resources, and we have done that in some respects as an operational decision for a period of time but they are critical of that as well. Sometimes when these reports hit the media, they are sensationalised and unfortunately people get only one section of the picture and then extrapolate that across a whole range of stats, I suppose.

CHAIR - In addition to that - and I am going by the ABC report - the Police Association's Pat Allen says:

That would effectively only leave enough police for a single patrol car for an area which stretches from lower Sandy Bay to New Town.

I think Donna has addressed that.

Mr O'BYRNE - Very clearly there are far more resources.

Mr HINE - Again, it is a matter of policing as in if there is a number of police in an area it still does not mean they are not available to then go and get in a car and go to a job if that is needed if it is really busy. Salamanca isn't 100 miles away. They would not be expected to go to Launceston. They are not far away from a police vehicle to access and go to a job, if there is a job that requires additional resources.

Mr O'BYRNE - I must admit I have been out with the commissioner and others on a Friday night and we have done the wander around -

CHAIR - Working?

Mr O'BYRNE - Working, yes - to get an understanding when I first became a minister of the workload and some of the things that Tasmania Police confront. There was an incident which we all went to. I was in the back of the car feeling quite nervous -

Mr VALENTINE - So you weren't picked up.

Mr O'BYRNE - No, actually at that stage I was in the front of the car. There were police units from a whole range of areas that came together to respond to a specific incident in a specific suburb. They come from all around the place to respond to the different need and it was quite quickly because we are a small place. What the commissioner is saying is that you respond to the need and the flexibility of the service is there.

Mr DEAN - I have a few supplementaries on a couple of those issues there. I refer to in my report on the annual report of police - and I didn't bring it with me unfortunately - there has been a survey done and I think it was ABC - I am not quite sure - it was done where it identified that only one in about four or five assaults are absolutely brought to the attention of police. In actual fact the study that I am referring to identified that the number of assaults in the state had gone up and they identified that in a number of areas. My question coming from that, minister, is do the police have any evidence or information on what the amount of unreported crime might be like? Is there any indication, clearly there is a lot not reported and that is the difference between the public's perception and what the police say is happening?

Mr O'BYRNE - I would be interested to see that report that you referred to.

Mr DEAN - It was referred to in my speech on the annual report, so I can get it for you.

Mr HINE - Yes. The Australian Bureau of Statistics Victimization Survey, which is what you are referring to. There are differences with statistics and how they gather information compared with what is not reported and what is reported. We are talking about two different methodologies and two totally different methodologies about someone ringing up and asking, 'Did you report an assault or have you been assaulted?' There are a lot of variations in relation to it. Our statistician has gone through that and provided an analysis of it.

The ABS data is self-reported through a survey and includes assaults that occurred from 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2012. Straight away there is a different reporting period between how we gather them, it is on a financial year basis, so that is over a longer period for a start. The ABS survey sample size is only small and they extrapolate that out, therefore, to align with your population size. There again it is a methodology difference there. The report uses different definitions for assault than we do. Therefore, capture crime different data subsets, so again another difference. The ABS report captures assaults that are both reported and unreported, where police only capture those ones that are reported. The survey response is not substantiated where those ones reported to police have to be substantiated.

The substantial differences in data reports cannot be ignored. We know that it is another interpretation where we have 16 000 victims and 61 000 offences. That is so different, they are different methodologies, and it is unfair and not physically possible to record. We know there is an under-reporting; we know that some people do not wish to report it but it is unfair to try to compare the two.

Mr DEAN - The coronial inquiry in the north of the state revealed a number of issues with police attending on their own, one-person patrols. As a result of the issues coming from that coronial inquiry and comments made by the coroner, is it proposed that there will be changes or is it being considered again? One-person patrols were a problem when I was there umpteen years ago and I was trying to deal with it then so is there going to be a change of tactics in relation to the way police patrol?

Mr O'BYRNE - We take the coronial inquiry extremely seriously. There were a number of changes made to this model after the 2006 shooting on the Midland Highway in terms of the single officer response. It is not an easy one to resolve. Following the coronial recommendations recently we have had discussions with the Commissioner and we will be working hard to look at those recommendations and see if there is any need for policy change. I rely heavily on the advice from the Commissioner on that issue, about how we make sure we keep our people safe. Other people go into some pretty dangerous circumstances and we need to make sure that our pre-assessments are appropriate in terms of the resources that are required for a certain activity at the time. So we rely very heavily on advice.

Mr HINE - Sad set of circumstances for the police officer involved and the deceased, and his family, so we understand the seriousness of the event. Single officer patrols have been discussed for many years and sometimes sending two police is a wasted resource when someone can do something on their own just as well, so we have taken the coroner's findings very seriously and already said publicly that we are going to look at every recommendation and take on those recommendations and implement them, to have a review of the single officer model, review training, and do a cost benefit analysis in relation to abandoning the single officer patrol. It is important to ascertain that the coroner did not recommend that we withdraw the policy totally.

Mr DEAN - Is it accepted that when one police officer is present on their own, in most situations, that their intensity is magnified and they are more likely to react in a position to take

quick action rather than when there are two officers present. A number of books talk about this, the anxiety levels of police acting on their own.

Mr O'BYRNE - Not having been in those circumstances, to be able to respond to that, I will ask the Commissioner to respond.

Mr HINE - There are lots of studies to say the other way, as in where more than one person attending some situations can escalate the situation and unfortunately in the last two stabbings of police officers there have been more than one person there. It is not the panacea to prevent assaults on police but we are committed to make sure our police officers are as safe as they possibly can be. That is why we are looking at the vest issue, and at the training issue and that is why we have taken the coroner's findings and we will review his findings and the policy very seriously and we will work with the stakeholders as well. No one takes the safety of police officers more seriously than we do; we take it very seriously and the association takes it very seriously. There are a lot of studies about single officer responses and having a number of police officers attend and many different studies have been done.

Mr DEAN - When is policy direction likely to be finalised, and any changes made that might occur as a result of that coronial inquiry?

Mr O'BYRNE - As soon as the coroner issued his decision, there was a discussion and I received a briefing from the commissioner about the implications, and he has my full support to deal with this as a matter of importance. I'll echo the words of the commissioner that the safety of officers is of paramount importance to us. We want to make sure we can create the safest possible environments for our people. There is a known risk in the work they do - how we mitigate that and protect them is of crucial importance. In terms of the timelines, I'll hand you over to Darren.

Mr HINE - Thanks, minister. We've already given a number of matters to a police officer - an inspector - to look at, about reviewing the policy and reviewing training. In relation to the cost benefit analysis, we are just doing up the terms of reference for that because that is quite a big piece of work. Just imagine the ramifications. We've already started the review - an inspector has already started that. Do you want to add to that?

Ms ADAMS - Only that most of the key stakeholders, including the police association, will be sitting down to look at all aspects of the policy. We'll be keen to get the policy finalised as quickly as we can but we want to make sure we are thorough and we consider all the aspects that may change the intent of the policy. It will be a deliberate process but we'll try to involve those who can help us get the best outcome.

Mr DEAN - I have a couple of other points on that, if I can go on.

CHAIR - Yes, because there's nobody else on support to the community so -

Mr O'BYRNE - I am sure we all support the community, but you mean 'in terms of that output'.

Laughter.

Mr DEAN - Having spoken to a number of policemen, one of the current major concerns is the standard of the current uniforms. There is a lot of concern, I'm told, within the rank and file about uniforms. There has been a bit in the press, too, about them falling to pieces and so on. What is the position? I understand these uniforms are relatively new, from only about 12 months ago. What is the position with uniforms? Are they going out to another contract, or is there an opportunity to join with another police service to get uniforms through other sources? Where are we with that?

Mr O'BYRNE - We did have the new uniforms in 2011. I don't think it's just a concern with

Tasmania Police. Any occupation where the workers are required to wear a uniform for lengthy periods of time will always have concerns and views about it. It is important that we respond appropriately. We've got a review of the uniform policy under way, and we'll be working with the police association on a response. Some of those concerns that you've heard, we've obviously heard as well and that review is currently underway.

Mr HINE - In fact, a survey went out this week to our members because the contract is up in August this year. The survey will help us determine what we do at the next stage. The shoes and the footwear have been a success. That's well accepted. We think the jumper has been well accepted. When you say 'falling to pieces' in relation to the uniforms I think that's, with all due respect, exaggerated.

Mr DEAN - The trousers were the main concern.

Mr HINE - There have been some issues. We understand that, and the company supplying them has certainly fixed them at their cost. It's one of those things when you deal with uniforms, there are always going to be issues. We are working through those issues. That's why we're doing a proper evaluation and a survey before we decide on the next iteration of the uniform.

Mr O'BYRNE - And there are obviously alternative preferences. It's also a matter of working through people's preferences.

Mr DEAN - I should say it hasn't been exaggerated by me. That is what was told to me by a number of police officers.

Mr O'BYRNE - I understand.

Mr DEAN - What savings are still to be made by the police service this current year, in relation to the budget?

Mr O'BYRNE - When the allocations of the forward estimates occurred, in the first round of savings, there were strategies that needed to be put in place to allocate the savings. Those necessarily are still in train, but what we have been able to do this year is inject an extra \$4.5 million to enable the sworn officer numbers to be maintained at 1 120. That is an extra allocation which is an important step forward. That does not necessarily mean we should not always look at the operations to make sure we maintain budget levels.

Mr DEAN - There are no further cuts for the police to make, to achieve the budget restraint that was provided 12 months ago?

Mr O'BYRNE - Based on the forward estimates that were established there was a set of savings and a target that had to be reached. We have changed that. We have injected an extra \$4.5 million. Every department must meet the budget. What we have done is injected an extra \$4.5 million to enable officer numbers to be at 1 120.

Mr DEAN - Have you removed the projected amount that the department was to save as a part of the budget savings strategy for this year?

Mr O'BYRNE - By virtue of the injection of \$4.5 million, we have, but the department still needs to meet budgets, when you look at the forward estimates.

Mr DEAN - So the department is still required to meet budget. Will that require any further cuts within the police department this year?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - What we have done is pre-positioned ourselves to meet our

forward estimates prior to this budget through the redundancy program, with a reduction in state service numbers and reduction in police numbers, also with the U-Turn. That was on the agenda as a savings strategy for this year. We have positioned ourselves to meet all of those savings targets. With the funding which has now been provided that will allow us to recruit back to the 1 120, so there is no further reduction. It will increase police numbers. However, as always, there will be cost pressures throughout the years and we will continue to meet those as we always do. There is no further saving strategy. The \$4.5 million provided offsets that requirement to find the \$4.5 million.

Mr HINE - We are confident we will make the appropriation for this current financial year.

Mr DEAN - It is good to hear because you do not hear that in too many other departments.

Mr VALENTINE - I was interested in the computer-aided dispatch program. It is a whole of emergency services project, I believe. Can you give us an update on where that is at, and can you comment on how you see it improving things for you. With that project in place, it might divert more resources to areas that are coming in from the other emergency services that you see as necessary to attend, and how it might stretch your resources? First of all the CAD project?

Mr HINE - The CAD project - we basically have a command and control system at the moment and it has been around for quite a long time, and is coming to the end of its life, so we put up what they call a sup funding to look at acquiring a new computer-aided dispatch system to replace our old CACCS system - I apologise for the acronyms. Government gave us that seed funding to look at, not only for the Police and Emergency Management, but to include fire and ambulance, so a whole of emergency services computer-aided dispatch system. We have a request for a quotation and now we are going out to complete a business case in relation to a computer-aided dispatch system.

Having a similar platform for all emergency services will make sharing information a lot easier and a lot more seamless. We will see some real efficiencies in relation to that. We are going out to the business case and once we get that back we can go to government and say this is the business case and this is the cost of having a computer-aided dispatch system across emergency services.

Mr VALENTINE - It seems to make sense to have them all in one. What I am concerned about is whether that might divert resources to other areas that you now get to know about. You are going to have to have a fair degree of focus in terms of what you do and do not send resources to, in terms of attending, whether it might be fire where there is a possibility of arson and you might think well we can get onto that straight away because we know about it. At the same time you might be having a robbery somewhere else and there might be an ambulance situation that has developed and you need resources there to be able to follow up on some aspect of that. How are you going to handle that?

Mr HINE - We are talking about a common platform where each individual agency can deal with each individual thing as they do now as in fire needs to deal with theirs, police needs to deal with theirs, and ambulance theirs. It is a common platform so if we need to exchange that information it makes it a lot easier when you have a common operating system. I do not think that will change a great deal but Mr Wilson-Haffenden is intimately involved in the project.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Through the business process there would be a number of models that would be identified and one is simply a common platform, which operates in three centres. I think that would address those issues you have raised. Likewise the capacity to bring those together has advantages in things like emergency situations. The business case will have a look at the various alternatives but at the moment we have three different systems running in three different locations. The first point is to see is there a benefit in a common system without even considering the location and co-location into a second phase.

Mr VALENTINE - You would now be informed of more acutely of what is actually happening

out there that you would not be sending resources where you may have once sent resources so it would balance out maybe.

Mr HINE - If an ambulance is despatched to say a medical situation we would not get informed of that and we would not need to go. We sometimes get informed and we make that judgment if we are going to send a resource from a police point of view and that is what a radio despatch system or centre does. If there is an emergency situation like the fires in January, having a common operating system does not mean to say you have to re-key information so it can be transferred across seamlessly as well so we see some real efficiencies. Again, if you are supporting one system across a number of agencies the cost benefit should outweigh having three disparate systems that need different resources and support.

Mr VALENTINE - I was thinking in terms of frontline resources more particularly but that is fine. I totally agree. Technology is great stuff but sometimes you can have a detrimental effect. The other question is, you mentioned a port team is no longer in place.

Mr O'BYRNE - It has its worries.

Mr VALENTINE - Sorry?

Mr O'BYRNE - It is traffic as well, it is combined, two teams together. It is still a port team but it is part of a bigger unit.

Mr VALENTINE - Some time ago there was an alcohol and drug strategy where you were working with the licensees around the waterfront to try and improve the situation. Do you still have that strategy in place with the licensees? Are you still working with them? What sort of work are the police doing in relation to that or has it been disbanded?

Mr HINE - There are a few issues with it but they are still working with a number of licensees in the Hobart area as they do in the Launceston and the Devonport areas and the western district as well. There are a number of strategies we are still working with and it includes the licensees on the waterfront and Hobart areas. There is an ongoing communication to make sure we work with our stakeholders, the AHA as well, so those strategies are still in place. We have the Launceston accord but I do not think there is an accord down in Hobart.

Ms ADAMS - No, there is not.

Mr VALENTINE - There used to be.

Ms ADAMS - There used to be.

Mr VALENTINE - So that accord no longer exists?

Ms ADAMS - Formally it still exists but in terms of when they have last met or come together it has been over 12 months. There have been some issues, external to Tasmania Police, which have hampered the coming together and sharing of ideas. As you would be aware we are fairly keen to work with our stakeholders to share those problems and try to come up with some solutions together. In terms of the competitive nature of the waterfront sometimes that has hampered the effectiveness of the communication and coming together to do that.

Mr O'BYRNE - I have met with a number of licensees and the THA as well but THA does not have all the membership. People assume because you open a pub you are a member of the THA. I have met with the THA and some of their members but they have also identified this other group of licensees that are not formally part of the THA and they also have a view as well, so there are a couple of groups.

Mr HINE - That doesn't stop us making sure we liaise with the licensees as well.

Mr O'BYRNE - It happens regularly.

Mr HINE - We continue to work with the stakeholders, the licensees and other stakeholders in that area to make sure we have a really good working relationship. If there are any issues, and we have a number of strategies - extra police, working with the licensing commission or the licensed establishments themselves - there are a number of matters along with the local government area as well.

Mr VALENTINE - There was a fair degree of CCTV infrastructure put in place a few years back around the waterfront and in and through the city. Have you reviewed how that is performing? Has it assisted with picking up on crime or is it really not that effective?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, it is effective.

Mr HINE - It has been quite successful in assisting us to solve a number of matters. We have 490 cameras around the state that we have access to at the moment.

Mr HINE - Glenorchy was the most recent one. We are continuing to work with it to make sure we get the best advantage. We find whilst it may not prevent a crime, it certainly helps in solving a crime or to identify someone. We have had a couple of great examples where we have put some pictures up on Facebook, using social media, to identify some people and it has been well received. We think CCTV has worked really well. We do not say it is going to stop crime; it just helps solve crime.

Mr O'BYRNE - I think we have seen with the unfortunate Jill Maher case where that camera was able to identify the person through the work of the community and Victoria Police.

Mr VALENTINE - It is not a matter of monitoring them 24 hours a day. The image has been captured and you can go back to that if there has been a crime.

Mr O'BYRNE - That is one element of it as well. Some cameras are live. We don't have someone sitting there looking at every camera across the state, but from time to time we do have people looking at them, yes.

Mrs HISCUTT - The Turner's Beach force have been assigned money in the budget for a fire station. Are you on -

Mr O'BYRNE - No, you are nearly there. You are much closer because the guys have just entered the room and when Mike Brown and his team come to the table that is your time.

Mrs HISCUTT - Thanks very much.

CHAIR - Minister, we have concluded that output group 1. We will move onto the next output group, which is crime specifically.

Output group 2 Crime

2.1 Investigation of crime -

Mr MULDER - I would just like to remind you of a discussion we had about the motorcycle people, some of whom were criminals, but weren't organised. I recall at that stage it was on the back

of a large seizure of high powered weapons, including SKS rifles, 15 kilograms of amphetamine, \$14 000 in cash and the situation was that it was being downplayed. I recall the commissioner at the time said he needed to see this against a background and he didn't see it as an organised crime problem at that stage, certainly not of the scale that we had experienced in another state. Also the fact that the commissioner undertook that they would be monitoring and would move resources if necessary. The deputy commissioner then made a really strong point about not everyone in a motorcycle gang was a criminal and therefore they were not really necessarily organised crime gangs.

Semantics aside, since that time we have had numerous incidents. I will just refer to comments that have appeared in the press at different times. In June 2012, there was a statement by the Deputy Commissioner that the laws were adequate to deal with the problems at that time, but unexplained wealth would assist. On 11 November it was reported that: 'the Rebels are involved in organised crime, according to the drug squad chief'. On 27 November, the Acting Deputy Commissioner and the drug squad chief were 'leading the local charge against 30 bikies in 8 chapters' and I quote: This is serious organised crime.

On 29 December it was reported that: 'the Rebels continue to be major players in the distribution of methamphetamine, according to the drug chief'. The question is: are we now prepared to concede that we do have an organised crime problem? And with regard to your commitment to move resources, as you saw fit - has that occurred?

Mr O'BYRNE - I will start, and then I will allow the Commissioner to respond as well. As you would know from your previous roles, Tony, I'm currently involved with the Australian Crime Commissioner's national taskforce, Attero, which we are a contributor to, and an active participant in. We are briefed extensively on the circumstances. Of course, they are operational in nature and I'm not going to engage in a running commentary about those activities because it could potentially compromise the work we're doing. There's no doubt there has been an increase in outlaw motorcycle gang membership in the last 12 months and there is no doubt there is an increased level of activity. We're extremely concerned about that, as we are with any crime. My role is to support Tasmania Police and the Commissioner by allocating the resources to work on that issue. I now hand to the Commissioner.

Mr MULDER - My question is: do we concede that there is now an organised crime problem?

Mr HINES - I'm not going to get into semantics, but from a national point of view, there is operation Attero in relation to the Rebels motorcycle gang. We have Rebels motorcycle gang members here in Tasmania so, therefore, we are part of the national approach. We are taking it seriously. Whether they're organised and serious - we really don't care about that. It's about targeting those people who we know can be involved, and are involved, in criminal activities. For example, last year in the northern district, police conducted two operations that resulted in 24 arrests in the northern district, and a further 18 in relation to a drug trafficking, assault, firearms matters, et cetera.

So, we take outlaw motorcycle gangs seriously. We know they are involved in organised crimes right throughout Australia and right throughout the world. We have organised Rebels motorcycle gangs in Tasmania and we are going to target those that are involved in illegal activities.

Mr MULDER - I wasn't asking for any state secrets. I was just pointing out that last year you thought it wasn't serious organised crime but this year, quite clearly, your own senior officers think it is serious organised crime. Having made that concession, or having had to face that reality, I am asking about your commitment to move resources in order to monitor it.

Mr O'BYRNE - With respect, Mr Mulder, there are a whole lot of activities, as you know, that Tasmania Police undertake that are of a very serious nature, in investigating certain crimes, and

we're not going to provide running commentary. The Commissioner has been very clear, and our view has been that any crime is taken seriously, and we are responding to that. We're not going to pull apart the entrails of our investigations or the work that's being undertaken.

Mr MULDER - I wasn't asking for that. In fact, you've provided details of operations that I actually wasn't interested in. I was interested in your policy position. Last year you said we didn't have an organised crime problem, and this year you are quite clearly saying we do have a serious organised crime problem. Last year you gave a commitment that you would monitor the situation and if it changed and more resources were required, you would move them if necessary. I am now asking you whether you accept that the situation has changed, and are you moving resources? I am not asking you how you are deploying them; I am not asking what operations you have got; I am just asking if you have removed your resources.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, and yes.

Mr MULDER - It was not quite that difficult. So now I will go onto the other point where there was a 2010 election commitment by the government that there would be tougher anti-bike laws, and, particularly, unexplained wealth laws.

A number of times comments have been made by various players that laws are adequate but unexplained wealth would assist. I am talking about the police spokesman being quoted in the media. I am assuming they are accurately quoted because no one sought to change them. Regarding the unexplained wealth laws, it took the Attorney-General up until 7 March this year before he made the grave announcement that he will introduce measures later this year to ensure Tasmania does not become a haven for organised crime, focussing particularly on the anti-wealth laws. Two months later we still do not have anything before parliament.

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, we do. They have been lodged in the lower House.

Mr MULDER - Thank you very much. I am just wondering why it has taken three and a quarter years to get to this point, given that the situation has been developing and was understood to be needed nearly four years ago.

Mr O'BYRNE - Well, there has been much discussion about it but ultimately that is in the responsibility of the Attorney-General. With any piece of legislation as significant as that, there is consultation that needs to take place with a whole range of key stakeholders. As you know, unexplained wealth legislation is not accepted by certain members of the legal fraternity and others, so it is important that we get the legislation right. Ultimately, it is not in my ministerial responsibilities but the legislation is before the lower House.

Mr DEAN - Robberies and armed hold-ups - once again, our statistics say that there are increases in certain areas here. In every other paper we read, we see something about an armed hold-up. What is the police position in relation armed hold-ups? What can be done to try and get on top of this? What are the numbers to date and how are we travelling at the present time?

Mr O'BYRNE - In any incident of a firearm or armed robbery we know that by definition they involve knives, syringes or broken glass; so it is more than just firearms. My understanding is that there have been 27 armed robberies so far this year compared to 86 armed robberies in 2012. Of the 27 armed robberies to 31 May this year, firearms have been used in six of them. Every incident is of concern and builds on the information before Tas Police to be able to respond. What is pleasing to some extent is the clearance rates in crimes solved - 71 per cent of armed robberies last year were solved and people were brought to justice. This is, compared to other jurisdictions, a very good result. In terms of some of the recent activity, I will ask the commissioner to talk about it.

Mr HINE - It is a topical issue and certainly a concern to us and the wider community. Just to

put it into perspective, the number of victims per hundred thousand in Tasmania is far lower than the national average. Our numbers have decreased from 16.5 per 100 000 in 2010 to 11.8 in 2011; it actually has come down in that period of time when the national figure was 26.3. So we are a lot lower than the mainland. That still does not make it right; it does not mean to say that we do not consider it an issue in Tasmania. As the minister said, one of the greatest deterrents is actually putting these people before the court to face the consequences of their action. Last year it was 71 per cent, or 61 people out of the 86 armed robberies, had to go through that process. There is public education about keeping money on premises and what to do but the general advice to a member of the public or a shop owner who is facing the wrong end of an armed robbery, and there is no doubt it is terrifying, is about complying with what the person wants at the time.

Yesterday we solved another matter in relation to a firearm. When firearms start to be used that is a greater fear factor but there were six for this year out of the 27 armed robberies. Knife is the weapon of choice unfortunately. Firearms are not the weapons of choice but we are taking it seriously.

We put resources into this, whether it is the formation of a taskforce or public education, but the community has to help us to help them. We rely on information anonymously through Crime Stoppers or an opportunity to interact with police. We are pleased with the clear-up rate and we are going to continue to work hard in relation to this.

Mr DEAN - That brings me to the next question. Police have the authority in certain circumstances to search for knives and weapons publicly. How many knives have been located and how many people have been charged in relation to the carrying of knives?

Mr HINE - We would have to take that one on notice. We keep those figures so we are happy to take that on notice and get back to you. It is an offence unless you have a reasonable excuse for carrying an offensive weapon.

Mr DEAN - The area of fraud crime and child exploitation now comes under the responsibility of four police officers? It is a very specialised area. What is the current number of cases being dealt with by these police in each category and their workload?

I would like to know what their workload is because of a number of issues and what the backlog is for these police officers. Is it accepted that there are sufficient numbers of police in that area - child exploitation and fraud - to handle the matters that are coming before them?

Mr O'BYRNE - In terms of fraud and e-crime, in terms of -

Mr DEAN - I meant to throw e-crime in.

Mr O'BYRNE - Ordinary crime investigation services consists of five investigators and two forensic examiners. These are all based in southern district command.

Mr DEAN - Are all of these five officers currently working?

Mr O'BYRNE - They are responsible for fraud and any crime-related offences reported in the southern region as well as providing support to the northern and western district commands and the criminal investigation divisions. Northern district command supports two investigators; in the western district command there is one investigator situated in both Burnie and in Devonport. In terms of their workload, I do not have those details on me.

Mr HINE - In relation to backlog, it is not only that area that looks at some of these fraud and e-crime matters. Other investigators can look at them with the assistance and advice of those in that area. Many years ago there were no specialised CIB services. We now have a team of specialised

investigators that look at the bigger issues. The CIB still look at the other issues, the minor issues that can be supported.

To give you some of examples - between 1 July and 31 March they undertook 94 investigations with 53 of those resulting in court proceedings. The computer forensic unit within fraud and e-crime undertook 865 examinations which included 189 examinations in computer hard drives, 511 examinations of mobile telephones, 165 examinations of other computer media as in CDs, DVDs, flash drives and those sort of things.

In the north and western districts they completed 145 examinations of mobile phones and 18 other examinations. Fraud and e-crime do not just look at everything across the state, they look at the more complex serious matters and CIBs look at some of the child exploitation matters, as do the federal police.

Mr DEAN - The backlog would be known and can that be taken on notice, the amount of work that group has, because they are serious matters -

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes, no doubt about it.

Mr DEAN - The other one was on child exploitation. Currently this year, what is the position with child exploitation complaints or investigations? Once again, it seems to be increasing, minister, but it may not be.

Mr HINE - We get involved in national operations in relation to child exploitation or grooming. There was one case in Western Australia recently where someone from Tasmania went across. Nationally, we coordinate a number of operations that we get involved with, with the Australian Federal Police and when we come across these issues, we take them very seriously. I haven't the statistics in relation to child exploitation but it is a matter where anything that comes across our desks we take it very seriously and we are very active in. It is one of these things, when it does occur we take action but also everyone has a responsibility to make sure we educate our kids about how they use the computer and about child exploitation, grooming and similar issues. There is a whole gambit of things that we can do as a community to protect our kids but when we actually find someone with this sort of material, we take action in relation to it. It is such an abhorrent and disturbing matter.

2.2 Poppy security -

Mr HALL - The table on the crop interferences gives data; for example, in 2011-12 it was 0.47 per 1 000 hectares. I can't recall what the licensed area sown was last year so what does that translate to, the actual number of miscreants?

Mr O'BYRNE - In 2012-13 hectares licensed was 32 676 hectares; hectares sown was 31 075; and hectares harvested was 29 117.

Mr HALL - How many people were actually caught?

Mr O'BYRNE - Persons charged: two.

Mr HALL - With those interferences in crops, were there any outstanding amounts - big bags, if I could call it that, of capsules harvested?

Mr O'BYRNE - Capsules stolen: in 2012-13 there were 2 905; capsules recovered: 302; there were 19 interferences and two persons charged.

Mr HALL - As poppies are now being bred with higher morphine levels, codeine levels and

thebaine -

Mr O'BYRNE - It is very concerning.

Mr HALL - Arguably that makes it much more toxic. Have there been any deaths at all reported in this last year? I think there were -

Mr O'BYRNE - There was a young -

Mr HALL - Were there any admissions to hospital from using -

Mr O'BYRNE - I am not sure about hospital admissions but we know that there was a 17-year-old male found deceased in November of last year.

Mr HALL - Yes.

Mr O'BYRNE - He made a cup of tea after he and another young male had stolen poppies from a Lewisham poppy crop and he passed away, which is really unfortunate. In terms of the other - I am not really sure if there were any other hospitalisations that I am not aware of.

Mr HINE - We do not keep statistics on that. We actually do not attend where there has been an overdose of drugs because the attitude of the people in the health area and law enforcement is that it is much better for people to get medical attention rather than get police attention. That has been our longstanding arrangement so we don't keep information on overdoses where people go to hospital.

Mr HALL - Fair enough. Is there any evidence that stolen capsules go beyond the traditional poppy tea brew? Are they dealt out in the marketplace to make other illicit-type substances?

Mr O'BYRNE - No.

Mr HINE - Not that we are aware of.

Mr HALL - We are stuck with the traditional brews.

Are there any instances of grower background checks, which are done by Tasmania Police, being denied to any entities or individuals in gaining poppy licences? Has that occurred?

Mr HINE - I have no facts or figures in relation to that because we don't licence. Therefore, we get involved in the licence checks.

Mr HALL - You just do the background check and pass it on to -

Mr HINE - I understand the individual has to provide that information to those responsible for licensing so we do not have any involvement in that.

Mrs HISCUTT - Your capsules, obviously the thousand of them you did not recover, the couple of thousands, did they just disappear or you are not suspecting they have gone to the mainland. There is nothing happening there.

Mr HINE - We just do not know. Whether they were discarded or, we just do not know.

CHAIR - We will move to output 2.3, fisheries security.

2.3 Fisheries Security

Mrs ARMITAGE - Minister, can you give me an overview of what is encompassed in the fisheries security - the overt and covert and sea bound and local rivers.

Mr HINE - Inland fisheries is what you are talking about?

Mrs ARMITAGE - Our fisheries security that we have.

Mr HINE - We do not do inland fisheries.

Mrs ARMITAGE - All right so the fisheries security done by Tasmania Police.

Mr HINE - Yes we do those in the marine industry. We undertake a number of patrols and we check various fish processing areas as well. We do a lot of covert work as well as in surveillance of those people who we consider may be doing the wrong thing. We do at sea inspections and a lot of patrols with our boats. We do a lot of investigations with DPIPWE. It can be overt, covert, checking, investigations, fish processing inspections, or recreational inspections so there is a lot of activity that makes up the entire policing of the marine industry. We also police on behalf of the commonwealth as well and conduct patrols on behalf of them.

Mrs ARMITAGE - You mentioned boats and I notice in 2.3 we have a footnote 3, the cessation of the trailable vessel replacement initiative, why was the program ceased?

Mr HINE - Because the boat has been replaced.

Mrs ARMITAGE - What about ongoing maintenance?

Mr HINE - It is still ongoing maintenance in relation to that project but all the vessels have been beached and the motors have been purchased and so it is finished.

Mrs ARMITAGE - They would have a shelf life so obviously that will come back later on when they need to replace them. You do not actually have an ongoing maintenance and constant -

Mr HINE - Yes we do.

Mrs ARMITAGE - No but I mean constant replaceables so it is just maintenance for the time being and then when the budget -

Mr VALENTINE - Depreciation.

Mr HINE - Basically we have an ongoing maintenance program and they each have a life. Once they get to the end of their life then we apply but a boat has a longer life than a motor vehicle. Some of the boats have a very long life so it is matter of refurbishments, replacing motors, those sort of things but it is certainly an ongoing maintenance program.

Mrs ARMITAGE - I am assuming the *Fortescue* is not a trailable vessel.

Mr HINE - You would want a very big trailer.

Mrs ARMITAGE - That is fine, thank you.

Mr DEAN - What impact, if any, has the *Fortescue* - being offline - had on marine and fisheries policy and patrols? What impact has it had?

Mr HINE - We cannot get away from the fact that we have one less boat out there patrolling. We know that it has an impact and we have put the *Vigilant* back out there patrolling as well.

Mr DEAN - Are there any other losses to the police service as a result of bringing the *Vigilant* back and doing other things. Has that cost the department money?

Mr HINE - The *Vigilant* is cheaper to run than the *Fortescue* ever was so that money would have gone towards maintaining and running the *Fortescue* is obviously put back into the other vessels.

Mr DEAN - The *Fortescue*, as I understand it, is currently in the hands of the Solicitor-General. Is there currently civil litigation under action in relation to that vessel or has it been resolved?

Mr O'BYRNE - That has been resolved.

Mr DEAN - So what is the hold-up on the sale?

Mr O'BYRNE - Essentially we are seeking advice from the S-G on how we can dispose of it, making sure all the things we do are transparent.

Mr DEAN - I suppose you could use it as an anchor for another vessel.

Mr O'BYRNE - Ha, ha - that's been suggested.

Mr DEAN - So what was the outcome with the Solicitor-General?

Mr O'BYRNE - We just want to make sure of our legal position prior to selling it.

Mr DEAN - Oh, I see.

Mr O'BYRNE - It is just making sure we do all the right things. We are waiting for advice from the Solicitor-General.

Mr DEAN - How long is that likely to take then? It's been in dry dock now for a long time and not in use.

Mr O'BYRNE - We are waiting on advice from the Solicitor-General and have made it very clear that we are very keen to resolve this issue and move on. Ultimately we have to rely on their advice, so we are in their hands.

2.4 Support to Judicial Services -

Mr MULDER - I note this line item has been dropped by about \$1 million in the coming year but then rises by a couple of hundred thousand dollars in the years after that, so basically we are seeing a drop in \$1 million. The notes tell us that this is to reflect the cessation of funding for project U-Turn, and the transfer of funding to Department of Justice for prisoner escorts. Which escorts have been transferred and how much of that money has been dropped off the budget relating to the escorts and project U-Turn?

Mr O'BYRNE - Project U-Turn is an \$850 000 annual cost that is paid to Mission Australia. That contract concludes in September and we have been given advice that to continue it will be more than \$950 000 in the next financial year. In terms of the matters you refer to I will ask the commissioner to respond.

Mr HINE - In relation to the court transfer of prisoners in Launceston, that MOU was signed in December 2012 in which we agreed that the Department of Justice would take over the transfer of prisoners from Launceston to the courts at \$110 000 per year.

Mr MULDER - Has there been any commensurate reduction in policing numbers in the north in order to compensate for that loss?

Mr HINE - No.

Mr O'BYRNE - It has freed up resources for other operations in the northern district.

Mr MULDER - So you made a \$950 000 saving in relation to U-Turn, and that is an annualised cost so that is nearly \$1 million a year to run on but there is \$50 000 left to take it through to September. Given the fact that this is a cessation of project U-Turn funding, would you like to clarify the hope you gave the member for Montgomery a while ago that you were actually looking for some other agency to take this money over? It is a cessation of funding to the police department.

Mr O'BYRNE - The judgment is that having Tas Police as the sole supporter of that program when there is a whole range of multi-agency programs delivered within it, is not appropriate or fair. So discussions are occurring now between myself and Ms O'Byrne, the Minister for Health, minister O'Connor and minister McKim. There is also consultation with the Premier about how as a whole of government we can provide support to that program. We have not concluded those discussions, but we are talking about it.

Mr MULDER - Given the commitment and the importance of this project to the whole of government, not just police, would it not have been a better idea to have funded it for one more year instead of shutting it down? It would allow those discussions to go on without the wind-down and all the establishment costs with premises and so on.

Mr O'BYRNE - I see your point. The thing is, it is still operating and it will operate until September. What we are trying to do in the coming weeks and month is to try and resolve that issue. It will be seamless - they will be able to recruit another course and there will not be any start-up costs, et cetera. There is a time imperative.

Mr MULDER - The point I am making is, why would you cease the funding? Why would you not just leave it in the police department and then transfer it to those other agencies when you signed up the MOU?

Mr O'BYRNE - The three-year contract that we currently have concludes, so it would not be appropriate for us to renegotiate a new contract without the basis for funding. Again, Mission Australia won the tender three years ago to deliver the service so we have to work across portfolios to try to put together a proposition to continue the program. It may very well be that we do extend for it one year to allow a more sustainable position to be obtained. What we are trying to do across departments is trying to find that level of support.

Mr MULDER - The question is, if you do that beyond September is there anywhere in a central bucket, or in another agency's bucket, the money to continue that past September?

Mr O'BYRNE - That is what we are doing now. We are having those discussions to enable us to continue it past September.

Mr MULDER - We look forward for a supplementary allocation or something?

Mr O'BYRNE - It may not be a request for additional funds; it may very well be within existing

resources of other departments that they reallocate.

Mr MULDER - Reallocate?

Mr O'BYRNE - At the moment, 40 per cent of the activity of U-Turn is numeracy and literacy programs. So we believe that the Department of Education has a role to play. Mr McKim has acknowledged that they potentially have a role to play; but again it is a matter of whether they are they able to move money from one program to another within their allocation.

Mr MULDER - I am saying if there had been some continuity of funding, we would have taken a little bit more comfort in your assurances that it was your intent to continue the program.

Mr O'BYRNE - I agree. My preference would have been to be able to say that we have an agreement, but we do not anymore.

Mr DEAN - I will just go back to the court again. Have all of the functions that the police were performing within the courts been removed from police?

Mr O'BYRNE - Not all of the functions; a limited level.

Mr HINE - We still do the transfer to the Supreme Court.

Mr DEAN - From the cell to the Supreme Court?

Mr HINE - From the Remand Centre.

Mr DEAN - And from the court back to the Remand Centre; so that the position of police will remain. I think a similar position is in place in the north-west, from memory.

Mr HINE - That is right.

Mr DEAN - What is the police position on the north-west coast?

Mr HINE - That is the police responsibility in relation to the north-west coast.

Mr DEAN - Is there any move at all to try to remove police from those court functions there in a similar way that is applying to Launceston and Hobart?

Mr O'BYRNE - Again, we are always hopeful of getting to that point. It is budget-related. There are implications for us and the Department of Justice. We were able to have discussions with the court people about the activities and their budget. Between me and minister Wightman, we were able to come to an arrangement. Discussions are ongoing, but we cannot commit to any arrangement. I would rather have police officers out doing other work, rather than sitting in courts. That is my preference, but again it is about a staged approach to resolving those issues.

CHAIR - We will move on to output group 3.

Output group 3 Traffic Policing

3.1 Traffic Policing -

Mr MULDER - My question is about the use of the GPS and things like that which might have been dealt with in overviews.

Mrs HISCUTT - The police cars are getting a little bit on in age, is that correct? Have you enough money to service them, look after them, and make sure that they can get there in time? What about four-wheel drive vehicles, are they all up to speed, have you enough money to cover those vehicles?

Mr HINE - There is a maintenance program in relation to police vehicles and they are on a leased arrangement. We have a number of vehicles in our fleet and most are on a three-year leased arrangement so they get changed every three years and four-wheel drives are also on that leased arrangement but Scott can answer any details in relation to the vehicle fleet.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Most vehicles are on a maximum of three years or 100 000 kms, some of our patrol cars turn over 100 000 kms very quickly so, they are not extended beyond that. The intention is that there is a maximum of 100 000 kms and the servicing and maintenances are predominantly done in-house and that is a regular maintenance program.

Mrs HISCUTT - And no problems there, everything is all right? Not going to break down?

Mr HINE - If you see an older vehicle that is not well kept, we need to know about it.

Mrs HISCUTT - I will take a photo and send it to you. .

Mr DEAN - Hooning legislation - is that working well? What are the numbers that have been clamped this current year? Is it an increasing issue for police and how many have been clamped and taken and sold?

Mr O'BYRNE - Between December 2009, when the offence act came into effect, and 31 March by this year, 2 655 vehicles were clamped and confiscated and 65 were permanently forfeited. Between 1 July 2012 and 31 March 2013, 451 vehicles were clamped and confiscated and 18 were forfeited so, the numbers are increasing in terms of that. We can provide on notice the stats on the seven days, 28 days, 90 days, indefinite clamping or confiscation.

Mr DEAN - If that can be tabled I would appreciate it but that satisfies the matter I am currently looking at. I was told there was an increase in this area and it is an area where police do very well. Are there any moves to look at further legislation around this area, or changes to try and get on top of this because the message does not get through?

Mr O'BYRNE - With the numbers we are getting, the message is getting through. It is a relatively new power, has only have been around a few years, and we have used it quite extensively. I do not think there are any discussions or suggestions to look at this matter. The only thing we are looking at, and we have not formulated anything in formal sense, is around trail bikes and we have confiscated some,

Mr MULDER - That was my next question.

Mr O'BYRNE - We know that in certain communities, this is a real issue. We have put a group together with local government and neighbourhood houses and others to talk about strategies; I don't think there is a silver bullet with it, to coin a phrase. There is no magic solution to this. There may be a number of strategies that we need to bring into place because some communities are being impacted. It also could be about licensing and registering. There are some pushbikes that are retrofitted with small engines - small machine that they can quickly get over the internet and get in from China. They retrofit their bike and they are very loud but not really powerful. There is a whole range of things that we need to consider about responding to the needs of the community.

Mr DEAN - My question was about trail bikes and strategies that are in place by the police. I get numerous complaints from two areas in particular about hooning motorbikes and trail bikes. I

recently submitted a report to the Clarence council where they are having similar problems as well. What has happened as a result of the matters that were raised within the Clarence community?

Mr O'BYRNE - There are two areas of particular concern. One is Rokeby and Clarendon Vale and the other is Risdon Vale. We have had a number of blitzes that have led to a change of behaviour, but once the blitz discontinues, the problem starts to rise again because these Braap machines are so cheap for parents and others. It is not just kids, you have people in their twenties and others on them, riding illegally.

We know a policing response, in terms of a clamp down or a focus on the area is important but there is a whole range of other things that we need to put in place to assist those communities because it is a real problem for them.

Mr DEAN - How many trail bikes, fitting this category, have been claimed by police in the last 12-month period?

Mr HINE - We do not have the statistics but I know that at Bridgewater there is a compound full of them and that is why we have been working with the local communities and the minister's office in relation to what we can do about it. Seizing them is the last point of the continuum. Education about the purchase and proper riding of these things is the first thing. We consider ourselves all along the continuum to make sure we can work with these communities that are affected. Having spent a bit of time down with various communities I understand their pain from the constant drone of these motorbikes. For example, in the Clarence area they have letter drops, warning the community, working with the communities groups. Everyone is working together to see what a solution can be, but unfortunately some of these areas have wide-open spaces and they ride motorbikes around them.

We do have seized a number of motorbikes and we have shed fulls of the things. We want to make it easier for police to be able to deal with the situation. But we want to go back to beginning of the continuum and educate the parents and the riders of these little motorbikes so we can solve the problem before it becomes a huge issue in various communities.

Mr DEAN - Is the police minister working with any groups to try to provide the appropriate facilities for these kids to ride these bikes? That is a matter that comes up from the Ravenswood and Rocherlea areas: 'If you get us a place to ride them we will not do what we are doing'.

Mr O'BYRNE - The issue is that those places have to be very close to the communities in which these trail bikes are. Unfortunately, you talk to private landowners and they say, yes, that is fine, you can have them on the land but I am not taking any illegal liability. That is where we are working with councils about some potential opportunities to identify areas close to these communities where there are a lot of these bikes. I know that in the Clarence municipality there was a discussion around pulling together some funds to get a trailer and organise groups of trail bikes at Cambridge. Cassimatys have a bike track out there. There is a view that we can get resources from the local community, a van or a trailer - and take it out to Cambridge, but that will only deal with some of the riders. Some people are just going to ride around their neighbourhoods, and public liability and all of these other issues are complicating the resolution.

Mr DEAN - I have one further question on drug testing and it comes up fairly regularly. There are many statistics identifying that the number of people driving under the influence of illicit drugs in Australia is quite high. How are we policing this area? I am told, again, by the police that they cannot get access to drug testing kits in order to carry out the testing they would like to do. Minister, what is the position, and are police provided with an adequate supply of these devices, to do as much testing as they need to do?

Mr O'BYRNE - In terms of the numbers, in 2010-11 we did 1 400 oral fluid tests, in 2011-12

we did 1 600 and this year to March we had done 1 300, so we are on track to get over the 2010–11 number. That indicates there are plenty of kits out there to do the work. I am not exactly sure, but there may be some operational issues in certain areas or districts, or within districts, but based on these statistics, the numbers are still relevantly strong.

Mr DEAN - The number of those charged as a result of the 1 300 tests that have been done this year?

Mr O'BYRNE - The percentages? In 2010–11, 26.6 per cent of the tests confirmed a reading, and 407 persons were charged; in 2011–12 there were 570 charges; and to March this year - we have a quarter to go - there were 317 charges. On that basis, we are probably on target with the 2010–2011 numbers.

Mr DEAN - The point I continue to make, minister, is that only about 1 to 3 per cent of those tested for alcohol are charged, but the percentage of drug drivers being tested and charged is much, much higher. Why do we concentrate more on alcohol testing? I am not saying it should not be done, but obviously we should be doing more drug testing.

Mr HINE - As you know, alcohol has greater influence and prevalence in our community, and therefore drink driving is more prevalent. Also, we are going to test more people for alcohol because of the ease and the time in relation to doing that test.

Mr DEAN - And cost I would think.

Mr HINE - And cost. A drug test costs about \$50, and a random breath test costs one or two cents, so there is a big difference, and it takes a lot longer - about 10 minutes - to do an oral drug test compared to seconds to do a random breath test. A drug test is a lot more targeted, and that is why the hit rate is a lot higher. The number of people who are drink driving is coming down. It used to be that alcohol was a factor in one in three fatal or serious accidents, but that is coming down.

Drugs are a serious issue. We take it seriously, and that is why we have a number of dedicated tests. We also do a lot of targeting in relation to drug testing, because as soon as you get a positive, the test goes to Forensic Science Services Tasmania for further testing and there is a cost associated with that as well. We are not taking our foot off the pedal. It is certainly a serious issue and we will continue to target the number of drug testings. As the minister just said, we have tested about 1 400 people up until the end of April this year, compared to 1 400 last year. We continue to make sure we are using our drug tests and we are using them wisely because there is a cost with them.

Mr DEAN - Thank you.

Mr VALENTINE - Registration labels: how has it gone not having them? I am interested to hear what the experience has been?

Mr O'BYRNE - This is under the DIER portfolio. There has been no noticeable change in terms of a decision about that anyway.

Mr HINE - As a visual aid that has gone in relation to a quick check on whether a vehicle is registered or unregistered. We may well go to terminals in police vehicles with the tablet devices that we are trialling. You can do it on the spot and the automated number plate recognition technology, and we have a number of those around the state, pick it up as well. In DIER, down south, they have someone permanently driving around with an automatic number plate recognition system that sends out letters to people to say they are unregistered.

Mr VALENTINE - There has been no noticeable change in terms of the stats in people unregistered?

Mr O'BYRNE - It doesn't hamper policing, it has improved it.

CHAIR - That completes that output group.

Output Group 4 Emergency Management

Mr MULDER - State Emergency Service - this is more of an operational question that arose. There was a lot of feedback, not necessarily from police, but within the emergency services across the board that during the bushfires we were actually losing contact with resources. Some agencies were unaware of the location of resources they had deployed into a very dangerous situation. Can you confirm that that is within your knowledge?

Mr HINE - I am not aware of the specific instances. That is part of the remit out of the Malcolm Hyde Review, I would have thought.

Mr O'BYRNE - Especially at the peak of the operation, we had a lot of units involved, be they TFS, Police, SES, Parks and Wildlife, Forestry or local community; there were a whole lot of activities that occurred. I have not heard of a report and no-one has raised formally with our office, or informally with me, that there were gaps or missing people. From time to time people were off on operational duties and may not have been in direct contact. I am not aware of any specific examples. If you do have any, we encourage you to put that in as a part of the review and maybe -

Mr MULDER - I will probably ask the same question of the SES and Fire when the time comes, but from a policing perspective, you are not aware of any of those sorts of situations where you have lost contact with people?

Mr HINE - I think in any major operation, communication is a major issue; but obviously this is part of the review. We are doing the debrief process now and that will be fed into the Malcolm Hyde government review. That is where it is expected to be addressed.

Mr MULDER - I take some comfort that you are not aware of any particular incidents. I just think it is important to note if we have such problems in communications with our workers in a crisis. The history of these things is that we have lost fire fighters who have been deployed to a situation after losing contact with them in order to withdraw them. It is a really significant -

Mr O'BYRNE - Or to redeploy them to an area of greater need.

Mr MULDER - It is a significant issue.

Mr O'BYRNE - It is.

Mr MULDER - I will take some comfort and no doubt ask the same question of the fire service and whether they are aware of anything. That was my only real concern there.

4.2 State security and rescue operations -

I want to come back to the *Fortescue*, not from its seaworthiness or sailability aspect but more from its procurement. I recall at the time there was a great fuss about the urgent need and necessity for procurement of this vessel. I believe it took two years before this urgent need was filled but I notice in the absence of its replacement there is some impact on search and rescue operations, as that incident off the Victorian coast highlighted. I was not going to bore the estimates committee with

the details, but there was an incident off the Victorian coast where other seagoing assets would have turned around and the *Van Diemen* was called off the slip on Hobart because of a lack of an adequate seagoing resource in the north of the state.

Mr O'BYRNE - Other emergency services and even the navy were called back to port because of the conditions.

Mr MULDER - I concede that, but always it would have been at the discretion of the master of the vessel. The competence and the seas, as you described in your answer, were of such a nature that I think they have been out in worse and done a good job.

Mr O'BYRNE - I suppose the issue is that other jurisdictions also called back their vessels because of the conditions, which were significant.

Mr MULDER - I am talking about a lack of capability; even if the seas had been slower and it had been closer to Tasmania, we had to call a vessel off the slip in Hobart due to the lack of a northern response capability. I am asking you, with the inordinate amount of time it has taken to get the replacement for the PV, whether there is a gap in our operational and safety and rescue capabilities?

Mr HINE - We have undertaken a large vessel review to ascertain the capability gap. That review has now concluded and we have had it audited. Yesterday the naval experts came down to assist in the review to ascertain and validate that capability gap, so we are addressing and looking at it to ascertain the location of that gap. With the *Fortescue* off-line, we now have the *Vigilant* filling that gap. Through this large vessel review we are looking at what the gap is.

Mr MULDER - I know it is before your time - both commissioner and minister - but, minister, was such a capability gap review not considered necessary when we first audited?

Mr O'BYRNE - It was before my time; all I can do is deal with the circumstance we have now. We are doing the review to find out what the gap is and getting advice on when and how we can sell the vessel that is no longer fit for purpose. We will allocate the resources once we are able to.

Mr MULDER - You would not have done what the then minister did?

Mr O'BYRNE - I am not saying that at all. A whole range of decisions were made at a point in time for certain reasons and I think it would be unfair with the different circumstances to make a judgment. All I can do is deal with what we have.

Mr MULDER - I wonder whether that would have been answered differently had you been the minister at the time.

Mr O'BYRNE - I would have answered it differently if I was minister then.

Capital investment program -

[5.15 p.m.]

Mr MULDER - I want to ask about the supplementary allocation relating to the police radio network. Could we have an update on why that \$10 million was needed and what is it to be spent on?

Mr O'BYRNE - It is not an extra \$10 million. It was unspent money in the previous financial year that needed to be allocated across in terms of the digital upgrade project. There were a few, not so much delays, but in terms of timing payments and resources the money was not allocated to us and we had to go to Treasury. For whatever reason, that was the decision made in terms of the

allocation of resources. When we need it, we call on it. It wasn't an extra \$10 million for the project; it was unspent from previous budget times. We allocate it at the time we need it.

Mr MULDER - I will ask the Treasurer next time about why we do supplementary allocations for this but not others. Is there a future whole of government radio network in the pipeline? What cost and contribution is involved in that?

Mr HINE - There is a whole of government radio project that is currently under way. Once the digital upgrade project is finished then with standard industry practice you need to refresh the radio network every seven to 10 years. We are looking at 2018 to 2020 when a new network needs to be commissioned. We are being tasked by government, through a funding program, to come back with a business case to what a whole of government radio network looks like, ready for the commissioning between 2018 and 2020.

Mr MULDER - What is the likelihood that that radio network will be an extension/expansion of the current digital radio system that you are using?

Mr HINE - We are on 800 megahertz at the moment and we have to come back, as are all law enforcement agencies, to 400 megahertz nationally. Other agencies will be using the radio network. I do not know what it is going to look like but it is going to be a priority system that will take us into the future. Until we go out for a request for tender or tender the radio network, as the result of a business case, we do not know what it looks like, but it will be on that 400 megahertz spectrum that we are required to go to.

Mr MULDER - How much of what we have, in terms assets and software, would be transferable to the new radio network?

Mr HINE - That is part of the tender process. We have just put in new switches as part of the digital upgrade project, which are quite expensive as part of that \$10 million. There are a number of towers around the state that the police department and other government agencies own. You would expect a lot of the equipment would be reused. But, again, that is part of the tender process.

Mr MULDER - Given that the current police radio network started of as a whole of government radio network and that the government of the day chose to let significant agencies not be party to that, which then caused all sorts of contractual problems down the track with a lack of traffic data for customers, which then resulted in a lack of towers and resources and other capabilities, what security are we going to get that this time the government is going to make it a whole of government radio project and insist that agencies be part of it?

Mr HINE - It is not just a police priority radio network; the Tasmanian electrical supply industry uses that radio network as well.

Mr MULDER - I am aware of that. But other industries, Forestry for example and the fire and ambulance services and a few others made huge songs about it. It was a different coloured government at the time.

Mr O'BYRNE - Again, it is the intent. I am not going to trawl back through history but the intent from Premier and Cabinet is that we standardise costs so we involve the key agencies.

Mr MULDER - I just hope we are not sending good money after bad at this point in time.

State Fire Commission

Mr O'BYRNE - At the table with me is Chief Fire Officer Mike Brown and Director of Corporate Services, Mike Gallagher, and Cheryl Ames. During the 2012-13 summer, Tasmania

experienced the biggest emergency crisis for several decades. The response to the crisis by our Emergency Service personnel was magnificent and undoubtedly contributed to there being no loss of life as a direct result of the bushfires.

The TFS faced its most severe test in the history of the organisation. TFS personnel in the front line maintained a professional composure throughout the crisis and constantly supported by the TFS leadership group personnel who managed these extremely challenging incident. State of the art technology and contemporary firefighting methods, including the use of helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft, were at the forefront of the TFS response to the bushfire crisis.

I acknowledged the significant role of Tasmania Police officers, SES staff and state service personnel in assisting the TFS emergency response to the bushfires and the continued assistance in the recovery effort. The TFS remains the only Australian fire service that is a fully amalgamated urban/rural career and volunteer fire-fighting agency. The Tasmanian government is determined to ensure that the TFS is appropriately resourced to enable it to remain a highly effective and efficient organisation.

I would like to commend the Chief Fire Officer, Mike Brown, for his leadership during the recent bushfire crisis and his ongoing leadership of our exemplary fire service. The TFS leadership team, career firefighters, state service personnel and almost 5 000 volunteers from around the state are also to be commended for their services to the Tasmanian community. The TFS consistently conducts its business in an appropriate manner and we welcome this opportunity to demonstrate how the organisation has met its appropriation.

CHAIR - I could echo those comments on behalf the members on this side of the table.

Mrs HISCUTT - A mighty job. The \$1.8 million that has been set aside for the construction of fire stations around the place - I have one at Forth and Turners Beach - is that going to be for volunteer fire fighters or are you looking at putting career FTEs into our area?

Mr BROWN - No, it will be for volunteers - Forth, Turners Beach and Ulverstone all have volunteers. Because road systems and the type of vehicles we use have become better over time we will amalgamate those brigades. In direct distance they are only about 4 or 5 kilometres apart so the brigades are happy to combine their forces, combine their resources, and are happy to have a new facility. We will dispose of the current site at Turners Beach and the one at Forth and that will, for the most part, fund the construction of a new facility halfway between them. I cannot recall the name of the road where there has been some land identified.

Mrs HISCUTT - They tell me the Ulverstone response times are good when it comes to volunteers. They are all there in the allotted timeframes. You have no intentions of putting career firefighters there?

Mr BROWN - No, with the frequent service from the Ulverstone brigade they are very reliable and they are a very busy brigade. They are one of the biggest brigades in the state, they well led, they are motivated, well equipped and they are certainly responding very reliably to the residential, commercial-industrial and bushfire risks in the area.

Mr O'BYRNE - They also receive support from the career brigades, both Devonport, and Burnie and -

Mrs HISCUTT - They do. How many FTEs does the Fire Service have currently?

Mr BROWN - I know for qualified career firefighters the number is about 306. The vast majority of those people work shift work on career fire stations but some of them would be working in areas such as in training, building fire safety and community fire safety projects. The majority of

those are within the station - just the total numbers there -

Mr O'BYRNE - Employee numbers: as of 30 April 2013, there were 452.5 FTEs.

Mr BROWN - That is inclusive of support staff, everyone in administration through to mechanics and radio maintenance people and so on. As I said, 306 of those would be operational career firefighters.

Mrs HISCUTT - What about the SES? Do you have the FTEs for that?

Mr O'BYRNE - The SES?

Mrs HISCUTT - No, that was just a by-the way question. Thank you for that and a wonderful job at Dunalley - what would we do without you.

CHAIR - Any further questions on the State Fire Commission?

Mr MULDER - On fire service levies and things like that, could you just give me a quick breakdown? Percentages defined in terms of what counts as the Fire Service contribution, the insurance fire levy, motor vehicle fire levy -

Mr BROWN - Thank you and I will pass that on to Corporate Services.

Mr GALLAGHER - The Fire Service contribution, for this year, is \$34.9 million; the insurance fire levy is \$17.8 million and the motor vehicle fire levy is \$6.8 million.

Mr MULDER - So there is nothing coming out of Treasury, the Fire Service levy being collected by local government and the other is collected from insurers?

Mr O'BYRNE - No, the state government contribution for 2013-14 is \$2.1 million.

Mr GALLAGHER - The motor vehicle levy cuts through Transport but the Fire Service contribution cuts through local council, of which the Fire Service pay a 4 per cent contribution fee.

Mr MULDER - I will go back to a question you probably heard earlier on in relation to operations and that was the suggestion by, I think it might have been volunteer firefighters whom you were having trouble finding at the height of the blaze and I am just wondering whether you had any knowledge of that?

Mr BROWN - Across the board we found our communications worked very well but because of Tasmania's very rugged terrain we know there are black spots. For where the brigades are located, all of those brigades right throughout Tasmania and on the islands can communicate with us but we know they can be responded to areas where communications are poor. They have the choice then of going to another channel because they have multi-channel sets; in some cases they will be able to get out on an alternative channel. In what we call major incidents or campaign fires, we allocate a fire ground channel to that incident and usually either drive or fly - with a helicopter - a radio transmitter to that area. If it is in a remote area where the coverage is not good, we will dedicate a transmitter to that area that can operate for the duration of the incident.

Mr MULDER - That is on the VHF or UHF frequencies?

Mr BROWN - Yes, it is on VHF.

Mr MULDER - With the topography and the terrain and all sorts of things where digital does not seem to work that well, what is your view then on this whole-of-government radio project that is

going to move you into a communication system that does not work for you?

Mr BROWN - We need to be careful about we are assuming. Technology has moved forward and we know that we have had a good system; we have been getting good radio coverage with the VHF system we have been using for a long time, but we know the technology is moving to digital. At the moment we are investing in digital links that will go from our bases to the mountain tops, but it still operates on VHF out in the field. VHF works well, but we know we need to move ahead with different technologies because digital is becoming the mainstream. We know that if we want to buy new radio sets in the future, the choice of new VHF sets is becoming smaller and smaller and smaller, so we need to move towards digital at some point in time.

Also - and I don't understand the technicalities of it - a bit more noise is beginning to come into the background of VHF radio systems. We know at some point in time we have to move. We are certainly working with police, with DPAC and with the other agencies in terms of scoping out what we need because we all want a system that is going to be at least as good as what we are operating with at the moment, or even better into the future.

We do have some wriggle room, as I think I heard Mr Hine explain. We have some time to look at the different technologies, to see how the system is going to work. It is important, certainly to us and to all our people, that they have communication systems they can rely on.

Mr O'BYRNE - There will always be contingencies, if there are gaps that are identified, and there are other ways to support the communications.

Mr MULDER - Thank you. Can I add my praise, coming from an electorate that was hugely impacted? Overall, it was a magnificent performance, particularly from the volunteers who went out there and showed they do more in their clubrooms than have a few beers and play snooker. I really do compliment you.

That leads onto another issue, and I know we have raised it before. The full time professional brigade has significant downtime. This is an opportunity to explain how that downtime is utilised.

Mr BROWN - The shift work fire fighters work on a rotation, which is two dayshifts of 10 hours and two long 14-hour nightshifts. I cannot remember the exact hour that they are still on working time - I think it might be 2300 at night. Until then they are doing training, maintenance, gear checks and familiarisations throughout their districts. For fatigue management they have downtime after that, which is their own time, through to 6 a.m. in the morning. That has been traditional across all state services, and across the world - that there is a downtime element - but that is one of the costs of managing fatigue and personnel over extended shifts such as ones they work.

Mr VALENTINE - I commend you again for the effort at Dunalley. I was there on a couple of days over that period, and it was great to see the services working together. That brings me to a question about trauma. How are you handling that with your own force of people, and with the volunteers? Could you outline that for us?

Mr BROWN - Thank you for that. We have been mindful of that issue, particularly in southern communities such as Dunalley, and there are others across the state. We had losses at Montumana through to Bicheno, and up in the Derwent Valley. In those communities, personnel are coming home from work each night and still passing areas where people have lost properties. Some volunteers describe to me where they used to see lights. Some of our volunteers suffered losses - I was talking to one the other day, and I said, 'You live on Summers Bay Road don't you?' He said, 'Yes.' Then he said, 'Oh, no, not at the moment. Hopefully we will build again one of these days.'

Mr VALENTINE - They have lost assets.

Mr BROWN - Yes, a lot of people are deeply affected and we have a range of employee assistance programs, and critical incident stress management people who are working with some of them. We have people who are seeing psychiatrists at the moment. We are doing what we can to be on the front foot in ensuring we are providing these people with the necessary services. It is not only volunteers - it is some of the staff as well - so we have had an extended welfare program. We needed to be on the front foot about this because in many of the places where it was needed, people were not used to having to access such services.

Mr VALENTINE - They have to very much encouraged to do so.

Mr O'BYRNE - Absolutely.

Mr VALENTINE - They would see it as a weakness, maybe.

Mr O'BYRNE - Exactly. People are very proud, they volunteer and work hard and sometimes they do not accept that certain things have a greater impact. The issue we have is not just in terms of the incidents, where people will unpack what they did and could they have done something different and they start then to work it through. You connect that with the length of the season that we have, from 3 January. A bit of business before Christmas, but it seems that the heavy work started on 3 January and the season finished in late April where we had a wild fire at Tea Tree Gully, near Richmond. It was not only an intense season in terms of the incidents, but it was long one. You are dealing with people unpacking every day's activities but there is not a long time to recover.

Mr VALENTINE - They have to respond to another.

Mr O'BYRNE - It has been inspirational because whenever they get the call on the beeper, they keep on turning up and even when we have had a fuel reduction burn at Mt Direction last week a couple of volunteer fire brigades, who had a very busy season, were there helping out. We have to manage people and make sure the resources and workload is manageable, but we have people who have had a very busy summer.

Mr VALENTINE - It is not just the trauma on the day, it is all the touchstones that have gone in their community and having to cope with that as well and the people around me.

Mr BROWN - We have also had to recognise the other people who have paid a consequence. It is not just the volunteers. Many of them essentially gave up their summer holidays to fight fires and they came back to work and still their families and employers were letting them go and give support for TFS. It has been an absolutely tremendous effort but it not only about the fire people. A lot of families and employers have sacrificed a fair bit for Tasmanians this year.

Mr DEAN - In relation to the levies and those three areas where the money is collected. In this current year, 2013-13, the increase is about \$3 million in the levies collected. In the 2014-15, it is about \$2 million and it goes up about \$2 million each year. Where does the extra money come from to make that increase? Householders are paying 4 per cent, aren't they, across the board?

Mr GALLAGHER - The question is: what are we doing with that extra money.

Mr DEAN - No. I am reading here, the revenues and other incomes from transactions, the fire service levy, for instance in 2012-13 was \$56 724. In the current year it is \$59.500 million, which is up \$3 million. Next year there is further increase of about \$2 million. What is making that increase?

Mr GALLAGHER - In terms of the fire service contribution itself, this increase for this year is 4 per cent for 2013-14.

Mr DEAN - What was it last year?

Mr GALLAGHER - It was 4 per cent last year as well. That will allow, as part of their programs, to run a recruit course of 18 recruits. We have the bushfire readiness program, which is being introduced to fund that as well. In terms of the increases on the fire service -

Mr O'BYRNE - Are you talking about the money beyond the levies?

Mr DEAN - No. When you look at the fire services levies, it is clearly identified how much it goes up each year, what you are collecting through those three levy areas. Where is the increase? Are there more people coming into that levy? Are there more homes? Are there more registrations?

Mr GALLAGHER - There is three parts to it. Whilst the Treasury paper show it as one, that the three parts being the fire service contribution, the 4 per cent. The commission itself has an opportunity to set that amount. That goes to the minister to be signed off on each year. In terms of the insurance fire levy, it is based on premiums written, so the commission itself does not have any say in how much revenue it will receive. By regulation, the percentages in regard to each premium that has a fire component, is set. In terms of our estimates they are based on what has happened in the past. What you have seen in 2013-14 compared to 2012-13 is a big increase in insurance because that what we experienced. In terms of the motor vehicle levy, that has remained quite stable over the last few years.

Mr DEAN - Right, that is what I was trying to get - where that extra has come from. The householders say they are paying enough.

CHAIR - Even though you said you were not going to ask any more questions, there you go.

Mr DEAN - I am sorry about that.

Mr MULDER - Now we know why the other committee has been sitting so late, but not today.

CHAIR - I don't think there are any more questions on the Fire Service.

DIVISION 6

(Department of Justice)

Output group 11

Workplace Services

Mr O'BYRNE - The focus of the work of this department is essentially around workplace safety and building regulation and there are a number of challenges in making sure that we promote safety and health and wellbeing programs within workplaces to ensure that people get home safely. There has been a reduction in injuries year on year and a range of new activities undertaken with the new harmonised Work Health and Safety Act. The work of the department is extensive.

CHAIR - Does your portfolio take in industrial relations services?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes.

CHAIR - Because your opening comments were focused on workplace services.

Mr O'BYRNE - The vast majority of industrial services are now with the federal government. We work with the Tasmanian Industrial Commission which effectively deals with public sector matters, long service leave complaints and 2 per cent of all industrial matters, if that. It is minuscule really, it's all virtually in the Fair Work arena, which is the federal government.

Output group 9 Industrial Relations Services

9.1 Services of the Tasmanian Industrial Commission

9.2 Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Tribunal Decisions

9.3 Industrial Relations Policy and Advocacy Services

CHAIR - Does anyone have any questions on 9.1, 9.2 or 9.3?

Mr MULDER - Not in relation to the commission, but I suppose one question that springs to mind is that last year we were talking about members of parliament's salaries and there was an amendment to say that this would be referred to the Industrial Commission. I am just wondering if that referral has occurred or when it will occur given the time frames in the legislation.

[5.45 p.m.]

Mr O'BYRNE - That is an excellent question. Ultimately it is a referral to the employer which is DPAC. If it is not with the commission now it is no doubt in train, but it is not something I have followed, to be honest. We made the decision and I got on with my ministry. If it is before the Industrial Commission, I have not seen a decision but obviously the legislation will be abided by and that is in the Premier's purview. I think but we can clarify that and find out exactly where it is.

Mr MULDER - I will let my credit card service provider know.

Output group 11 Workplace services

11.1 Workplace standards -

CHAIR - Minister, has there been any movement towards the development of a code of practice in the residential construction sector? When the harmonised regulations became effective this year, and when they were debated last year, there was plenty of discussion in the parliament about the difficulties or the onerous nature of what might emerge for the residential construction sector.

Mr O'BYRNE - There was much discussion about that and as recently as only a month or so ago there has been a discussion at a national level about how we deal with residential building sites and different codes of practice. This is consistent with the COAG reforms and a whole range of portfolio areas including industrial relations and workplace health and safety. We know that there is a significant benefit to the Australian economy by having consistent standards across jurisdictions. I think there has been a conversation at a national level about the briefing that is being talked about although I do not think there is any resolution of that discussion. I think there is a willingness to talk about a residential code to deal with some of the smaller building sites, and some of the requirements that have been placed on builders. I will ask Roy Ormerod to report on some of those national discussions.

Mr ORMEROD - Thank you, minister. SafeWork Australia is working on developing an annex to the construction code which specifically targets issues around the housing sector. In the meantime, we are working with the housing sector in Tasmania to assist them in getting access to compliance in a manner that suits their industry so there is not this over-the-top, heavy-handed compliance when often the issues are more targeted towards major construction rather than the housing industry.

CHAIR - They are interesting comments because Roy has just indicated that the office is prepared to work with the residential construction industry so that what might be seen as onerous is

not enforced; but if it is regulation, why is it not enforced? I share the view that it is onerous.

Mr O'BYRNE - No, I think there was a view from certain sections of the industry that there is a perception that they are onerous. What we are trying to do is to have national consistency but we have always said in terms of the implementation that we would be flexible and supporting industries adapting to the new arrangements. There is a discussion around some of the residential housing code and it has not concluded. So instead of 'l-a-w, black and white' from day one, we are working with the industry to transition to assist them in understanding the new requirements.

As recently as Thursday and Friday of last week there were large forums in the north and south of the state working with the building industry. At Wrest Point in the Tasman Room there would have been about 450 builders whom I spoke to last Friday afternoon. They had all come along to a Workplace Standards forum to talk about compliance and some of the questions that they had around the new regulations. I think there is a lot of work being done by the department to assist. They are a change, but I would not call them onerous. This year we have had two deaths in the construction industry; last year we had two deaths. I think there are just under 800 injuries per year that occur in that industry. It is a dangerous industry and we want to make sure that we have appropriate measures in place. The commitment is from a regulator to work with industry for the new implementation but, given some of the issues that have been raised by the HIA nationally, we are having a national conversation about how we can assist and resolve some of their issues from a technical basis as opposed to an implementation.

CHAIR - What I detect is a desire to move towards a residential-specific code of practice and you have indicated there were some recent forums interstate - I presume from all jurisdictions - what is the outcome from that? Is there a movement towards the production of such a code? I understand from contacts with an office in Canberra, there had been a vote on the matter and it was decided not to produce a residential-specific code of practice?

Mr ORMEROD - That is correct. Rather than have two codes of practice for the construction industry, which could be confusing - some residential building work can be equally complex, if not more complex, than commercial. It is much better to have one construction code to look at the concerns that the housing sector has about interpreting what they see as their obligations on the construction code, by amending the construction code, so it covers all industry rather than two codes, which can cause confusion.

Mr O'BYRNE - There is a whole range of question marks, so to avoid confusion we are trying to get a national approach to supporting the industry.

CHAIR - What is the industry view about that? Who were the people who made that decision recently, which was a no, to developing a residential code? Are we talking about bureaucrats or government departments that have made that decision? If that is the case, what is the industry view as to the desirability for a residential-specific code?

Mr ORMEROD - SafeWork Australia is a tripartite body set up to look at issues around national codes. That body comprises of industry, unions and regulators, and is the body that determines as a result of that meeting, it is best if we have one code for the construction industry and taking account of any areas which may require clarification for the housing sector to put into that code where necessary.

CHAIR - Does the government have a policy position on that, minister?

Mr O'BYRNE - We want to make sure there is consistency across states. That is what ministers and the COAG agenda are signed up to. Having multiple codes within an industry promotes confusion. How do you delineate the size of the contract that does not indicate a complexity or potentially the danger of the work? It is site specific. We have negotiated a national

position. You talk to some builders and they do not want to be members of the HIA; they fall into line but they may have a personal and private view which is expressed. All we can do is try to be consistent, transparent, and assist people in working through it, particularly with the residential sector. There is a commitment to work with them to have a greater understanding of what their requirements are.

CHAIR - As minister, were you aware of the position taken at the meeting?

Mr O'BYRNE - I understand what you are referring to - an email from Stewart Clues - where he has suggested a certain event occurred where I instructed someone to do something that was done differently. When we give instructions to bureaucrats to go to national meetings, there is a view to try to accommodate certain issues from a state perspective. At no stage did we walk away from the principle that we wanted a consistency between states. Governments have signed up to that, both state and territories, that there is a consistent implementation of the regulations. We have responded to Mr Clues in relation to that. There are different opinions about the various votes and in terms of the nature of that meeting. There was a debate and discussion had, that a consistent approach was maintained, and a commitment to help the residential builders across the country in implementing the code.

CHAIR - In that same vein, I am always reluctant in this process to raise single issues, or personal experience, but when we are talking about this new compliance requirement after the harmonisation laws were introduced, I am aware of some circumstances and I will bring one in particular to your attention. This was on a residential building site where a builder was challenged as to wearing a helmet on the site by a workplace standards officer who entered the site. There was some texta writing on the helmet and the self-employed builder was told that that helmet was non-compliant because the texta would penetrate the plastic fabric of the helmet and render the helmet unsafe for further use. He was required to go off the site, replace the helmet and a further inspection would be made.

Mr O'BYRNE - That came to you second-hand?

CHAIR - That came to me first-hand. I was really concerned when I heard that.

Mr O'BYRNE - We will have to take it on notice. It is hard to comment on an individual circumstance.

CHAIR - I understand that and that is why I say I am reluctant, and always have been through the estimates process, to raise those kinds of issues.

Mr O'BYRNE - If you can get us some details outside of this process we will act on that.

CHAIR - That may be possible. It went further than that. The self-employed contractor was physically grabbed by the shirt and was told that the shirt did not have enough high vis percentage in its fabric. From an MP's point of view, that it is really concerning. We signed off as members of parliament on the harmonised legislation and if the application of that legislation is going to be at that level, I think, minister, you would be as concerned as I am, when I was informed of that situation.

Mr ORMEROD - Can I suggest there is an appeal process that the act clearly states. If there is a problem, if a person believes an inspector has given an order they do not agree with, they can always come to the regulator and appeal that decision. It is important that we get that information back so we can assist.

Mr OVERLAND - They can also complain. If that has happened that is clearly not appropriate conduct, so we are concerned and if we could get some details we can follow up on it.

CHAIR - Yes, certainly. Minister, Roy is right, but that is not the sort of bureaucratic response anybody in the real world would want to a conflict such as that. We don't need to hear 'Well, there is a channel you can follow'.

Mr MULDER - And even more time off the site.

CHAIR - Anything else on that issue of the harmonised legislation and its application? Minister, can I ask the current status of energy ratings for house design/construction in Tasmania?

Mr O'BYRNE - We delayed the six star at the request of the HIA. We had an agreement with MBA that we would delay it until 1 May this year and there is no policy decision to move beyond the six star, so we are now in line with the other Australian jurisdictions. We were the last by a fair distance. There are no policy decisions to move beyond six.

CHAIR - It is currently six?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes.

CHAIR - You can understand from my previous life that I keep in touch with builders regularly, as you would with your previous life. My reference to the Building Code of Australia suggests that Tasmania is still exempt from six-star ratings for houses.

Mr O'BYRNE - No, it is a policy intent to move to six star from 1 May 2013. There was an issue related to hot water cylinders, were exempt in terms of outlawing of hot water cylinders. At the request of a number of bodies, we have deferred that decision. But in terms of a six star rating from 1 May this year, it is implemented.

CHAIR - Can you point me to the enabling gazettal or regulation?

Mr O'BYRNE - I can do, but not at the moment.

CHAIR - If you would not mind, please because my reference to the BCA tells me that we are still exempt. It has not been enacted for Tasmania yet. People designing houses out there right at the moment -

Mr O'BYRNE - They are doing 9 and 10 -

CHAIR - They can do all sorts of things by choice, but if they do not have to do six and believe they do, people are being led astray.

Mr MULDER - Misled into obeying a future law.

CHAIR - Given that your understanding is, 1 May six-star became effective, has there been a communication to designers in the industry?

Mr O'BYRNE - Absolutely, very clear instructions, especially when we were to make the decision in 2012 and there was intense lobbying from a couple of individuals on both sides to bring it in last year. But at the request of the HIA and the MBA to allow time to adapt and design this et cetera, we deferred it and we were very clear and open and we communicated with key players and many people in the industry. Roy, please outline the communication strategy.

Mr ORMEROD - We have had a number of staff around the state talking to goods surveyors, building groups and designers on the requirements of the six-star. That has been running for some time now. In the last 12 months, awareness has been out there on the new requirement for six-star.

CHAIR - I understand that but I am concerned as to whether there has been enabling legislation/regulation or order to make it law.

Mr O'BYRNE - It is a legitimate question. If the BCR is telling you that we still have five then we will check that out. My understanding is we have done all the regulatory basics as appropriate.

CHAIR - Am I right in understanding that in preparation for moving to six-star a regulatory impact statement was produced and the RIS suggested there was a net loss to the state of Tasmania by moving to six-star?

Mr O'BYRNE - Only on the basis that the energy consumption was renewable, based on Hydro power, and that was a key component in their assessment. They do a full assessment but in terms of the energy consumption and the standards that are applied, consumption will go down for people under a six-star rating because houses are more efficient. A whole of life assessment is made. They measure the kind of energy used in Tasmania as predominantly renewable. That meant the figures themselves meant that with the impact on et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. That is my understanding.

CHAIR - That is what a regulatory impact statement does, doesn't it? It includes the impact for the new regulation. You have indicated that based on the renewable energy component, primarily, that we did not need to move to six-star and there was net detriment to Tasmania by doing so.

Mr O'BYRNE - But the cost of heating a house has increased significantly since the RIS was done. Power prices have increased and that RIS was done back in 2010. Also, the higher star rating you have, the less power you use. In relation to the RIS it was a point in time. It was marginal in terms of the whole of life assessment or whole of cost assessment and it is more of an assessment not necessarily to the consumer but measuring carbon footprint and all those elements. They can be quite broad but most people now, if they had a choice, would have a higher star rating for their home and building and in terms of energy consumption we are trying to balance right wheel.

We were the last state to get to six by a long shot. It was at the request of industry to delay and we have acknowledged their views. Other states are going ahead of us and there are a number on seven continuing to pursue the highest energy star rating. We are not proposing that; we think six is where it's at at the moment, and unless there is a compelling case to move to seven and beyond in a mandated way, we are happy with six.

CHAIR - Minister, you mentioned if people had a choice they would take a six-star rating, and that is the very issue, choice. A five-star-rated house I would think you would agree is a very highly energy-efficient house, as indeed was a four-star only two years ago when that was the requirement. You talk about choice, so can I put it to you that the extra capital cost to comply with a six-star as opposed to a five-star is quite substantial and if given the choice, people would not go for the extra capital cost but might retrofit some extra insulation at a later stage once they have all the other complying components. An education exercise may have been better than the stick approach, which I understand you have taken.

Mr O'BYRNE - It is not just me, it is a policy setting that virtually every other jurisdiction accepted. In terms of the overall cost and percentage to achieve a six-star rating as a part of the overall cost, yes, it is an increase but it is not so significant as to undermine the total build and for the ongoing cost for energy consumption over the period, you have to look at the upfront cost and over a 10 or 20-year period how much money you have saved in energy consumption and do a calculation over 10 years. It's like the issue with solar panels - there is an upfront capital cost with a saving and benefit of having them in place.

CHAIR - Solar panels are a choice but the six-star rating is not. I think if the choice was given, people might not go for a six-star, they might work towards that a later time.

One final question about the introduction of the bushfire code and the requirement of inspection and so on. You would be aware that there was a huge bottleneck created because there was only one person designated in the state to sign off on compliance with bushfire codes for house design. I understand that in recent times there have been some steps taken.

Mr O'BYRNE - We now have over 10 people. A new code came in in November and initially the Tasmanian Fire Service made the decision that for the sake of consistency across different plans, there should be one person at the beginning to set the parameters. The TFS had a very busy summer so a lot of resources were required. In terms of where we are at now, a new system is in place and the last thing we want is for regions and local government areas to have inconsistent decisions made by the TFS, so they took a policy decision to have one person initially to do the work and provide the training. It is important that we train people in terms of certification. There was a view that the market would respond and people would get in and do their training to get the accreditation, but there was not the response that the Tasmanian Fire Service thought there would be and a number of people chose not to go to the final stages of the training and get accredited. We have been working with them and over the last month or so, as of last week, 10 people have now been accredited and we are working through the backlog.

CHAIR - Would there be capacity within that process to facilitate some qualification for building surveyors to get to that level? Is it Fire Service-specific?

Mr O'BYRNE - In terms of the work there is two levels. There is the Fire Service and local government area making their decisions. In terms of the Tasmania Fire Service, they want to make sure the people who are making the decisions are accredited. There was a position put by the HIA for a retrospective accreditation. We think that would have been quite dangerous because you would have people who may not have the skills or the necessary wherewithal to make the assessment.

We would be going back to homeowners and saying, 'Look, by the way you were given accreditation but we reviewed the decision and you are not up to spec and you are going to have to go back and do it again.' We wanted to avoid that situation. Again, the TFS is of the view that they would have a greater level of take up if the people doing the work were accredited, so it has been an unfortunate set of circumstances. We acknowledge that in some areas it has had an impact, and we are working through the backlog now.

I don't have a firm view or a policy position and I am not caught up on who it should be. As long as the TFS can accredit them, and they are acceptable to the TFS, that will do me.

CHAIR - There would be capacity for the TFS to make its own decision about private building surveyors, or building surveyors at the council level, becoming upskilled?

Mr O'BYRNE - As long as they are accredited with the TFS to be able to do it. Ultimately, the TFS will be making these decisions, to make sure there is consistency, and that the people who are accredited to do the work can actually do it.

CHAIR - Yes, but we understand there are time constraints put on the approval, and if it is not done within the statutory period it is deemed approved. If there are hold ups, for example because of a busy fire, and if we are relying on TFS employees only -

Mr O'BYRNE - We are not now. As I said, it is not just 10 people within the TFS - there are a number of private practitioners. Nine people outside the TFS are now under accreditation.

CHAIR - Right. I presumed they were within the TFS - those extra people.

Mr O'BYRNE - The TFS is responsible for accreditation. That was the surprise - we thought

there would be more people putting their hand up, because there is a financial benefit for them. They can charge a fee. But ultimately there was - I wouldn't exactly call it a market failure - but there was a slow take up by the private sector.

CHAIR - Building surveyors can do it if they want? They can put their hand up and then they could do it all in the one house?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes.

Mr DEAN - I just have one question on that. This plan obviously relates to extensions and that has been area of concern. You may well have read it in the paper yourself - it was written in the *Examiner* where a person at Dilston had a small extension put on the back of this home in a very clear area that was no more fire prone than the middle of Hobart, but they had to have a fire plan done.

Mr O'BYRNE - There have been fires in the middle of Hobart recently.

Mr DEAN - It is probably safer than the middle of Hobart, I should put it that way. He was required to have a fire plan for what he says is a small extension. He spoke to me about it and he finished up not going ahead with it because of the need for a fire plan.

Mr O'BYRNE - This is more of a local government area.

Mr DEAN - The fire plan was required, because the plan had been held up at that stage for about six months. I rang the office here at Hobart, and the gentleman who was required to sign off the fire plan - and I must say he was excellent - said, 'I'll get to it straight away.' I think it was done either that day, that night or whatever - he must have picked it out and done it.

There is no restriction on the size of an extension, for a plan to be necessary, so the requirement obviously covers any extension, even in a rural area?

Mr O'BYRNE - The example that you refer to and the incident that gave rise to -

Mr DEAN - It was in the paper.

Mr O'BYRNE - your concern - I think we are reviewing that under local government. Is that right?

Mr ORMEROD - We are working on that.

Mr O'BYRNE - We are working with LGAT.

Mr DEAN - Thank you very much for that. One more question. How many officers do we have at Launceston? The reason I ask, minister, is because they are forever running. They are great officers, but they have little time to even talk to you, they are that busy. How many officers do we have there and is it adequately staffed for the work they are doing?

Mr O'BYRNE - We can always do with more.

Mr DEAN - With the work they have to do, is it an area that should be considered or looked at?

Mr ORMEROD - I think it is statewide because I cannot give you the exact figures for Launceston. The inspectorate there is reasonably even across the state and the workloads are reasonably well spread at the moment and numbers are broadly the same as last year. They are holding out okay.

Mr DEAN - I think that office had one or two removed from it about three years ago.

Mr ORMEROD - That is correct. That was a management position. We made some savings by removing some of the management levels. We tried to keep the field inspector number the same because that was the key to delivering our services.

Mr MULDER - Was Windermere's question about the safety inspectors who are doing this?

Mr O'BYRNE - Yes.

Mr MULDER - There are no extra ones getting out there, because I can report a rise in enforcement activity, if you take any comfort from that.

Simon would know there is a need for people who are in power to enforce law and to issue fines and there is a need for appropriate training in the discretionary use of their powers, the educative functions sometimes, that it is not always enforcement, the equitable treatment of people across sectors and the need to conduct their duties without fear or favour, malicious or ill will. Do you have those sorts of training programs in place? Do you have your own codes of conduct these people can be brought to heel on when we have over-officious enforcement?

Mr O'BYRNE - You are right. All of those things are important to us, and that we get the balance right. It is about making sure we encourage good cultures in workplaces and within companies. You can talk on both roles of workplace standards and work covers so I might get Roy to say a few words and then ask Martin because you are right, education is far better and a carrot is far better than the stick in getting the benefit.

It is a balance between making sure we educate and support but if people are breaking the law and are putting people in danger then we need to act. It is getting that right balance.

Mr ORMEROD - We have our values which are clearly enunciated to all our staff, and issues about transparency, equity, treatment, and all those things are strongly held as being important values. We also have the state's code of conduct which they must comply with and any issues about where there has been a misuse of authority of power we can use that if we need to.

We get mixed responses daily about our field inspectors from being too soft to being too hard. There is always that balance because some people might feel they have been hard done by because of a certain visit but we are always happy to take feedback and we encourage people to come to us with feedback if they have concerns - it is good to get some positive feedback too by the way.

Mr MULDER - Is there some ethical standards framework that will review these sorts of things?

Mr ORMEROD - We match it against any feedback we get. It is important to get feedback because if we get complaints we can match that to see what sort of conduct issues are there. I am not aware of any particular issues that show a trend of problems with the inspectorate in relation to bad conduct. I need to investigate any of those issues so we can determine whether there is a problem. I feel at the moment there is not a problem; nothing coming back to me indicates that there is not a problem.

We have also a construction round table, particularly in the construction area incorporating our social partners, whom we met again today to talk about the issues of skill sets within the inspectorate and also improving the knowledge and culture of health and safety within the construction industry because we see a scenario which needs a lot more work on and we are serious about getting those recruits.

Mr MULDER - The complaints I get here are not uncommon in policing. It is not about the fact you did not have the right to do what you did or that you should not have done what you did. Usually it is the attitudinal stuff - the way people go about it.

Mr O'BYRNE - Like the way you are spoken to.

Mr MULDER - Those are the sorts of complaints you often get, like 'I wouldn't have minded being told but did he have to humiliate me in front of my entire workforce? Did he have to pretend that I had to kiss his boots to get out of here?' - those sorts of attitudes. If you are going to achieve the educative function you have to have to address that.

Mr HICKEY - In terms of the minister's asking for WorkCover's approach to this, the field officers within WorkCover are only issued with carrots, they do not have any enforcement powers. They are not able to issue notices and the like.

The WorkCover board have specifically resourced a number of field officers to do advisory services in both the health and wellbeing in health and safety areas. Those in the health and safety area are particularly focused on small to medium-sized business. The board has made a decision that larger businesses should have the resources by virtue of economies of scale to provide that service for themselves. They do not have a right of entry so the mechanism for them getting into workplaces is to write to small to medium-sized businesses in targeted industries and say they have a deal for them, go out and offer free OH & S advice. If you hear feedback from people who have had a bad experience there is a dedicated service from people who do not have enforcement powers. Referring those people to that service would be useful. As well as that I could make some comments about the recognition that WorkCover does through its award system, however that is probably slightly off the topic.

Mr MULDER - It wouldn't be the first time.

CHAIR - We are done, minister; there is nothing else.

The committee adjourned at 6.22 p.m.