



# **PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA**

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B**

Hon. Mark Shelton MP

**Monday 23 November 2020**

### **MEMBERS**

Hon Rosemary Armitage MLC  
Hon Ivan Dean MLC  
Hon Jo Palmer MLC  
Hon Tania Rattray MLC (Chair)  
Hon Jo Siejka MLC  
Hon Josh Willie MLC



## **WITNESSES IN ATTENDANCE**

**Hon. Mark Shelton MP**, Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Minister for Local Government.

**Mr Darren Hine**, Commissioner

**Mr Jonathan Higgins**, A/Deputy Commissioner

**Mr Adrian Bodna**, Assistant Commissioner

**Ms Donna Adams**, Deputy Secretary

**Mr Andrew Lea**, Director, State Emergency Service

**Chris Arnol**, Chief Officer, Tasmania Fire Service

**Mat Healey**, Director, Policy and Sector Performance, Local Government Division, Department of Premier and Cabinet

**Craig Limkin**, Deputy Secretary, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations, Department of Premier and Cabinet

**The Committee met at 9.01 a.m.**

**CHAIR (Ms Rattray)** - Good morning, minister and good morning to the members of your team that you have with you. First day of Estimates for 2020, the most discombobulated year that most of us have seen in our time. I expect that we will work through this in a respectful and methodical manner. It is our intention to get through all of the output groups that you have responsibility for, and when people are changing to the table, if that's necessary during this time this morning, then I'll invite you to use the chairs that have been cleaned. We are COVID-safe conscious and that's part of what we do, and having the State Controller in the room with us, we are more conscious than ever. Thank you very much.

I'd like to introduce members of Committee B. We have on my left the honourable Josh Willie; the honourable Jo Siejka; myself, Tanya Rattray; the honourable Rosemary Armitage; the honourable Ivan Dean; and for the very first time to Estimates, the honourable Jo Palmer; and, minister, your first time as a minister.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you very much, Chair.

**CHAIR** - I invite you to introduce your team and provide a brief opening statement. Thank you, minister.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you, Chair it's my pleasure to be here with you and the committee members again. It'll be a new experience for me.

On my left is the Commissioner Darren Hine and we have the Acting Deputy Commissioner Jonathan Higgins. On my right is the Deputy Secretary Donna Adams and the Assistant Commissioner Adrian Bodnar who is the manager of the State Control Centre.

I will start by making an opening statement, I apologise it might take a little bit longer than you would wish, but anyway. As the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, I am continually impressed by the high calibre of work undertaken by the Department of Police Fire and Emergency Management. As you said 2020, will be remembered for the most serious public health emergency of our time, COVID-19. The first state of emergency in living memory was declared in March 2020 with the Commissioner of Police also undertaking the role as State Controller. The contribution by my department has been significant in keeping Tasmanians safe from the spread of this virus. For some months we have been in a fortunate position with few restrictions on our activities, however, we have seen restrictions on our movements that we've never seen before and it's been unprecedented.

Tasmanian Police's commitment to educating the community and ensuring compliance is to be commended. The high level of compliance and support they encountered from the community while undertaking these duties are a testament to the high regard and trust in which they are held by Tasmanians. I will now outline some of the key initiatives funded by this government. The government invested \$8.9 million in the budget to employ an additional 20 police officers over the next four years. These additional officers will support Tasmania's COVID-19 response capacity in areas such as quarantine checking and compliance and assessment, which is a critical service in helping to keep the Tasmanian community safe.

Following COVID responsibilities, the additional officer numbers will transition to become full time special operations group positions. These safety officers are highly trained

and equipped to respond to a wide range of security situations and can be deployed during high risk policing incidents. We delivered 113 police officers in our first time of government, and we've committed to a further 125 officers over the term of this government for deployment to frontline positions across Tasmania. Now we're adding a further 20 police officers to extend our election commitment.

This Government acknowledges the need for police to have access to real time intelligence systems and to this end, we are providing \$46 million over the next four years to continue the development of Project Unify. This builds on the initial \$13 million investment in Project Unify's first stage in 2017-18 which will include development of an online crime reporting function and increased integration across a range of systems. The Government has also extended its commitment to upgrading police housing. I understand the need for a contemporary accommodation for police officers and their families stationed in remote and regional areas, and we have invested a further \$8.7 million over two years to upgrade the final 29 houses.

Tasmania Police is responsible for the marine search and rescue operations and protection of our marine resources through compliance and enforcement activities. To maintain and enhance this capability, we have committed an additional \$12 million through the forward estimates to continue our progressive police vessel replacement program. This will see two new vessels delivered by 2023-24 financial year thus enhancing Tasmania's marine enforcement and rescue capabilities. Recognising the need for contemporary fit-for-purpose facilities, the Government has committed \$7 million to refurbish the Launceston Police Station. This builds on our previous commitment to deliver a new police station in New Norfolk and Longford, and an emergency services hub in Sorell on which work continues.

The threat of bushfires is also present. It always has been and it always will be. Reducing the risk of bushfires is essential to protecting Tasmanians' life, property, infrastructure and the unique and beautiful natural assets, especially as we meet the challenges of climate change. We are investing \$17.6 million in a comprehensive package of bushfire mitigation and prevention initiatives in the 2020-21 Budget. This year the government has committed \$4 million to the State Fire Commission. This funding offsets freezing the fire service levy as part of the COVID-19 response and also includes \$1.27 million to implement our volunteer remote area fire-fighting capability.

An additional \$4 million is provided in the 2020-21 and 2021-22 Budget to boost the State Fire Commission's bushfire capability. Further, we are creating a new division at Tasmanian Fire Service to manage and plan and respond to bushfires. In addition to this \$9.3 million has been provided to bolster the Government's fuel reduction program, which will include the appointment of 12 additional crew. The Government will also build on the success of the Red Hot Tips program through a further \$295 000 000 investment in recognition that a key part of the bushfire management is empowering landowners to actively manage bushfire risk on their own property. These initiatives combined will lead to a total 31 new positions in Tas Fire Service including a new deputy chief officer.

The backbone of being able to respond adequately to significant emergency events is a fit-for-purpose operational centre, and we are investing \$3.5 million for a new, modern State Operations Centre, from which major incidents will be managed. The State Operation Centre will accommodate the strategic elements necessary to manage significant incidents or multiple events occurring across Tasmania, predominantly from a fire and flood perspective. Our state

emergency response is supported by 600 SES and 5000 Tasmanian Fire Service volunteers around the state. In particular, I want to recognise the significant efforts from our volunteers in both TFS and SES who have supported the Tasmania community during the COVID-19 by performing compliance checks of those in home quarantine.

I thank all our police officers, career firefighters, SES staff, state service employees and volunteers who have not only continued their normal business, but also enabled such a professional, coordinated and reliable response to the COVID-19 emergency. With that, Madam Chair, I am happy to take questions, and as you see, we have a number of members at the table.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. Obviously all questions will be directed to you as minister, but on behalf of the committee, we would also like to place on the record our thanks to all those who have been involved in the COVID-19 response and keeping our community safe. It would be fair to say that it gave all of us a lot of comfort that we had that support, so thank you for acknowledging, and we'll support that acknowledgement 100 per cent.

Minister, we have allocated first questions to a member, and then I'll open it up to the rest of the committee after that. I invite the member for Launceston to commence the questioning.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Madam Chair. Minister, COVID-19 and family violence is a good one to start with. I have family violence figures from previous years, which I'll go onto in a moment. I will start with quarantine and family violence with COVID. I know that there have been some issues, and I'm just wondering, how did Tas Police cope with that? What was the situation, what did they actually do with people in quarantine particularly with family violence incidents, and was there a large increase?

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you very much for the question, and I'll throw to the commissioner in a moment, but you may be aware that there are family violence units in each of the districts, and in discussions they have been proactively working their community in order to make sure that family violence issues are kept at a minimum. The police have been very active in that space. I'll go to the commissioner for further response.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister. As you know, family violence is a high priority for Tasmania Police and the community as well. So, during COVID-19, there were some concerns about - you know, especially when the stay-at-home orders were in place about what you can't see, and we were concerned about not getting those reports that we thought we should be getting. We kept a really close eye out over the last 12 months on family violence matters. There's been about a 2 per cent decrease in family violence matters reported to Tasmania Police. We kept monitoring this situation because we were concerned about some of the victims not being able to report to police.

In relation to that, our family violence units were meeting daily, if not weekly to make sure we were monitoring, and especially monitoring the high-risk offenders and the high-risk victims. We went out and proactively approached the victims and the offenders to make sure that we weren't missing something as well, and we put a lot of effort into that. Over a five-year period, it's remained fairly much the same. Obviously the last 12 months had a 2 per cent decrease, but what we are seeing, the high-risk matters that are reported to us are decreasing,

but the lower-risk matters - and don't get me wrong, all family violence matters are extremely serious -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They may be the numbers I have, 3576 up from the three-year average of 3428, so that's the lower -

**Mr HINE** - Yes. Those ones are what we call -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Not as serious.

**Mr HINE** - Not as serious, but I don't want to underestimate the seriousness of even those. We're getting more reports of those, which you know, hopefully it is because people are more willing to come forward and not put up what they shouldn't have to put up with, the victims. But during COVID-19, we monitored what was happening in other states as well. We also monitored what was happening through the Australian New Zealand Policing Advisory Agency, and we'd have weekly meetings with them to see what family violence matters were actually happening around the country as well. We did do some social media and other campaigns to make sure people felt safe in relation to it.

This is an area that is going to continue to be a focus for Tasmania Police, and some of these things may not come out in the short-term, especially during the stay-at-home orders, but we always encourage people to come forward and get the help that they deserve. We'll always place a very high level of resourcing into family violence because it is something that everyone in Tasmania Police understand what some people go through, and we want to help them the best we can, and we'll work with other agencies as well. So, has that given an overview?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, it's given me an overview. Minister, the issues that you might have had particularly with COVID-19, the people in quarantine in hotels, I understand there were some issues, people locked up together for two weeks. I know there were some issues, there were some issues of family violence. What did Tas Police do about that? How did you deal with that? They have to stay in quarantine, but there's a family violence issue.

**Mr HINE** - In hotel quarantine -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr HINE** - Or home quarantine, or hotel quarantine, we certainly monitored through - in the hotels, the -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You can't really take them out, can you, and put them in a different room? Or is that what you did, or how did you manage family violence?

**Mr HINE** - If it was a situation, Communities Tasmania had responsibilities for the hotels with liaison with police. If there was any issues, of course, they were moved. And in home quarantine, if there was any issues, we'd monitor that as well to make sure we're not putting people in danger through that. I'm not aware of any charges in relation to family violence in hotel quarantine. There were issues, and I've said before, various committees that in hotel quarantine and home quarantine, we have a mixture of people especially in hotel quarantine. We had the mixture of problems in hotel quarantine because they reflected the community, whether it was drug and alcohol, mental health, violence issues and all sorts of

things. I'm certainly not aware of any charges or any serious instances of family violence. We had a government liaison officer in each hotel who would monitor any situation. There would be daily checks. Also those people at home, we would do compliance checks as well. The compliance checks were not only about making sure people who should be home are at home, but also making sure they're okay. It gives the opportunity for anyone to report any matters as well.

It was a difficult situation for many reasons, including family violence. I'm not aware of any charges that came out of the hotel quarantine situation.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you for that. Still on family violence and the electronic monitoring of family violence perpetrators, are there any current known issues with the veracity of the electronic monitoring of family violence perpetrators and high-risk offenders? If so, what measures are being taken to address them?

**Mr SHELTON** - The trial that was run earlier this year was a great success, and it's proven to be - and all the figures are around - and I'll throw to the Commissioner in a moment. But, eliminating family violence remains a certain priority of the government, and we all need to do whatever we can to eliminate family violence. The trial was fantastic as far as setting it out. I don't know whether people remember, but I went out and did a little bit of media around that. People who volunteered into the program wore the ankle bracelet and the stats around that were quite good. So, Commissioner, you might -

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister. The trial, as the minister said, was successful, and we've done some preliminary data around it. In some of the data that is coming out of the trial, when comparing to the offender history in the 12 months prior, suggests that there was an 82 per cent decrease in high-risk incidents, a 70 per cent reduction of assaults, 80 per cent reduction of threats, 89 per cent decrease in allegation of emotional abuse, and 100 per cent decrease in reports of stalking. There is still a study to be done as well, and it's being conducted by the TILES, Tasmanian Institute of Law Enforcement Studies. We're seeing it as a success, but obviously we need to do these at the full trial and see what the final outcome is, but everything that we've seen is positive. And it not only keeps the victims feeling safe, but we're also making sure that those offenders with the bracelets are being held to account for their actions as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thanks, Commissioner. Minister, the Safe Families Unit, what progress has that made towards eradicating family violence?

**Mr SHELTON** - There's a tremendous amount of work done by the Safe Homes, Families and Communities process. Violence against anyone in any form is unacceptable, but the harm caused by family violence is particularly devastating. Family violence damages the physical and mental health of victims, has significant, short- and long-term negative impacts on victims and children involved and impacts significantly on the communities.

On 1 July 2019, the Tasmanian Government released the Safe Homes, Families and Communities Tasmanian Action Plan for family and sexual violence 2019-2022. The plan represents the next stage of the Government's long-term commitment to preventing and responding to family violence and the new response to sexual violence. The Safe Families Co-ordination Unit was first established in 2016 and is police-led supervised unit with



representatives from multi-government agencies who work collaboratively to review incidents of family violence.

The SFCU undertakes assessments of risk and harm to ensure co-ordinated support to victims and victims of family violence, including children in these assessments, and any associated recommendations are sent back into the system. I was fortunate to look at what they do in the unit and when they come together they bring each department together and interrogate the previous day what's happened around the state. That work is being done on a daily basis to keep up with issues that might become prevalent or that individual families may have around the community. It's police-led. Commissioner, you might add to this.

**Mr HINE** - I'm sure the minister won't mind me asking, as in the Safe Families Co-ordination Unit, if any member wishes to come down to have a look, I'm sure the minister would again. I would welcome you to have a look, because it is quite an eye-opening unit about how we coordinate across government. The minister takes a great interest in it and has been down there to see how it works. I'm more than happy for anyone to come and have a look from a government point of view, because, whilst there's some shocking stories there - and, of course, we'll protect the privacy of everyone that comes across the desk there, but to get through the process, it's a good thing to do.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Commissioner. Probably in the new year, we're very busy at the minute, but we appreciate the offer.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, that's any time. It's the new year. I keep forgetting how quickly that's coming. I'm sure we're still in July, aren't we?

**CHAIR** - I wish.

**Mr HINE** - I have an answer on this point, too.

**CHAIR** - Yes. I thought I'd get other members after this.

**Mr HINE** - So just another couple of statistics, or I'm happy to leave it there, whichever

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**CHAIR** - It's entirely up to the member. It's the member's question.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - A couple more statistics would be good.

**Mr HINE** - We've got the department of Police, as we lead it. There's the departments of Justice, Health, Communities and Education in the same room. The number of matters reviewed in 2019-20 year was over 6000 cases that they reviewed and the families assessed through this mapping process was 219 in that last financial year. The issue which is always hard to digest is the children identified as affected by family violence, in the last financial year it was 4400. So that's the one which is always really difficult to deal with. The other is notifications to schools. There were over 3000 notifications. I've actually tested it with some schools about when they get the notification and they said, 'Yes, it's really handy to know some of the children are going through these difficult circumstances', so I'll leave it there, but it's just always the one that gets me is that 4400 children affected by or witnessing family violence.

**CHAIR** - Supplementary to Ms Siejka?

**Ms SIEJKA** - On the question about juveniles and children, I understand that there's an increase - or it's a trend that's slightly going up each year. I'm wondering what you think the reasons there are? What is your interpretation of that data? What sort of referral system do you have in place to support juveniles? What sort of appropriate supports can they access?

**Mr SHELTON** - What is obvious and what we have to get out into the community is the fact that there are government processes in place and government support available. The more the community is made aware of what members of the family can report and get assistance for the better. What we're seeing is, within the community, a more outgoing seeking of help and, therefore, the numbers keep going up. It would be lovely to see them going down. Of course, as a society, that's what we need to try to do. Over to you, Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you for your question. I understand your involvements and your interest in this subject. Sadly, the number of children identified as affected by family violence - if we go back to 2016-17 with 1800, then the next financial year was 3400, the next financial year was 3500 and then the last financial year, 4400. It is a disturbing trend, but the other thing is at least we have better systems to identify those children that are affected and we have better referral mechanisms as well, whether it's the schools, communities and the other departments that we deal with to make sure that they are captured and helped.

Whether it's the Education department or Communities or in fact the police, we have other systems that we can put them into and keep them better supported, for example, through education. It is a disturbing trend, I have to agree, but it is one of those processes that we have got better systems to identify children. In the early days, the systems were a bit clunky, but we certainly smoothed out some of those systems to make sure we capture the children that are affected and - sorry, involved - and when I say 'affected' some are affected greater than others also. There's lots of different systems and other -

**Ms SIEJKA** - That data - so when you're talking about - that's from birth to?

**Mr HINE** - Eighteen.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes, okay. It's very concerning, isn't it? But good they're picked up. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Mr Dean, yours is a supplementary in regard to family violence?

**Mr DEAN** - It is. It's on a similar line of the member for Hobart. There are a number of different groups working in family violence, right. If you start from a family violence incident, the number of different people and groups involved is quite high: I think there's about five or six groups that I'm aware of. I raised it in parliament recently. It's time, I would say, for these groups to be brought together under one umbrella and working as a unit, because there is inconsistency across the state with how they are operating. There's certainly inconsistency in the north-west with one of these units as to how they are progressing some of these matters, not consistent with the rest of the state. Isn't it time to bring some of these units together to really focus on family violence and sorting it out?

**Mr SHELTON** - I take that as more of a statement.

**Mr DEAN** - No, it's not. No, it's a question. The question is: isn't it time to bring these units together, working together as a group so that they can concentrate on family violence and consistency throughout the state? That's the question.

**Mr SHELTON** - I can only agree with you, to have everybody on the one page working together, it's all for the one cause. It certainly would be the goal for any community to be working and have everybody working in the one direction. There are significant resources and, of course, that was highlighted through the Safe Homes, Safe Families process. Before that was instigated back in 2016, there was a divergence of different groups and, from the police perspective, bringing the different government agencies together in order to talk about this was the first step, and so that's been achieved from a government-agency point of view and you're now talking about the next step, I guess.

**Mr DEAN** - The point I make came out of the electronic monitoring report that was done - the first one that was done, the review of the program - where it indicated that there was inconsistency within these groups of people and they referred to the north-west coast in particular. That's what my question is.

**Mr HINE** - Which groups are you talking about, Mr Dean? I'm just trying to - is it the Government or the external providers?

**Mr DEAN** - It's all of the providers that are involved in some way or another in relation to family violence: the external providers, the internal providers, the whole lot.

**Mr HINE** - In relation to the districts, they do get together once a week to actually discuss from a government agencies point-of-view, and all the government agencies get together to pool their understanding. There have been some differences in relation to core settings, but we understand why that occurs as well. We work closely with some of the external providers to make sure that we're understanding what assistance they provide. Every situation is unique. One size does not fit all, and one solution doesn't fit every circumstance. We should have some consistency; I agree with your preposition there. But when we try to fit a one circumstance or one solution to a unique case, it can get very difficult.

**Mr DEAN** - I'm not asking about that. It's the groups and consistency within the groups. The groups are working in different areas or acting and operating differently.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. Especially from those support groups, and they do a fantastic job. I've met with several of them, and of course, they have their own unique remit that they'll deal with as well. It's like when someone's reporting a family violence matter, they mightn't feel comfortable coming to a government agency, but they would feel comfortable going to a private provider. We want to get consistency and ensure there is consistency. We are always working with that as well. I have to say that sometimes there is not one solution that fits all occasions. We'll always try to get better to make sure we have a better coordination in relation to -

**Mr DEAN** - Commissioner, with the greatest respect to you, I understand that. Each situation requires some different approaches and so on. That's not what I'm talking about. It's the consistency of the groups working together and applying the similar positions throughout

the state. I can provide a report to you, and that's what I'll need to do, provide the report to the minister where it's pointed out.

**Mr SHELTON** - The last comment I'd make is, of course, the department - from the police perspective, we manage what we manage, and we're not talking about other agencies, departments or organisations. From the perspective of these other agencies, some of them are self-funded and not government-funded, and it's out of a different agency rather than the police enforcement side of things. It's about dealing with youth and how we manage that through the system.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, you'd be aware that the first complaint against Nurse James Griffin went to police in May last year. He was subsequently charged in September, and then again in October, but he was allowed to continue working in his position with the health service until the end of July when his Working with Vulnerable Children check was cancelled. I'm interested in at what point during a police investigation police communicate with other departments, and what happened in that particular circumstance?

**Mr SHELTON** - As I've already said, the safety of the children in our care is always a priority of the government. The Premier and the Minister for Health announced on 22 October that independent investigation would be commissioned by the Tasmanian Government into the serious allegations regarding the deceased former employee of the Launceston General Hospital. The charges laid and allegations made against the deceased former nurse are abhorrent, and we have acknowledged the community's concern about these very serious matters. The Government has finalised and released the terms of reference for the independent investigation. I know that's not where your question is going -

**Mr WILLIE** - No.

**Mr SHELTON** - But allow me to finish. The outcomes of the investigation will be released to the public.

I can advise the committee that the Premier was making a statement this morning on this matter regarding a commission of inquiry. We know this has been a very difficult time for many in our community, and we are committed to supporting anybody who comes forward with information. The Government will take any action necessary. I was alerted in late August last year that the matter was being investigated, and that Tasmanian Police were liaising with the Department of Health and the LGH. At that time, it was an ongoing police investigation and charges had not been made, therefore it was not - I was not privy to any of the details, nor should I have been given the ongoing nature of the investigation.

As you would be aware, the THS has continued to engage with Tasmania Police, and I encourage anybody with any further information to report it to the police. The issue is that it's an ongoing - or it was an ongoing - investigation at that time.

**Mr WILLIE** - My question, minister, is during a police investigation in a very serious matter such as this, at what point does the police communicate with other departments that there may be an issue that somebody may be still in a position working with children, and that the evidence is starting to stack up against them where charges will be laid? The first complaint

was made to police in May, and he was allowed to continue in his employment until the end of July.

My question is, at what point do police communicate with other departments such as the Justice department, or the Health department, or the Education department, or Sport and Rec, or whatever it may be?

**Mr SHELTON** - Because it was an investigation, as we indicated, that was going on, and the police did - and were talking to the Health Department and LGH. I would throw to the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister. I won't talk about the specific case because as the minister's said there is to be an independent commission of inquiry. In normal circumstances, as police are investigating a matter, and if something comes up during an investigation, then obviously as an investigation moves along, more evidence is gathered or received. At the point of time where the investigators make a judgment that an employer, or there is an issue in relation to that person to keep other people safe, then obviously the police will involve - whether it's another agency or employer as well, or there needs to be charges. But obviously the evidence gathering takes some time, and at the point of time where they think that either charges need to be laid, or there's other people in danger, for example, then the investigators will make a judgment.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, was any other person identified in those investigations as a person of interest?

**Mr SHELTON** - I'm not aware of that detail. As I said, it was an ongoing investigation at the time, and there is still a coronial inquest to come. I have nothing more to add.

**Mr WILLIE** - So going back to my previous question. It took a couple of months for that evidence to stack up before other departments were notified.

**Mr SHELTON** - Investigations take time and you can imagine that in these particular circumstances, in order to prevent individuals who are being investigated from removing or destroying any evidence, the police have to be very cautious about how they go about their investigations. The points have been made that investigations take time.

**Mr WILLIE** - We've seen some other examples with other departments. For example, there was a teacher who was stood aside straightaway when a police investigation started, and that's been reported on recently. I'm interested in why the circumstances around James Griffin are different. Why wasn't he stood aside? Why didn't the police department notify those departments that they were investigating the individual so that the investigation could take place rather than being left in the care of children?

**Mr SHELTON** - From the perspective of that, it's difficult for police. They were going through an investigation. As I've said, there was communication with the LGH and the Health department. As far as those time lines go, Commissioner?

**Mr HINE** - As I've said, it's in investigation. Every investigation is different, and the evidence time line is different. Who refers the matter to police is different, and these occasions that you mentioned, there was a difference about who was reporting. But the evidence has to

be there before we actually notify an employer. I'm not talking about these specific instances. But if we do find where there's a situation where we do need to inform the employer, because the evidence is starting to come together, then we will inform the employer or take that person in relation to whether it's charging, or take some action to make sure that no one else is harmed.

**CHAIR** - Minister, can I get some clarity around what matter would constitute a direct 'you're suspended', and what matter would be progressed to an investigation before there was any action taken? I need to be clear in my mind here. I'm confused now. Some incidents appear that they go straight to investigation and somebody is not stood down, and then there's others where people are straightaway stood down and then the investigation occurs. I want to be clear about what incidents might cause that response. Is my question clear?

**Mr SHELTON** - Your question is clear enough. The reality is that it comes down to by law, and we're talking about police here.

**CHAIR** - Yes, absolutely.

**Mr SHELTON** - By law people are innocent until they are actually proven guilty and charges are laid and so forth. So that has to take place. Different departments in other areas, there may be different policies, but that's not the law and we're dealing with the law as far as we've been dealing with this department and the Commissioner may add more to that.

**CHAIR** - Right. So, Education you stood down directly, immediately. In Health perhaps there's an investigation and then there's some action taken. Is that what we take from this, is it up to the department?

**Mr HINE** - The matters for suspension is up to the department, not up to the Police department at all. It's not up to us. If we have sufficient evidence to charge someone and put certain conditions before the court, obviously we'll do that. An investigation when it comes to police, it's obviously assessed and then out of that assessment it's either moved forward or it's not moved forward because there's insufficient evidence.

**CHAIR** - So it's about the department.

**Mr HINE** - Every case is different. The departments as in if they refer it to us we'll inform them as long as there's no issue in relation to how you share the information. Because the evidence has to be collected, people have to be interviewed, so then it's up to the department to make that decision once they're informed. But every investigation is different, every set of circumstances is different, and all the information that comes to police is going to be different. Trying to fit one size across all is very, very difficult because the information and evidence has to be tested.

**CHAIR** - But the clearness or the clarity in my mind then from what both the minister and you have said, Commissioner, is that it is up to the department who decide whether an employee is stood down immediately and the investigation takes place or else the investigation takes place and then there's subsequent action.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Did that get some clarity for the honourable member?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, but following on from the Chair's question, when did police first notify the health service about the allegations surrounding James Griffin? Was that in May when the complaint was made?

**Mr SHELTON** - I'm not aware of the other time lines. As I indicated, I was first alerted in late August, and I'm not aware of the other detail.

**Mr HINE** - On 28 July police contacted the Licensing and Accreditation Regulatory Service and advised Mr Griffin was under investigation for the matter.

**Mr WILLIE** - So that was the first communication from police to another department?

**Mr HINE** - And during July the LGH was informed - and that's correct, Mr Higgins?

**Mr HIGGINS** - That's correct, through the minister. In July whilst a certain CIB became aware that Mr Griffin was employed at the LGH and then at that point made steps to actually brief the hospital at the end of July.

**Mr WILLIE** - Okay. So if we go to that other example that I was talking about with the Education department, there was obviously a complaint about a teacher. Did police notify the Education department straight away?

**Mr HINE** - Did you say the complaint came from the Education department?

**Mr WILLIE** - I don't know where the complaint originated with that particular case.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. Sorry.

**Mr WILLIE** - But the minister has said that the teacher has been stood aside, so I'm interested in whether the complaint went to police first or whether it -

**Mr HINE** - Is the one, the matter before the court at the moment?

**Mr WILLIE** - I don't think it's before the court, I think there's an investigation, isn't there?

**Mr SHELTON** - In order for the Commissioner to answer that he would need more detail about the actual cases and so forth. I'm not aware of the detail of that.

**Mr WILLIE** - It's been well publicised recently. A teacher was stood aside recently for an investigation to take place. Did the police notify the department straight away about that?

**Mr HINE** - If the investigation is ongoing, if there's any court proceedings it would be inappropriate to make any comment now.

**Mr WILLIE** - Right.

**Mr DEAN** - I have a question on this point.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Supplementary, Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - My question is, where evidence is brought forward of sexual abuse involving kids and minors and others, and where the alleged perpetrator is deceased, what responsibility do police have to investigate the matter in those circumstances, rather than simply saying it should be up to the coroner. What is the responsibility of police to investigate where the evidence is brought forward by the alleged perpetrator is now deceased?

**Mr SHELTON** - As I said previously, if there's any further information that people have they should always come forward, whether the perpetrator is deceased or not. As far as the responsibility, there is no one to charge and therefore it can't proceed to court.

**Mr DEAN** - I'm aware of that, minister. I'm just saying what's the responsibility on police to investigate the matter before it gets to the Coroners Court?

**Mr SHELTON** - Historically I don't know what's happened, and I throw to the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - As you know, Mr Dean, and the discussion we had earlier on in relation to putting the matter before a coroner, the investigation continues on and the coroner requires that information to be put before them, and if the coroner requires further investigation, that investigation is undertaken.

**Mr DEAN** - So, minister, the question is, and I guess following on from that, so it's doesn't matter whatever is brought forward in the meantime, then police have no responsibility at all to investigate any complaints made and that it's a matter for the coroner. Is that what you're saying?

**Mr SHELTON** - The police will take any information that's coming forward and we'll be the conduit, of course, and pass that on to the coroner as the Commissioner has said.

**Mr DEAN** - But how can they do that if they don't investigate it?

**Mr HINE** - We do investigate, as in, if someone comes forward and makes a complaint or an allegation against someone who is deceased, we'll certainly take that complaint.

**Mr DEAN** - And investigate it?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, and because that matters obviously either have got to go to the coroner or there could be out of the Royal Commission that was just brought forward. We do take statements in relation to that.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, yes. Okay.

**CHAIR** - I'm just mindful that we might need to go to other areas. Any more questions in regard to family violence?



**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'd like to just to follow up on Mr Dean. Just about the providers and support groups that were mentioned by Mr Dean and the lack of co-ordination. So obviously the Safe Families Coordination Unit was set up for that very purpose. Is there any intent to bring them all together under that umbrella?

**Mr HINE** - I wasn't quite understanding Mr Dean's question about who the other groups were, and if I had -

**Mr DEAN** - I'm just getting the report sent through to me, so I'll reel them off to you shortly.

**CHAIR** - The minister indicated that there were groups outside of the government funded groups, so I guess that's the question that we're looking for the answer.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, and some groups have a wider remit than police as well, whether it's a mental health issue or it's other issues as well. So there are other groups that have a wider remit as well, but we certainly try and bring everyone together through our various committees to make sure we're all on the same page, we're understanding what they do. But there are definitely some groups which have a wider remit than just the family violence. There could be mental health issues, there could be educational issues, there could be a lot of issues that actually sit outside what the Safe Families Coordination Unit were doing, and the report that Mr Dean is referring to, I'm not sure which report that was.

**Mr DEAN** - This is the first review that was done in relation to electronic monitoring that was undertaken - and then there was a second one done after that as well. But it was the first one that was done, it was required by, I think, legislation for a review to take place within -

**Mr HINE** - The justice report, right. Okay.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes.

**Mr HINE** - I'm with you now, I understand which report.

**Mr DEAN** - Sorry about that.

**CHAIR** - No, that's fine.

**Mr DEAN** - I'm trying to get the reports.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. No, that's fine. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I've got a general question, minister, if I can take you to page 211, table 8.3 'Performance Information.'

**Mr HINE** - Sorry again, the page?

**CHAIR** - Page 211 and it's table 8.3, Performance Information. I note with some interest that all or most of the performance measures, the percentage of measures has actually decreased, particularly in regard to satisfaction with police services. I found that quite interesting, unit measure is percentage, and back in 2017-18 was 88 per cent of satisfaction

with police services; 2018-19, 85; and 2019-20 was down to 81 per cent. Then you have a look at a number of others. Satisfaction with police in dealing with public order problems, it's also just a 2 per cent decrease. Perception of safety in public places during the day, 94 per cent down to 89 per cent. The 94 was back in 2017-18, and they've all actually decreased.

Can you give me some indication of where the police services are failing community expectation in your view? I was quite surprised at those figures and somewhat disappointed given that we rely so heavily on our safety with our police services. Do you have some assessment of why that might be?

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you, Madam Chair. From a national perspective, and the actual rates are still either equal to or above where we sit from a national perspective - so the national survey of community satisfaction with policing conducted by the Social Research Centre shows Tasmania Police continues to perform well above when compared to the national average. Eighty-one per cent of Tasmanians surveyed showed a general satisfaction with police services, which was higher than the national average of 78. Eighty-six per cent of Tasmanians agreed that Tasmanian Police performed their jobs professionally compared to the national average of 84 per cent, and 83 per cent of Tasmanians have confidence in policing services, and this is above the national average of 82 per cent. Seventy-five per cent of Tasmanians agree that the police treat people fairly and equitably. This is above the national average of 70 per cent. The detail that's in -

**CHAIR** - So you're not concerned that these percentages are actually decreasing, less confidence in the police services? You've got no concern even though we're above the national average? With all due respect I'm not always that interested in what happens nationally. I'm more interested in what's happening here at home.

**Mr SHELTON** - So there is a throw to the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - I'll hand over to Donna in a minute, but there's normally a 4 per cent variation in these statistics, so when you take that, there has been a decrease in some of the areas - errors. So if you take a 4 per cent margin of error, so a 2 per cent decrease is not that statistically relevant, but it's always something that we have a look at, and we take great pride in the satisfaction with the policing service.

**CHAIR** - I thought you'd be disappointed, with due respect.

**Mr HINE** - Having had a look at the statistics and being the Chair of the National Crime Statistics Unit as well, I'm not that concerned because of the margin of error in relation to it. If it was a consistent drop over many years, and that it was greater than a 4 per cent margin of error, I would be concerned. But again, it's something we need to continue on, and each district, their report on government services actually goes down to a district level as well, and it is something we report on. We report on our monthly statistics as well from an organisation point-of-view to make sure we keep them in.

**CHAIR** - Do you have a breakup of regions for us?

**Mr HINE** - The report on government services is given to us, and it's reported nationally as well, and I think it's publically available. Yes, we certainly have an indication. Donna, do you have anything to add to that?

**Ms ADAMS** - No.

**Mr HINE** - So, yes, don't get me wrong. Policing operates on the legitimacy of the community, and the community, if they haven't got satisfaction with the policing service we provide, as we've seen in some other countries around the world, particularly America, then we would have a concern. From a margin of error point of view and the facts, you need to compare yourself to something apart from yourself, and we do compare ourselves nationally as well. Whilst -

**CHAIR** - The 88 per cent in 2017-18 was a Tasmanian figure. Is that correct? The 88 per cent satisfaction with police services?

**Mr HINE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - So then 2018-19, 85 per cent. And then 2019-20, 81 per cent. Is that comparing Tasmania's satisfaction with police services with like-for-like? So we've got a 7 per cent reduction in satisfaction with police services over those periods.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. If you take out the 4 per cent error that I described before -

**CHAIR** - We've still got a reduction.

**Mr HINE** - We've still got a decrease. What's happening around the world and what's happening around the country also affects the statistics as well. So whilst we should always keep an eye on things, we shouldn't be blindly driven in relation to it. We've seen that what happens in America affects us here in Tasmania as well, so we shouldn't be -

**CHAIR** - Lord save us if that's the case, Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - We've seen the protests here in Tasmania in relation to some of the things happening in America. There is a ripple effect right across the world. We've seen, for example, in COVID which we've been living and breathing, whatever happens in the mainland, there's a huge ripple effect here, and we've seen what's happened in America. I'm not sure if Donna has anything to add to that.

**CHAIR** - The member for Launceston has a supplementary in regard to this particular item. Is that correct?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I do. I was pointing out the national average was 80 in that first one. It's a similar supplementary. It's to do with complaints against the police, so it pretty well is on the same line. I note the 2019-20 Integrity Commission annual report showed in the past year complaints about Tas Police had more than doubled from 29 in 2018-19 to 61 in 2019-20. Can you give any possible reasons for the significant rise in complaints?

**Mr SHELTON** - I'll hand to the Commissioner in a moment. One thing I did learn coming out of my local government days is as soon as you create an expectation at some level, then the expectation from the community is for a higher level to be achieved. If you don't meet that higher level, even though things are going up, the community's expectation might come

through in a survey to say, I'm not really happy. Expectations are an issue right across, and that I have reports on -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - With respect, minister, it was actually complaints, not expectations. Complaints made.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes, I understand that, but going back to the previous questioning. As far as complaints going up, they are also with the complaints process, and people being aware that they can complain, and that educational process that we've got in the community that if you're not happy with what goes on, then there are processes in place now for people to complain to, either through the Integrity Commission, the Ombudsman, or in fact the police and their own complaints process. The community now realises that more and more, and can follow up their individual complaints. For the actual detail on the numbers, Commissioner?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Just a follow up. Whether you think that's actually the reason - through you, Commissioner - because in 2017-18, it was 41, so it had actually gone down to 29 to come back up to 61. My feeling is people have always known they're complaining, and I'm wondering why if the Commissioner - or through you, minister - has any reason why complaints might be up as opposed to people being more aware. I think they've always been aware.

**Mr SHELTON** - I'll make another statement after the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you. In fact, when I saw the Integrity Commission report, I asked that very question. Many of those matters were dismissed or not referred to Tasmania Police and didn't go into investigation anyway. Also there is a new reporting system introduced, which broadened the scope of complaint. Many of those didn't come to Tasmania Police because they were dismissed before they even got to us. I had the same concern when I saw it, and I asked that same question.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes, it's a big increase.

**Mr HINE** - It was a big increase, but the same number of complaints, and I'll pass to Mr Higgins in relation to the actual complaints internally driven. That increase in number wasn't referred to Tasmania Police. They were dismissed by the Integrity Commission because their scope of work was increased.

**CHAIR** - Can I take it from that, minister, the Tasmanian Police don't know about the complaints until after they read the report, or do they get some sort of summary about the number of complaints made even though they are perhaps frivolous and vexatious and then subsequently dismissed.

**Mr SHELTON** - From the Integrity Commission's point of view, no investigations are made public until the investigation is completed. As we all know, if you've been in amongst it then you're not allowed to tell anybody even if you've been a witness. So police wouldn't know as far as the Integrity Commission inquires go.

**CHAIR** - Until the report is released?

**Mr SHELTON** - Until the report is released. Of course, they do know about the complaints that come directly through the police processes, but not the Integrity Commission, that's right.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, that's right. Look, it's up to the Integrity Commission what they inform us with and of, and just out of that 61, 50 of those were dismissed and 11 were referred to Tasmania Police for further follow up. But there is no systemic issues which have been raised with us at all as a result of anything in the audit. We have a really good working relationship with the Integrity Commission, but they are a statutory authority that they'll inform us where they need to inform us and where they don't at all. Mr Higgins, I'm not sure if you can add to that?

**Mr HIGGINS** - Through the minister, it's worth noting the March 2018, we commenced the journey with our new Abacus reporting model. It was a more robust system to capture complaints at three levels, at level 1, 2 and 3. That can be attributed to the increased reporting as well. Things that may have been dealt with at a conversational or lowest level we capture now as well, and they're dealt with, so recorded correctly as they should be and we'll deal with them depending on - when I say I 'deal', towards resolution or otherwise. That should be taken into context of the increase from March 2018 onwards as composed components to the year before.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr SHELTON** - Through all the stats that I see on police and crime, and burglaries and everything else, in Tasmania when looking at the stats we have to look at them over time, and you were right with the last one, to look at it over time. Often in Tasmania the numbers are skewed somewhat because of a small group of people or one individual that goes about a crime spree over a certain time frame. Therefore, the stats go up in a single year and then come down because in a few weeks' time the police have collared that person, or whatever, and they're done. Or a couple of youths pinching a whole heap of cars over three or four weekends and then that's sorted out. So stats can be skewed because of one or two individuals because of our population being so small and the sample size being so small.

On this one, as I understand it, 34 of those complaints came from the one individual over the one issue. That's how the numbers can be skewed.

**CHAIR** - It skews the figures, yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you very much for that, Commissioner.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Siejka, and then I'm going to Mr Willie.

**Ms SIEJKA** - My question is in relation to the same table but in regard to offences against the person. Whilst the data there looks to be in the decrease regarding offences against a person, I understand there's particular areas where it's increasing. I understand Bridgewater, the south-east and the north-east have all had an increase in offences against a person. I would like to know what does that term actually mean - what's the definition? What's included within that term 'offences against a person'? What actions are being undertaken to address offences against a person in those communities, so Bridgewater, south-east and north-east.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you for the question. That's an operational one so I'll go very quickly to the Commissioner. In reality the police across Tasmania keep an eye on the trends within their different divisions to understand what they need to do in order to keep people safe and so forth. I expect the Commissioner to say that - well, I'm not going to - to reiterate, what I'm saying is that each division looks at these areas.

**CHAIR** - I'm sure the Commissioner is going to say exactly what the minister says, yes.

**Mr SHELTON** - He will fully answer your question for you.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Thank you.

**Mr HINE** - Offences against the person involve a number of different crimes and offences for assault, and so I can get you the definition of everything that's included in that.

**Ms SIEJKA** - That would be great, thank you.

**Mr HINE** - There is quite a strict and robust table in relation to offences against the person. What we find with some of these statistics, for example, if it's in the Bridgewater area, they fluctuate greatly. There may be one cohort that's causing us an issue, therefore, once we either charge them or put some different measures around them, that'll tend to go down. Sadly, as the minister said, there is a limited number of people causing the maximum amount of harm to the community. Once we identify that harm or those people causing the harm and we can find a solution for them - not all the time we can find a solution, or sometimes they continue on to offend. It might be Bridgewater one month, one year; it could be another area another year.

I have to say, each district is tasked to continue to look at the various crimes and offences, and they don't look at it every week, they look at it every day. That's what policing relies on, to make sure that we understand what's going on in the community, what trends are going up or down. If we see an area where it's going up, then the district is tasked to look at that. For example, there is a task force here in the southern district called Saturate, which is concentrating on a specific cohort of people to address the issue, and they've been really successful.

Sadly, there is a minimum number of people which have actually been charged on nearly 1000 offences, and again, by doing such a really good job. Donna, did you want to add to that?

**Ms ADAMS** - Yes, if I could just add, from 30 September the offences against the person are at 1179. That indicates that we're looking to head towards a decrease across the state. The other important thing to note is the emphasis placed on the clearance rates or the charging of offenders, and that's actually increased from 91 per cent to currently to 93 per cent. There is a focus on obviously trying to clear those crimes as quickly as possible. Each of the districts have a road and public order area which is specifically tasked with looking at those public order offences to ensure that we're keeping a good understanding of what's happening and that there is a good response when these offences are occurring.

**Ms SIEJKA** - I should ask who comes up with the names for your task forces, but I won't, because I always have such interest in them, just like 'Saturate.' The clearance rate that you mentioned as a trend going down, I noticed that the clearance rate for the individual region

isn't there. So if talk about Bridgewater, it's all sort of encapsulated in a larger region. Is it possible to get those, what the clearance rate of offences are for Bridgewater or just regions more broadly?

**Mr HINE** - We can get it down to a divisional level. I'm happy to do that, I'll take that on notice.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Fantastic. Thank you.

**CHAIR** - That's two questions on notice now.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes.

**Mr HINE** - I can read out the number - what the indicator is for assault in relation to that, but I'll put it on notice so we can examine it.

**CHAIR** - We would rather have it in hard copy.

**Mr HINE** - Yes.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes, thank you.

**Mr WILLIE** - My question is not on the performance information. So if Mr Dean does his and then you can come back to me and I'll change the topic.

**CHAIR** - Any more questions on performance information before we move to another area. Thank you, Mr Willie.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, obviously policing is hard and it does take a toll on mental health. I'm interested in workers' compensation and critical incidents and the data around that. Do you have those latest figures?

**Mr SHELTON** - I have some data and it is very important.

**CHAIR** - And we're all sitting down. Sometimes we need to be sitting down for some of these figures, minister.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. I know the Commission takes a specific interest in the health and wellbeing of the police. There's a lot that has been done in this area starting back a few years ago with our health and wellbeing initiative, \$6 million initiative was put into that. It was the start and there is no greater support for our emergency service personnel than the Tasmania Liberal team.

In 2019, Tasmania became the first jurisdiction in Australia to legislate the presumptive provisions for workers suffering from PTSD, that is, removing the barriers to public sector workers and first responder volunteers diagnosed with PTSD from accessing the workplace support. Last year, we also removed workers compensation step-down provisions for police officers who were on workers compensation as a result of operational-related injuries, meaning that they will continue to receive 100 per cent of their pay.

The health and wellbeing of our emergency responders is a key priority for us when it involves our firefighters and volunteers. This year in the budget we added \$250 000 to incorporate our volunteers into health and wellbeing packages. And, of course, the \$6 million over four years for a proactive, preventative health and wellbeing program.

**CHAIR** - So numbers, minister?

**Mr SHELTON** - And the numbers -

**CHAIR** - I'm mindful that we've got to get to a lot of other areas, and we're still in 1.1.

**Mr SHELTON** - As at 31 October, the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management had 157 open workers compensation claims, 46 related to TFS workers and volunteers, 96 related to sworn police officers, and 15 related to state service employees with DPFEM. Of the 157 open claims, 61 related to mental health illness; 52 per cent of these claimants are currently totally unfit for work. Ninety-six relate to the physical injuries, with 11 per cent of these claimants totally unfit for work. Of the 96 open claims for sworn officers, 31 are currently off work, incapacitated. Thirty-seven are in the workplace - with restrictions, or on restrictions, and 28 are undertaking normal duties.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, minister. How many police have been involved in critical incidents? Do you keep that sort of data?

**Mr SHELTON** - Critical incidents?

**Mr HINE** - Sorry, it's in relation to whether involved in any incidents, obviously some of that is recorded. There's different ways to record it. Whether they get involved in CISM matter, then we've got the facts and figures about how many people will be involved in that.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can we have those?

**Mr HINE** - Yes. In fact, Donna will read them out to you now.

**Ms ADAMS** - In the last financial year, 319 critical incidents were responded to with 2100 individual contacts made with 111 individuals referred to psychologists, and there were 11 group interventions that had been conducted. So far this year, 80 critical incidents have been responded to with 754 individual contacts, with six individuals referred to psychologists and six group interventions conducted.

**Mr WILLIE** - Through the minister, when you say contacts, is that part of the management team that follows up with their peers? Is that -

**Ms ADAMS** - That's a critical incident stress management coordinator making a call to someone who's attended a critical incident, and they work through a set of questions that have been designed in consultation with a psychologist to ensure that there are no risk factors coming which would indicate you needed a referral to a psychologist. As you can see, some members have been referred to a psychologist as part of a proactive response to managing that reaction to the critical incident.



**Mr WILLIE** - Thanks for providing that data.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It is supplementary. You've mentioned the workers comp, and I'm wondering about sick leave. How many members might be on sick leave, and how many of those on sick leave would be stress leave? If you have a breakdown of that.

**Mr SHELTON** - I do have some information on sick leave.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - At any tick of the clock, it'll be flying across the table.

**CHAIR** - Hansard doesn't record pauses, so that's always a good one.

**Mr SHELTON** - I understand that.

**Mr HINE** - I can read out some sick leave, and then those on various types of leave, Donna will go through. For 2019-20, there was 72 000 sick leave hours taken. The average for police officers over the 2019-20 period was 54 hours on average for police, and we've got a breakdown for state services, career firefighters, and on sick leave.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - The fact police are coming across things every day that can cause - not necessarily the workers comp issue, but it might be sick leave and stress.

**Mr HINE** - It's an interesting statistic, and I make not a lot of comment in relation - the average hours per FTE for police is actually a lot lower than the average hours of sick leave for a state service employee. Everyone's got a different reason for sickness, but for stress-related, Donna will be able to give us some statistics on that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Would stress-related normally come under sick leave, or would that go as a workers comp? So would people put down workers comp if they're suffering from stress of the job, or would that simply go as a sick leave?

**Mr HINE** - It's a matter of what it's categorised as, and what the person or the individual put in a worker's compensation claim, which we've got the government past presumptive PTSD legislation, so that's accepted and goes through the system, or someone just might need general sick leave, and not described by the circumstances.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - While we're on this, what sort of support does the police department provide to these members in areas particularly of stress? Obviously, it would have to be one of the most stressful positions you could actually have.

**Mr HINE** - Through the minister, and I'll go to Donna in a minute. We've invested significantly over the last number of years. We've had a really big push about supporting police officers. We know policing and emergency service is difficult, and I explained last year that when we put in a submission, we were working hard on it. We actually went to Ambulance Tasmania as well to see if they wanted to join with us, and they did to make sure we cover all emergency services in our submission, and government allocated \$1.5 million each year.

Out of that, we've done significant work about employing additional welfare officers in each area to make sure the CISM is better supported. Health and wellbeing areas, we've now established, and just little nuances of what we do in relation to that, we've actually - they used

to be in a police building. We've actually moved them completely out of the police building into a separate building, so there is no connection with any of the policing. We have a centre here in Hobart. It's not connected with the police building, because when you're in a different state of mind, you actually want to be able to feel free that you can go in and out and get the support you need. In Launceston, we've got a different -

**CHAIR** - I was going to say, how accessible is that to people who live outside of Hobart?

**Mr HINE** - In Launceston, we have a different office outside of the police building, and in the north-west coast we have as well. So, all the services that we provide down here, and we know we have a large workforce, and it's right across the state, so therefore we've provided those services outside Hobart as well. We've introduced a ready-for-response program, which every three months, every year, we give the opportunity for people to go to a gym or get a program so they can actually do that, and we pay for that, and there's over 1000 people that put into it for this time because we know there is a strong connection with health and wellbeing and mental health.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - A bit of a follow-up before you continue. Are you doing anything to prevent it though? I accept that when there's an issue, when there's work stress that you follow-up with psychologists, intervention after the crisis incident. Have you been looking at perhaps a preventative psychological support maybe annually with staff so that people can actually have a meeting I guess to equip them before they have these incidents rather than after? So is there some way that you are looking at preventative?

**Mr SHELTON** - Part of the \$6 million commitment with health and wellbeing is, in fact, that. It's first aid - when we talk about first aid, we talk about first aid to the body and that sort of thing. There's a first aid mental health program that police do, and of course that's -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Is that annually?

**Mr SHELTON** - There's a program that they can voluntarily go into, and they can do it as many times as they can make available. But the fitness is the other side of things. The Commissioner has already mentioned a program where police officers can be involved in a gym or the aquatic centre and do some swimming. We know that healthy bodies, healthy minds -

**CHAIR** - Not much good to you if you're policing at Gladstone, with all due respect, minister.

**Mr SHELTON** - But there are programs; that is what I'm saying. It is that part of the health and wellbeing is in fact a pro-active regime where we can keep people fit and healthy and on top of their circumstances so that they can remain at work and not be off on stress leave or sick leave.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - My question still goes back to are you looking at any preventative support and as such any professional psychological support before someone has that issue? I know that many larger companies have their staff meet with and really to school them up in a psychological way annually. Minister, do you think that would be something the department

could look at -psychological support before someone goes on stress leave every year? Perhaps it's a bit like first aid, but some mental first aid? To prevent some of these issues happening?

**Mr HINE** - What I was going on to is about Ready for Response as in healthy body, healthy mind is exactly what you're talking about and when we say it's got to be accessible right around the state, there is online as well. We understand you haven't got gyms and access to all these things. We're actually saying the same thing to make sure -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - But who's going to conduct it, is my question. Are you going to have the psychological support prior?

**Mr HINE** - I think we're saying the same thing, as in it's -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We are, but I want to know who's going to do it? Are you're going to have professionals in that field doing it?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, because if you have psychologists already there and we do have psychologists there we refer people, again, that is after the fact.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Doing it before.

**Mr HINE** - So we're talking about is before the fact. We launched what we call My Pulse which is an online assessment tool, so people go on there. It's a health and wellbeing assessment tool and there's also a mental health assessment tool. Anyone can go on there at any time and Donna will give us the figures in a minute. You can go on there at any time and if you hit an amber or red then you're automatically contacted within a short period of time and you're off coaching services which is preventative -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You're probably not going to do it, with respect, on your own because you probably don't want an amber or red coming up on your file. I'm just simply saying -

**Mr HINE** - No, can I -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Sorry, yes.

**Mr HINE** - Perhaps if we can dispel that myth. There is no amber or red on your file. We don't get to know about it. That's a really important point to make. We do not know about it. It goes to health and wellbeing. We want to absolutely dispel that stigma that it is a red mark on your file. It's actually about assessing and helping that individual. So the individual can do it and no one gets to know about it. There's an outside provider that contacts them to make sure they're offered that support. I am passionate about that because I don't want people to think that there is a stigma. There is absolutely none and we want to take that stigma away to get that help they need.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I still feel it's an optional thing, rather than something the department of Police is saying, 'This is something which should happen to everyone because do we do things we probably should do.'

**Mr HINE** - There's a lot of research about what's optional and what's mandatory and sometimes the mandatory path doesn't work because people don't want to go to it. So, it's a

little bit like when you do need the help you should actually volunteer and control that yourself. I'll hand over to Donna in a minute. I had a really good example where I went up to a Launceston uniform and a Sergeant - I've told this story many times - where the Sergeant says, 'My Pulse? What a load of rubbish, why would I want to do it?' This individual had some trouble in dealing with some of the shift work, went onto My Pulse, came up amber. Got a phone call, got offered some coaching sessions, thought, 'Okay, I'll give it a go, I don't believe in it,' and that person is now a convert. Went along to the coaching sessions. Absolutely helped that individually. Sometimes if you force people down a path, they go, 'I don't want to be here, so therefore I'll actually clam up.' I'll hand over to Donna.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Before Donna does, my last question on this. Did you have figures on the uptake of the assessment?

**Mr HINE** - Yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, we got all those.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's lovely.

**Mr HINE** - While we have to continue on with this, there is no stigma. I want people to come forward to get the help they need and there is help out there. There is absolutely no black mark on their name. We don't get to know about it. Our concern is getting them the help that they need.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You're saying 'the help they need'. I'm not saying they need help. I'm asking before they need help, before they think they need help - skilling them up so they don't need help.

**Mr HINE** - That's what My Pulse is all about as well. We have psychological assessments during the recruiting to make sure that we're recruiting the right people.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Strong mind, strong body. Yes.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, and that's why Ready for Response is to assist. That's where My Pulse is to assist. There's also the website to make sure that people can access the information and what can help them as well. There are certain areas that it is mandated, where they need to have regular psychological assessments because if they're dealing with child pornography or other stressful situations they are at high risk as well. I'll hand over to Donna.

**Ms ADAMS** - Could I just quickly reinforce what the Commissioner says, it starts at the recruiting with a psychometric testing. We do mental health first aid for recruits.

**CHAIR** - You can't fudge that?

**Ms ADAMS** - No. When you go to a high risk area as the Commissioner says, crash investigation services or forensics, there is mandatory wellbeing checks that occur every six months in those areas. The My Pulse program, we've had 460 individuals that have gone through the physical or mental health screening and we've had over 1000 coaching sessions

that have been conducted by psychologists or specialist counsellors of our staff in relation to that program. We've also engaged Curtin University, won a contract to actually review the effectiveness of our wellbeing program and the My Pulse specific program, and that's a three-year review of our wellbeing support in that preventative space. It's not after we've got an issue. It's what we're doing in the preventative space and each year we'll get an interim report to actually gauge how we're going in that space.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They're annual figures? The 460 individuals and 1000?

**Ms ADAMS** - Yes, that's since the program began.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - When did it begin, sorry?

**Ms ADAMS** - As of 30 September 2020, so it started last year, we've had 460 individuals undertake physical and mental health screening.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - And that percentage of -

**Ms ADAMS** - I haven't got a percentage, but can get that for you, if we could?

**Mr HINE** - Some of the circumstance we've found is that those who come up red or amber in relation to their physical health, with over 50 per cent of those have actually come red around being in relation to mental health. There is that linkage. We've always known that linkage. It reinforces for us that linkage as well. Mental health is absolutely a number one priority to this organisation.

**Mr SHELTON** - The initial question was around sick leave and the Commissioner has mentioned 54.11- or 54-hours equivalent leave per full time equivalent in the police, the career fire-fighters, that was 65.25 hours, State Emergency Services, 59.83 and DPFEM State Service employers take an average of 77.78 hours of sick leave. This in comparison to the 2018 figures, the average hasn't moved far.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So, you are fitter on the beat.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Minister, in relation to mental health but volunteer mental health. I notice that the program is only funded until the 2021 financial year. It's basically due to stop in seven months. Is there a reason for this? Will it be continued and would you like it continued? How many volunteers have used that service to date?

**Mr SHELTON** - You're talking about the \$250 000 commitment in the budget.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes.

**Mr SHELTON** - For the volunteers to be added? In discussions with the volunteer associations they have argued that their cohort of people are just as susceptible when they go to crash situations and that sort of thing as full time. The Government took that argument onboard and put \$250 000 in the budget to allow for that to happen. We will monitor the uptake of that and see how that goes. Of course, the view in the future could be that it needs to continue

or there needs to be a different program or something else put in place. At this stage we have included them in the program.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Okay.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you. I have a lot of questions. I'll have to put a lot of them on notice. Just on the fitness thing, minister. Is there any fitness testing of police officers? I'm talking about police officers at the coalface, in their career once they leave the academy.

**Mr SHELTON** - Once they leave the academy? Part of this process is fit body and fit minds and people have the ability to participate.

**Mr DEAN** - No, I'm aware of all that. Are police once they leave the academy, is their physical position ever tested throughout their careers in the organisation unless they were into special SOGs and different other areas where it's tested all the time and that's great, at the coal face.

**CHAIR** - It's probably tested if they're chasing down a potential criminal.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, so that's what I'm asking. Is there any physical testing of police at all once they leave the academy, mandatory testing as occur in other services?

**Mr SHELTON** - Sorry, what was that?

**Mr DEAN** - As occurs in other services.

**Mr SHELTON** - Police are required to maintain a certain level of fitness under the Commissioner's - I can't remember the actual definition of that, Commissioner, in order to perform their duties. It is strongly encouraged that all police officers keep and remain fit and healthy. It's a challenging profession, high standards for mental and physical fitness is required to meet the demands of the job. There is a rigorous standard for applicants to the police, as you mentioned, the applicants are strongly encouraged to continue their fitness throughout the course and their careers, as far as the rest of it goes. As we know, we've just been talking about the mental health of police and so on, and I know that -

**CHAIR** - So there's no annual beep test, is that what you're telling us?

**Mr DEAN** - Minister, maybe I can help here. Is there any mandatory fitness testing of police once they leave the academy unless they're in specialist parts of the police service? The answer is obviously no.

**Mr SHELTON** - It's encouraged that people always stay fit and healthy. I'll hand over to the Commissioner as far as the current operational requirements are.

**Mr HINE** - The short answer is no, and there's been many studies about mandatory, what's the inherent requirements of a police officer. Those that have actually made it mandatory have had some issues with that as well. It's a bit like the carrot and the stick; it's encouraging people to actually mandate these things. There are industrial relation issues with that, as you'd well understand.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, sure.

**Mr HINE** - But it's actually sorting out what are the inherent requirements of a police officer. Quite rightly, as you said, specialist areas do need a level of fitness so it is a pretty new argument that I've seen right round the world about whether you mandate it or risk the carrot and the stick. We're certainly going down to the encouragement to make sure they've got to be ready for response or My Pulse as well to make sure they can do their job. As you know, under the act a police officer must be able to do the job and if there's an indication they can't then we can have them assessed. It's a really interesting argument about mandatory compared to encouragement.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you for that. My other question is on mental health. Minister, police officers are being targeted through derogatory and defamatory social media posts. But they're in a position where they really cannot defend themselves, and it is causing issues and it is causing problems. I've had police come to me in relation to this matter. My question of you is what is the department doing, what are you doing as the minister, to get on top of the social media posts that we're hearing about. There are these extremely defamatory statements being made, alleging some terrible terrible situations on police.

**Mr SHELTON** - I understand that police are in a very difficult situation when it comes to this issue. Unfortunately, it's not just the police, it's in local government and so forth.

**CHAIR** - It's the world, minister.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes, and cyber-bullying is never okay whether you're a police officer or whoever it is. The Government strongly encourages all people to stop to think before they post anything that targets another person, especially if it contains unsubstantiated allegations or innuendo. We know that's the worst thing about -

**CHAIR** - Mud sticks.

**Mr SHELTON** - Indeed. Look, it's terrible -

**Mr DEAN** - We know how terrible, look what's happening.

**Mr SHELTON** - I'm pleased the Tasmania Police are supporting affected individuals through the wellbeing program that we've been talking about, and is also investigating the matter regarding criminality. I'll make the point that if there's anything of a criminal nature or whatever then the police will take that up on behalf of their officers and investigate that as far as the criminality goes. I agree some of the things that have been posted are shocking and should never occur. My dear old mum always said as far as that goes, never say anything that you wouldn't want somebody saying about you. Unfortunately, today's society has gone downhill very quickly as far as that goes.

**Mr DEAN** - So what has the Police department done about it?

**Mr SHELTON** - Over to the Commissioner as far as the exact detail.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you for the question, and Mr Higgins will fill in the gaps that I miss out. We could all talk about social media for a long time.

**CHAIR** - But we can't, because we need to get to morning tea.

**Mr HINE** - Good point. We do take it very seriously. We're refining our processes as we move along. There is the e-Safety Commissioner Guidelines as well which we follow. If it's brought to our attention, there is now a notice and a guide under the police manual for police officers if they are the subject of a social media comment that they want to bring to our attention. Not only the individual police officer can make a representation to the social media platform, we'll make a representation as well and we all know the situation that social media platforms will not take them down all the time. We certainly encourage them and if there is something of criminality about it, then obviously we'll look at it. But there is a process about getting the support that that individual officer needs to contact the social media platform as well. Obviously as a police officer there is - it's not appropriate for a police officer to attack anyone back online, because that just sometimes gets out of control. Our view is about following the safety commissioner's recommendations.

**CHAIR** - Do you make any direct contact with the person who has posted?

**Mr HINE** - We have done, yes, and sometimes that just makes it worse. As we know, some individuals will then post what we've then said to them, they'll post a line and they'll attack even harder, but the individual police officer will actually make representations. We've got contacts at the social media platforms as well, but we can't get them to take it down unless they want to.

**Mr DEAN** - Are there any criminal investigations currently under way in relation to social media posts in relation to police?

**Mr SHELTON** - The only way I could answer that is you would understand that if there was a criminal investigation under way that we couldn't talk about it anyway.

**Mr DEAN** - All I'm saying is, are there any? To say that there is one, two, three, four doesn't identify anything. Are there any?

**Mr SHELTON** - As you would know from an operational point of view, I'll go to the Commissioner for that.

**Mr HINE** - Any operational matter we won't comment on, and I couldn't tell you now if we've got any ongoing or not. As you know there's lots of crimes and offences reported to Tasmania Police. I don't know, it wouldn't be appropriate to comment on it.

**Mr DEAN** - Can you take it on notice?

**Mr HINE** - It's probably not one we'd actually come back to you to say how many we've got going on or not going on. But can I say, if there is - and when you say criminal?

**Mr DEAN** - You've said that there would be a criminal investigation undertaken in certain circumstances and times. My question from that was, are there any criminal investigations under way? The answer is yes, or no, or I don't know.

**Mr HINE** - In relation to criminal defamation, and if you remember back to your policing days it's probably one of the hardest crimes to actually prove.



**Mr DEAN** - Sure, sure.

**Mr HINE** - I think we've only had one or two prosecutions in many years.

**Mr DEAN** - I think with amendments we've made to the legislation since I've been here, it may have even made it harder. But anyway, keep going.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. The short answer is I'm not aware of any investigations in relation to social media for criminal defamation. But I don't know about if any individuals have taken civil defamation but it is a very difficult crime to prove.

**Mr DEAN** - All right. My next question still relates to mental health and the issue around the statement - and I have raised it previously - about mandatory blood testing or fluid testing of any person where they deliberately, or where a police officer comes into contact with bodily fluids and so on of those persons. Is the department looking at bringing in legislation similar to what's in place with other states to cause mandatory blood testing or fluid testing of any person where there's an exchange of fluid with a police officer? I can probably say emergency services, but with police officers because it's causing a lot of concern. The Police Association has raised this issue as a real concern.

Western Australia, in fact, has just increased their legislation from blood to all fluids because of the COVID-19 situation. That amendment went through very quickly within the Western Australian Parliament. So are we looking at similar legislation for this State to protect and support our police?

**Mr SHELTON** - As far as immediately looking at that legislation, that's not on - it's not in front of me at the moment, but I'll take it on board any issues that can help keep our workforce safe. I don't know whether there's been any work done by the Department on that, Commissioner, and so I'll hand over to you.

**Mr HINE** - I agree with Mr Dean. It's quite an anxious time if a police officer gets a blood exposure or fluid exposure. Especially in relation to COVID. We're certainly looking about how we can do it better, and to give that assurance for the police officer that is exposed. A lot of the time, there are tests that can be done in relation to the individual because they -

**Mr DEAN** - But it takes a long time to get that testing back, Commissioner. That's the issue and that's the problem.

**Mr HINE** - Can I say, we expedite? If we've got the permission of the individual, then we'll expedite that testing. I'm not sure if, Donna, you're aware of anything?

**Ms ADAMS** - No. The only other thing I'd say is that we've worked recently with the police association to redevelop our processes and policy in relation to how we manage these situations, and that information is obviously being disseminated across the organisation recently. We're doing everything that we can to ensure that we get timely testing of our police officers and get those results back as quick as we can.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. We work closely with the association to make sure to ensure we reduce that anxiety of police officers. We've gone through those new policies and procedures to make sure they're refined because it can be quite an anxious time. We've had a couple just recently

and we want to make sure our police officers are safe and that anxiety is reduced as best we can.

**Mr DEAN** - A legislative change here in accordance with the other states would fix this very quickly, and with the results coming in pretty well immediately once the subject is tested.

**CHAIR** - I think the question is: Does the minister agree or will the minister look at it?

**Mr SHELTON** - I've already said it, and I agree with the fact that we need to keep our workforce as safe as we can and remove some of the anxieties, and so I'm happy to work with the Department on that.

**CHAIR** - The last question in 1.1, or else there will be no cup of tea this morning. So, member for Pembroke.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Thank you. Minister, I'd like an update on the Officer Next Door program. How many are there? Where are they? Any information that you can provide me about it?

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you very much for the question. The Officer Next Door program, of course, is part of the community engagement processes that each district puts in place right across Tasmania, and along with PCYC and other involvements in the community, and it's certainly a very important part of policing from my perspective. In my younger day and being involved in, it wasn't actually the Police Boys Club, it was the Bracknell Boys & Girls Club. The local police officer, Ross Davies, was the main person behind that. It wasn't run by the police, it just is involvement in the community, and I completely understand how the police being involved with the youth around, and that familiarity and so on is certainly part of policing.

**CHAIR** - Minister, you're still involved in that club, I believe.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes. We were involved in -

**CHAIR** - The Bracknell community.

**Mr SHELTON** - You're involved in Bracknell or you've involved in the Boys & Girls Club. But for the detail, I'll go to Officer Next Door, about the policemen in the houses in the suburbs and so on, and next door to people and so on.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you for the question, and it has been going on many years. We're just going to get the numbers for you about the Officer Next Door program. - at the end of the break, I can give you - hopefully give the exact number of people involved in the Officer Next Door program. That's about the public reality -

**Ms SIEJKA** - Where they are. Are they evenly distributed around the state? That's probably not the right words to use, but are they located - yes, broadly.

**Mr HINE** - If I can get that on notice, and hopefully after the break, I'll be able to give you that information.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Thank you. That would be great.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. 2.1, Investigation of crime. Mr Dean.

## **Output group 2 - Crime**

### **2.1 Investigation of crime**

**Mr DEAN** - I'd like to continue on with the first one because I want to ask some questions about drones and body-worn cameras and all of those things. No, you're right, and I found that other information. I found that other information I wanted as well, so I might talk to you about that shortly if I can.

**CHAIR** - You can ask them before we leave so that we can get the answers. We've got some questions still remaining, but I'm mindful of the time as always, or weave them into crime.

**Mr DEAN** - Just a general question on crime. What has been the real impact on - and I think the figures are showing good impacts during the COVID-19 period, and what have been the growth areas in crime during the COVID-19 period that we've seen? minister?

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you, Mr Dean.

**CHAIR** - There shouldn't have been any. Everyone was staying home.

**Mr SHELTON** - And that was, in fact, the reality. Basically through the shutdown period and the lockdown period, of course, it all reduced. State-wide, crime has reduced by about 2 per cent. That's been a good outcome, but we do have to take cognizance that COVID was around. There has been, unfortunately, some areas where it's gone up. Typically, there are good result on a yearly basis. We have to be aware that we live in a small State, and you can have a high-volume processes of two or three individuals creating high volume areas in some cases, and of course those stats then going up, and next year they'll be down. The year after it might be up a little bit or down a little. So the total offences, of course, as I indicated were down 2 per cent. Offences against the person, down 3 per cent. Offences against property, down 2 per cent. Fraud and similar offences, up 5 per cent. And other miscellaneous, down 2 per cent. Any further information?

**Mr HINE** - Minister, if I can just add to that. If we look at during the COVID period from March to the end of June last year compared to this year, total offences were down 19 per cent, and offences against the person was down 15 per cent. Offences against property were down to 21 per cent. Fraud and similar offences, down 11 per cent. And all other miscellaneous offences were down by 17 per cent. Family violence matters reported to Tasmania Police - and this is the one I am concerned about - was down by 10 per cent. As you'd expect, the stay-at-home people weren't moving around as much, and those who were moving around for the wrong reasons were readily identifiable, that was trend in Australia and New Zealand. Does that answer your question, Mr Dean?

**Mr DEAN** - No, it doesn't, because what's the growth areas? It partly answered the question. But what growth areas have we seen? What was the, I guess, areas within criminal activity that have been probably fairly prevalent through the COVID period? That drop-off is great, that's wonderful, and we'd hope that it continues.

**Mr SHELTON** - And these are state-wide figures, of course.

**Mr DEAN** - I'm just wondering where the reality is.

**CHAIR** - One person.

**Mr SHELTON** - In the different divisions, you know, the north or the north-west might have been higher than one and the other two down, and therefore it created a situation where it's lower State-wide, but one division at a higher number, and that's where you wanted to get to, Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes. You've asked yourself the question now, so I'll ask you the question. What area is currently of the greatest concern in relation to criminal activity as well?

**Mr HINE** - During the COVID period, and Mr Bodnar is itching to say something. He's been quiet all the time, but for example, motor vehicle burglary was decreased by 4 per cent, and southern district had an increase in property damage by 4 per cent in northern and southern districts. So there was different districts had different increases in crime during the COVID period. It would be lovely to say that right across the state, you know, overall the statistics were down but there were some areas that actually increased. Mr Bodnar might be able to add to that.

**Mr BODNAR** - Thanks, Commissioner, if I may. As the minister's just mentioned, there was a 5 per cent increase in fraud and similar offences across the state. Now, when we look at that in numerical terms, it's really about 45 to 48 offences that increased over that 12-month period. The other one I note is really business burglary increased by 8 per cent across the state. I can't really put my finger on why we've had an actual increase in that, because through the northern district, the business burglaries were done by 10 per cent, and southern district was slightly up at 2 per cent. Whilst I can't provide the committee with actual numerical figures, rather than the percentages, they seem to be the two that are predominant at this stage.

**Mr HINE** - The other one that was a little bit of a concern was eCrime. People at home using the internet, there seems to be some increases right across the country and we weren't the only ones about fraud and eCrime, because as soon as you get stimulus packages people have more money, there's greater opportunity to influence that. So eCrime was a bit of a concern for us as well.

**Mr DEAN** - The other area was the sexual abuse of kids, children. That is a real issue and we've now seen that the Premier has announced a commission inquiry this morning in relation to these sorts of activities, the hospital and other issues around this as well. I guess Ashley is also involved in that. What is the position in relation to offences of sexual abuse in relation to kids and what is that doing to Tasmania Police? Do we have a specialist department or section within the police that are investigating these matters? How has it been managed and handled?

**Mr SHELTON** - Within Tasmania Police as you mentioned, the Crime and Intelligent Command will enable Tasmania police to better coordinate specialist resources to investigate crime. This will allow a greater support through the three districts, three districts crime and drug investigation areas, and in the area that you talk about, and provide an enhanced ability to combat organised crime, firearms trafficking, serious drug distribution, child exploitation and

serious firearms crime. The Crime and Intelligence Command is a new command within the police service which has 62 - 65 officers and, of course, what happened was that through the additional 125 allocations of this government into police it enabled the Crime and Intelligence Command to be set up and, therefore, have its own designated structure which, as I said, will be out there and one of their responsibilities will be or is to combat child exploitation.

**Mr DEAN** - So sexual abuse of kids, where is that seen in the state at the present time so far as complaints coming into police? Is it a continually growing area or are we getting somewhere near keeping up with it?

**Mr SHELTON** - From a grandfather's point of view I would hope that we're on top of it and it's actually going down. Unfortunately, there are still perpetrators that could be out there and the police, I'm sure, are working hard in these areas, and I'll hand over to the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you, minister, and thank you for your question. Look, it's just abhorrent, sexual assault whether it's on children or anyone is abhorrent. Obviously we take that very seriously. Sexual assaults have gone from - sorry, indecent assault is from 31 to 57 in the last year, and other sexual assaults are steady at 55 as well. Each area has CIB victim units which look after this area. There's also a joint anti child abuse task force which coordinates victim units across the geographic districts as well.

But as you know, the internet plays a significant part in our lives. It also plays an absolute dark side of our lives and the AFP, and we work very closely with the AFP certainly focusing on child exploitation through the internet. We even get matters referred to us and then we investigate often with the assistance of the AFP. The AFP will do it as well or we'll do it by ourselves. So sexual assault and exploitation of children is certainly a high priority for Tasmania Police. Are we keeping up with it? We don't know what we don't know, and that's the scary thing. When it comes to our attention obviously we'll investigate. The AFP has a dedicated task force in relation to these crimes as well, and as you know, the AFP is domiciled in Tasmania too.

I don't think we can ever rest in relation to what's happening around the country and what's happening around the world, and the dark web is certainly a concern for every policing jurisdiction right round the world.

**Mr DEAN** - If I can go to the SOG, minister, you made a statement during your opening address that the 20 additional police officers funded after the COVID-19 hopefully will transition into a SOG. I suspect that they won't actually go into the SOG, but they will take the place of the extra police that go into SOG.

**Mr HINE** - That's right.

**Mr DEAN** - So when is it visualised that that will happen, and with SOG - sorry, I need to declare an interest here as well, and I'll just make that known to people.

**CHAIR** - You're not a member of the SOG, are you?

**Mr DEAN** - No, I'm not. But I have a son there, so it's fair that I identify with that, but it's nothing to do with him at all. So my position is - the SOG, will there be 12 in Hobart, 12 in Launceston? Is that what the plan is as to where they will be located?

**Mr SHELTON** - Look, at this point in time it's about getting the first 10 on board and making sure that that cohort is up and running and, of course, we have four officers there at the moment and there's - the process will be and, of course, with the - as you indicated with the recruits coming out of the academy, even the fast trackers that we moved through in the latter half of this year. At the moment and in the first half of next year it's all about increasing numbers so that individual officers can have a chance of applying through the process to enter that and become part of that 10. So that's in the first 12 months and then, of course, three and four, or whether - anyway, they're actually split over the next few years to get there. Of course we need to determine exactly where they'll be and the responsibilities around those areas but, of course, we have committed also around \$1 million for a specialised facility for the SOG to go into.

**Mr DEAN** - Capital investment, I'll probably ask a question on that area. But so there is a position that you are looking at south and north for the positions for SOG, is that it, being considered?

**Mr SHELTON** - Nothing is off the table as I know at this point in time. So it's all being considered. I'll hand over to the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - That's a really good question because we know we've got a cohort up in the north register of the state and we've got it down south. So we don't want to disrupt people. It's fair to say we'll have a contingent down in Hobart and we'll have a contingent up in the north.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you for that.

**Mr WILLIE** - I can't make mine fit. We'll do mine later.

**CHAIR** - You can't make that fit in any way, shape or form?

**Mr WILLIE** - No.

**CHAIR** - I'm very flexible this morning, because it's Monday.

**Mr WILLIE** - It's about police and their interaction with schools, so I don't think we're going to fit it.

**CHAIR** - Right. That's going to be a long bow. If you'd like to ask your question, then it can be put on notice.

**Mr WILLIE** - If we can come back to, yes.

**CHAIR** - That's fine. Before we get out of general policing, it's probably a good time to ask it now.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - I'm going to Poppy Security and that won't fit anywhere near education. So ask it, honourable member.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm just interested in the number of police that are interacting with schools. There's 195 government schools, I'm not sure if they interact with private and Catholic schools, but who funds that? Is it the Education department or is it the Police department that does that and how are those arrangements entered into? I know from working in a school it's of real value to have that interaction with police.

**Mr SHELTON** - As I've said earlier on, police are involved in our community and of course they go to individual schools and they work those programs that Tasmania Police support a range of school-based programs for primary through to college students including 'Police in Schools', Adopt-A-Cop, the safer school restorative practices. These programs play an important role in the prevention and intervention of anti-social behaviour, and upon its commencement in 1998, the aim of the 'Police in Schools' program was to enhance schools and youth relationship to increase the awareness of students and the wider community to their civil responsibilities and following the implementation of the policing at risk youth strategy.

Police were withdrawn from colleges at the end of the 2020 school year, and been reassigned to work alongside the Department of Education and at primary school level as well. The Adopt-A-Cop provides primary schools with access to designated police officers who after a period of time are formally adopted by the school community as their own. The adopted police officer conducts presentations and promotes discussions on topics including road and personal safety, stranger awareness, police and the law and other topics in consultation with the school. Commissioner can you comment further?

**Mr WILLIE** - Were you saying they're going to be withdrawn from colleges and redeployed somewhere? Is that what you were saying?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - To the department?

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes, that's what I heard.

**Mr SHELTON** - So they're working with the Department in Education and so on, on those programs that we talk about. Commissioner, have you got any more to add?

**Mr HINE** - Yes. I have to say I agree. It's having police work with the Education department in schools. As you know there was a police in college program.

**Mr SHELTON** - There were a number of colleges. We're now withdrawing from that to actually work with the high schools and the primary schools more. So we've got a broader strategy so we had a look at the strategy that we did have. We found that the police in schools was better aimed at a different level at the primary school level to make sure we have a greater interaction with schools. We've certainly liaised with the Education department and have our support of the Education department about where we put our resources. We basically widened it to make sure it's not just the colleges and we'll still provide the other - support the colleges as well.

We know that getting to the kids at an earlier age is certainly of benefit, not only to the kids but to the police officers so we can provide guidance. It's been the subject of a very large review and that's where we are. And if you talk about Adopt-A-Cop, that's where police officers volunteer to go to the schools and many of us here have been parents and been involved with our schools in different guises, whether it's a former teacher or a politician or a police

officer, so we certainly encourage police officers to adopt a school. A lot of the times they adopt a school where their children may be going and perform that role. But that's on a voluntary basis.

**Mr WILLIE** - Do you have any data around the interaction with schools? Like the number of schools that police are engaging with? There'd be some schools that aren't engaging, wouldn't there?

**Mr HINE** - We have some. There is some data, but it is quite limited. You know, I'd like to say we cover all schools, but we don't, and we can't, as well. But we certainly have a strategy we would put some resources into dealing with some schools that may have some issues. We've found some really good benefits with it as well. I don't have specific data on how many times a police officer visits a school in relation to the Adopt-A-Cop program.

**Mr WILLIE** - Do you have any data around the number of schools that are engaging and the ones that aren't?

**Mr HINE** - I don't specifically have an answer your question. We'll have a greater interaction with the school when they have a greater need for police interaction. Some schools don't have an interaction because they don't need that interaction. Some schools, we have a constant interaction because there's various issues there as well. I'm preaching to the converted and you'd know much more about the subject than I would. There are some schools which we have a greater interaction because there is greater need for police assistance.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes. Okay.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We have a very sharp question from the member for Launceston with a brief answer.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It's really quick. It's just regarding the SOG's follow up from Mr Dean. What do they do when they're not on sieges or on critical incidents?

**Mr HINE** - At the moment, we haven't a full time contingent apart from the four. They are part-time. They obviously do their normal duties where they are at this moment. Then they train and they train quite rightly once a month. They should because they're highly specialised unit. When it's full time they'll be training, planning, assisting uniform duty in their normal day to day work as well. So they won't be just training, they won't be just waiting for significant events, they'll be assisting other areas as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can I ask how many there are?

**Mr HINE** - At the moment?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So you've got four full-time? How many part-times?

**Mr HINE** - Four full-time and there's -

**A witness** - Twenty-one.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Twenty-one.



**Mr HINE** - Then there's the funding for the full-time 20 plus the four so there'll 24 full-time and that's what their main role will be, but there'll also be assisting other areas as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Mr Dean? Your very most important question before we leave this area. I know you've always got dozens.

**Mr DEAN** - The bikie legislation. Minister, how successful is the legislation that came through the parliament, two years ago, 18 months ago. How many offenders have we seen or dealt with by police under this legislation? In other words, notices provided. Have we seen any coming before the courts as a result of this legislation and what's the current position with the bikie groups in this state? Are we on top of their activities? I understood that there was a new group wanting to come here as well and has that occurred? Where are we at?

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. Well, from a general perspective first of all.

**CHAIR** - We don't need any preamble, just the numbers, thank you.

**Mr SHELTON** - No, no. The bikie legislation has interrupted their business model, there's no doubt about that. Not wearing their colours and so forth has certainly had an effect on their activities. I understand different divisions have had different issues and down the north-west coast, they've had a specific - or they dealt with outlaw motorcycle gangs differently and have had some good outcomes in that area. There are currently nine established though, OMCGs in Tasmania comprising of 17 clubhouses, 21 chapters and an estimated 275 members. Most of Tasmanian chapters have proven links to interstate chapters and crime gangs involved in manufacturing, distribution and trafficking of illicit drugs and firearms. I've got a great spread here, I could go through, but the Chair won't allow me.

As at 30 June 2002, five persons have been charged with displaying of prohibited insignia, and at 30 June, a total of 254 notices have been issued to 43 people with three OMCG members charged with consorting.

**Mr DEAN** - So that's multiple notices given to one offender? It must be if -

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes. Two hundred and fifty-four notices have been issued to 43 people. So multiple issues. Multiple notices to different individuals. Seven applications to review the warning notices have been made through the Magistrates' Court. Four have been withdrawn and three are yet to be heard.

**Mr DEAN** - Why have they been withdrawn? Was it seen that the evidence wasn't there to support it? Have some other reason police seen fit to withdraw those charges?

**Mr SHELTON** - That's operational detail, Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, that's fair enough.

**Mr SHELTON** - I'll hand over to the Commissioner.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Perhaps if I can, minister. So they're initially when they come through, they're reviewed by a commander and then if the commander doesn't feel they've met the threshold from the initial serving then it's may be withdrawn. Now the ones that have gone to the Magistrates' Court also get our principal legal officer as well to ensure that legal eyes cast over it with the commander and then if we don't believe the threshold has been met, they'll be withdrawn.

**Mr SHELTON** - Specifically the western districts have targeted OMCGs and noticed a significant reduction in the number of visible patched members in the district. Six barring orders have been issued to OMCG members in that district to aid and keep the public safe.

**Mr DEAN** - And did the new group relocate here? I can't remember the name of the group, but it was a recent bit in the media about it. The Commissioner's nodding, minister.

**Mr SHELTON** - I'll go to the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - I think it's when the legislation was going through. I mentioned The Nomads that just -

**Mr DEAN** - I think there's another group other than them now.

**Mr HINE** - We get information that certain groups want to relocate here and can I say we'll make it as hard as we possibly can for them to come here and establish here, because we know once they establish, they patch over members, they cause issues. So any OMCG group that wishes to come here - we'll make it as hard as we possibly can for them to establish.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Moving onto 2.2 which is Poppy Security.

## **Output Group 2 Crime**

### **2.2 Poppy Security**

**CHAIR** - Minister, if you'd like to take yourself to page 212, Table 8.4, which is the number of poppy crop interferences per 1000 hectares zone. We have an increase from 2018-19 to 2019-20 from 0.57 to 0.79. Can I have some indication as to why there's been an increase in the level of infringements from the previous year? What is the number of hectares of poppies planted for this season, which you'll be all over as a farmer?

**Mr SHELTON** - Well, to answer the question directly, this year the total acreage or hectares zone is 11 461.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr SHELTON** - And that's from 10 447 hectares.

**CHAIR** - And the increase in level in crop interferences?

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. The year 2019-20 saw an increase in the number of capsules recovered, 2296 - this is interesting - compared to 1058 in 2019. So there's been a wonderful recovery. The issue raised here is that the number of capsules recovered this year exceeds the number of interferences reportable. I'm just looking for the number, but the number of capsules recovered was greater than the number of capsules lost or reported lost, I should say. I'm just trying to work out how -

**CHAIR** - So how did that happen in the previous years?

**Mr SHELTON** - Well, I can only -

**CHAIR** - Been held over.

**Mr SHELTON** - I was looking at this from a farmer's point-of-view. As you know, poppies grow up and they have a number of heads on the stems, and they can have four or five capsules on each stem, and obviously when a plant is looked at and pulled off, and you start counting, there can be a different number. Particularly when you get into the thousands - and I'll hand over to Jonathan for that.

**Mr HIGGINS** - That was obviously a seizure that was done, with that number of capsules they've actually recovered. Now, those poppy paddocks - as you no doubt can imagine, you have seen around the countryside, they're very large lots of capsules. When a report is done that they've been stolen, they're not necessarily individually counted to see how many - or an estimate done by the - normally the representative of whichever company it is to say how many have gone. So in this case, this was a large amount of capsules seized from one particular person when they were seized. When I looked into it, the person wasn't very forthcoming on which paddocks they targeted, apart from one in the Derwent Valley which we're aware of.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Minister, in the past there had been, I guess, a move to have the industry self-fund its security, but that's not the case. Do you have any plans to change that?

**Mr SHELTON** - No, I don't have any as far as police goes.

**CHAIR** - No, that's fine. The industry will be pleased to hear that, but that was a potential move in the past. Any other questions, members, on poppy security? I'm looking at Mr Dean, thank you.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - This question will keep us from morning tea.

**Mr DEAN** - Have there been any security issues around the hemp side of it? I know that there's different qualities in the hemp and so on, but have there been any arrests, any charges, any issues, any problems for police in relation to the security around the hemp crops? How many hemp crops have we currently got in the state?

**Mr SHELTON** - Well, we need to clarify that first of all, because industrial hemp is grown by agricultural farmers all around the place. That's the low THC stuff.

**Mr DEAN** - I mean the legal - I mean the legal crops.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes. The legal marijuana that's been grown in several places, and as far as I know, Tasmanian Alkaloids has its own security system. I'm not aware of any issues around that growing.

**Mr DEAN** - No issues for police at all?

**Mr HINE** - No, DPIPWE is the regulatory body, but from a policing perspective, I'm not aware of any, Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - Is there any requirement for police to do any security work around the hemp crops, the marijuana crops, that have been growing legally?

**Mr SHELTON** - Not that I'm aware. Each company that grows it has responsibility for its own security.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, okay.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr SHELTON** - Certainly Tasmanian Alkaloids - you can't get in there, anyway.

**Mr DEAN** - The growing of poppies now occurs in other states. The comparison of securities, they've been growing in Queensland; I think that is one state where they're being grown. Has any lessons been learned for us, the police here, in relation to their security and what's happening around the crop growing there?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Or how we compare with other states, security-wise?

**Mr HIGGINS** - So the other states looked at us and what we were doing in Tasmania for security, being the only legal growers in the Southern Hemisphere for many, many years. The Northern Territory has crops as well and Queensland. Victoria, from memory. The security arrangements they have, they've learnt - their lessons have been learnt from us as opposed to us looking at what they're actually doing.

**Mr DEAN** - That's good.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I just wondered how we compared though it figure-wise. That was all.

**Mr HIGGINS** - I don't have the figures for losses, no.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - You don't have Australian statistics. Right.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, minister. We've timed that beautifully. We are going to stop the broadcast, and I'm going to invite you all to have a cup of tea and return to the table at 11.30 a.m. to continue on with Fisheries Security, so thank you very much for your morning. I did omit to recognise our secretary, Natasha Exel and Waddington earlier. They keep the committee in order, and we very much appreciate that, so we shall stop the broadcast.

**Mr SHELTON** - And Ms Hansard.

**CHAIR** - Yes, I've already mentioned Lynne earlier.

**The Committee suspended from 11.17 am to 11.32 a.m.**

**CHAIR** - Welcome back, minister. I just had a conversation with you prior to us coming back online to indicate that we probably will cut back local government to 45 minutes to get through these output groups. We'll attempt to speed up the questions and answers if that's agreeable to all at the table and your support team. I believe that the commissioner has a couple of areas on which he would like to provide some clarification and an answer to questions from prior to our morning tea break.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity. I've had a chat to Mr Willie in relation to that referral from that education and teacher matter. That matter was referred by the Education department to police, and that matter is now before the court, therefore, nothing else further can be said while that matter is before the court and we've clarified that issue. In relation to the Officer Next Door Program, I can say that there are 13 houses in total - there's Mayfield, Ravenswood and Rocherlea in the north; in the south, there's Bridgewater, Gagebrook, Lutana and Newtown, Rokeby and Risdon Vale; and in the western district, there's one in East Devonport.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much.

**Mr DEAN** - Chair, could I clarify a position for the commissioner from earlier this morning?

**CHAIR** - Yes, honourable member.

**Mr DEAN** - In relation to those groups where it was thought that there should be closer contact - and this relates to electronic monitoring, and I'll read a part of it -

It is suggested that victim support could be further enhanced by developing a greater understanding and consistency in responses to victims ...

The groups are between Project Vigilance, Safe Families Coordination Unit, family violence units, Community Corrections and Monitoring Unit and the Family Violence Counselling and Support Service - FVCSS - would be of assistance in this regard. They are the groups I was referring to.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you, I appreciate that clarification.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. Minister, can I invite you to focus on 2.3, Fisheries Security, and I'll invite the member for Elwick, Mr Willie, to ask some questions.

## **2.3 Fisheries Security -**

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. Looking at Table 8.4 on page 2013, there's a drop in the marine offences figure. I'm wondering whether that's related to COVID and less activity on our waters by the police and also recreational and commercial fishers.

**Mr HINE** - The short answer is yes.

**Mr SHELTON** - There we go. The Chair did want short answers.

**CHAIR** - We also need to record information, so I don't know that I want to go that short.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, there was a period of time through the lockdowns where there would have been a whole lot less activity. I'm assuming that's what the decline is about.

**Mr SHELTON** - Tasmania Police balance high-visibility patrols with their intelligence-led covert marine controls and investigations in the northern, western and southern geographical districts, each responsible for marine enforcement. Significant district marine service resources were diverted to assist in the COVID-19 - 'inspected at sea' was 4306 down from 5526 the year before; 'marine offenders detected', 1335, which was slightly down on the year before, about 100; as far as the vessel patrol hours, marine and rescue services about the same as the year before or slightly above the year before, 6834; and 'district marine services' was 603, which was down on the year before.

**CHAIR** - We were told to go fishing for our mental health. if you recall, on our own.

**Mr HINE** - As long as it was launched within the municipality where the vessel is registered - I remember it.

**CHAIR** - I remember that was one of the big issues.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, I remember that very well.

**CHAIR** - Particularly people in Launceston.

**Mr WILLIE** - Minister, behind the marine offenders' data, are particular high-value fisheries are targeted within that? Can we have a breakdown of that if you collect that sort of data?

**Mr SHELTON** - Different fisheries have different seasons, and the Police Marine Division works through those different seasons. For the detail, I will hand over to the commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thank you for that, minister. I gather that is about when the crayfish season is open. We have greater patrols in relation to that. Down the east coast, it's 5 December. The scallop season is about to close this -

**CHAIR** - For recreation fish?

**Mr HINE** - For recreation, yes, exactly. We have greater patrols and when these things are open we look at - for example, there was a media event where someone had collected over 700 scallops, I think it was, when they weren't entitled to them. That was put in the media because it's about informing those people who are thinking about doing the wrong thing by saying, 'Yes, you will get caught and there are significant penalties.' During the various

seasons, we'll police that. Outside the season if we receive intelligence that people are doing the wrong thing, obviously we'll target those things.

**Mr WILLIE** - It sounds like the strategy is to flex up around the crayfish and the scallop seasons - those high-value fisheries seasons.

**Mr HINE** - Yes.

**Mr WILLIE** - That's where you catch most of the offenders?

**Mr HINE** - Yes. Of course, there are people who do the wrong thing outside the season. So, if we get intelligence, and we still continue to do our regular patrols - and that's what happened with the scallop situation. If we're getting information about people doing the wrong thing, we'll target that and also the fish processing areas. COVID-19 had a massive effect on the policing and also the recreational fishers. But I think your assessment is about that when a season opens, we want more resources to make sure people are safe on the water and have all the right equipment. There are more people on the water doing the right thing when they catch whatever they're out to do, for example, scallops or crayfish. Outside that season, it is about gathering intelligence. If there are people we need to target, we'll continue to do that.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'm aware the fines and even prison sentences can be significant for this sort of thing. What sort of fines have been levied across the current year or 2019-20 year?

**Mr SHELTON** - For the detail of that, I need to go to the department. As you've just stated, when it comes to illegal crayfish fishing or abalone- and we've seen high media exposure recently and over the years about abalone - being taken either out of season or over the quantities allowed. There are a number of regulations around abalone take. This is a police responsibility and marine enforcement to enforce the regulations.

**Mr WILLIE** - I might add to that question. How many fines have been levied? What if any prison sentences have occurred because of this activity?

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister. In relation to marine offenders detected, there were 1300 in the 2019-20. In relation to fines and court outcomes, and prison sentences, that's a question for Justice who keep those figures.

**Mr WILLIE** - I'll save that one until tomorrow.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, save that one until tomorrow. There are definitely figures in relation to that, but we have a breakdown of how many charges and those things. We can quickly get those from Mr Higgins. I think he has them in front of him now.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes. The marine offenders detected 1335. Vehicle inspections at sea, 4306. Would you like to go down through vessel patrol hours as well?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mr HIGGINS** - The vessel patrol hours were 6834 hours. That's from State Marine and from the District Marine Services, 603 hours. So that might be Georgetown, St Helens and the smaller areas like Stanley.

**Mr WILLIE** - Right. I am happy to hand over to other members.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. Ms Armitage?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can you clarify what comprises the total marine offenders detected figure list?

**Mr HIGGINS** - That could be infringements handed out, summons files, and the like. It's a combination of all offences. All offenders proceeded against.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - What proportion are boat safety infringements against offenders who break the law, taking fish unlawfully? Do you have a breakdown of those?

**Mr HIGGINS** - We do, but I don't have that in front of me.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Can I take that on notice?

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - There are a lot of charges which might be just a safety issue - not having enough equipment in your boat and whatever it might be. Could it be clarified? Thank you.

**CHAIR** - Not having an in-date safety jacket.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That's right. There could be a lot of those things rather than the unlawful taking of fish.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions in this area?

**Mr DEAN** - Just one if I could?

**CHAIR** - Mr Dean, who said he wasn't going to have a question.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, going back in the past, there were issues involving some poachers in this state by people coming over from the mainland, some big poachers, involving lots of poaching and vessels being taken possession of. Is there any evidence at this time to suggest that we're on top of all of that?

**Mr SHELTON** - You're really talking about organised poachers?

**Mr DEAN** - Yes. Organised poaching and I've forgotten the guy's name. There's a well-known name in fish-poaching for Victoria. You are aware of it. Are we on top of that in this state? Where are we at?

**Mr SHELTON** - I've seen no figures that highlight anything that's out of the ordinary. I'll hand over to the Commissioner for that.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister. It would be naïve to say that there is not poaching going on. We have several ways we can combat these things. There is a partnership with DIPWE. How we manage the fisheries industry has dramatically changed since the days of Mr Strachan.



There were quite significant assets put into that to combat it. The way the industry's managed now, it's a lot harder to get away with poaching. If we receive intelligence, we will act on it. I certainly won't go in to say if we've actually got any active investigations. We certainly don't want to give the industry, or any of those who are doing the wrong thing, information but when we receive intelligence, we will continue to actively pursue that.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you.

#### **Output 2.4 - Support for judicial services**

**CHAIR** - Moving now to 2.4, Support for judicial services.

**Ms SIEJKA** - I am after a couple of updates. Are police still providing court security in Burnie? My other question -

**CHAIR** - And for how much longer, if so.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Thank you. Are police still conducting prisoner transport for the Department of Justice?

**Mr SHELTON** - As you do know -

**CHAIR** - The Burnie Magistrates' Court first.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. At this point in time, yes. Police are still involved with Magistrates' Court security down on the north-west coast. I'm just looking here. There was an election commitment by the Liberals to remove that from both Launceston and down the north-west coast. We've been through the process in Launceston and we are talking to Justice about the timelines and the process around the north-west coast.

**CHAIR** - What are the projected time lines for that?

**Mr SHELTON** - We're working with Justice on that. I know there's been some discussions of late, so for the latest, I go to the Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks for that. We don't want to be into court security. We've moved - have been removed thorough the assistance of Government and Justice from Launceston which is excellent. We're now moving out, we'll want to move out of the north-west coast as the minister said. We're having ongoing discussions with the Justice Department and we want it to happen sooner rather than later as well. We also note the service has to be provided as well. Over the last three months, the number of transport of prisoners from Burnie to Launceston has greatly reduced because it is the responsibility of the prisons department. We had a look at how much overtime was used in the last three months in discussion with the association and, quite rightly, the police association has these concerns too. That has been greatly reduced to under \$1000 in some months that we've provided this service.

We're hoping in early next year we'll be able to withdraw ourselves from the court. However, we are working closely with Justice. They are doing all they can as well and it's had been quite a large issue. I'd like to see us out of there ASAP, but I also know the realities of

the situation of removing ourselves from the prison service and letting private security provide security to Supreme Court still.

**Ms SIEJKA** - When will a time frame be set? I presume you've had discussions for a while and there must be, given what's happened in Launceston. How long will it take to do that?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, the discussions have been going on for a while but the Justice Department is working really hard. We are hoping by the first quarter of next year, we'll have a firm time line about when we can remove ourselves from the courts in the north-west coast.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Thank you.

**Mr HINE** - And to the transport?

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes, please.

**Mr HINE** - The van - I'm happy to say that when we do have to transport prisoners from Burnie through to Launceston, we spoke about it last budget Estimates about having a van. I'm pleased to say we've got a van. COVID-19 certainly caused some issues in relation to the design of the van and getting it across from Victoria. We now have hold of it. It is now up in the north-west coast and it has been used once.

Our preference is not to use it because that's not our responsibility but we have used it once. It's been trialled; it's going through a trial period. We have agreed with the association how to trial and to make sure the van is fit for purpose, so we're doing that. Once we settle that then we'll consider where else they can be used. We know between Burnie and Queenstown there is transport of prisoners, but we are also upgrading the police detention areas in the cells in Queenstown, so we're putting two cells there. It's at the cost of about \$100 000 to \$120 000. That decreases the time we need to transport prisoners and we can have the court there.

Also in the east coast, we understand occasionally will have prisoners to be transported. So once we assess this van and whether it's fit for purpose against the assessment criteria we've agreed to with the association, and we'll look at where to from there. I know the minister has some pictures of the van.

**CHAIR** - Which Hansard struggles with. But thank you, we'll pass them on to members.

**Mr HINE** - I'll hand them around. Members might wish to have a quick look at them,

**CHAIR** - Yes. It's a van, a white van.

**Mr HINE** - With a lockup in the back.

**CHAIR** - Any other questions from this area?

**Mr DEAN** - Just as a follow-up to that: I heard what the commissioner said there, but is it still right that police are doing long transfer trips in their current vehicles, which are not suitable for long prisoner transport? Is that so, minister?

**Mr SHELTON** - Well, we have the van in place now, and it's on a trial, so it would be taking - it would be operating as per the policies and so forth, and the number of transfers I'm not real sure about. Whether it's needed, whether there's other transport options needed at the same time, the commissioner will answer that.

**Mr DEAN** - This is an important question because it goes to, once again, mental position and conditions of police doing this, where they - subject to coronial inquiries where they made pointed statements in relation to the suitability of police vehicles for that purpose. So that's my question; are they still being used for long-haul transportation of prisoners?

**Mr SHELTON** - Commissioner?

**Mr HINE** - Yes, look, it's an important point, Mr Dean. I agree that, you know, in that, (a), we don't want to have to do it because it'll take the police officers off the road, but it's about the situation of the prisoner. If it's a compliant prisoner, obviously a police vehicle, a sedan, is more than adequate. We've been doing that for many, many years. If the person is not compliant, obviously a divisional van is more suitable, and there are driving instructions about the speed limit that they can actually go as well to make it as safe for the prisoner as we possibly can make it.

There were some issues about air conditioning and heating in the back of the van, and we've rectified that, and also cameras. So we still have to do it. When we do need to do it, we want to make sure our police officers are safe and we want to make sure the prisoner is safe; we've been doing that, and we're working again with the association. I know there has been a frustration about the time to get this new van, and we've all felt that. We've had a couple of different solutions that haven't worked because we've had to make sure it is fit for purpose, so at least we do have a van now, and we're working on that. Once we assess it, the suitability of it or otherwise will inform our decision going forward. So, does that answer your question?

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, it has.

### **Output Group 3 Traffic policing**

#### **3.1 Traffic policing -**

**CHAIR** - A question in regard to Table 8.5 on page 214. I note from the table that random breath tests, a COVID-19-related impact. Yet the oral fluid tests and drug driver offenders test have increased. So you've used the trafficking area with COVID-19 as a reason for reduction, yet the others have increased, albeit slightly, but still an increase of about 4000 with oral fluid testing, and around - just a tad under 2000 for drug driving offences. Can I have some explanation around that? Thank you.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you very much. People would realise that through the main COVID lockdown period and main emphasis on COVID, police announced they would be stopping and not going through the process of setting up the large roadblock-type tests. Tasmania Police conducted 438 322 random breath tests in 2019. However, in 2019-20, that reduced to 187 748 due to -

**CHAIR** - Two hundred and eighty-one.

**Mr SHELTON** - Slightly different number. But Tasmania Police still went through their random breath-testing processes. Strategic operations were subsequently reinstated from the larger random breath tests in August 2020. Tasmania Police conducted 4518 oral fluid tests for illicit drugs in 2018-19; 4959 tests were undertaken in 2019-20, which is consistent, and which is an increase of 10 per cent of what I've always found it. Interestingly, when looking at the random breath tests, as in alcohol and drugs, there is -

**CHAIR** - But again, there's an increase.

**Mr SHELTON** - The drug testing is, of course, now almost double all the time that the alcohol tests come back.

**CHAIR** - So there's an increase of 10 per cent in those two areas, but yet there's a decrease of not 50 per cent, but somewhere in the vicinity in random breath tests? I'm just using COVID as the note to that decreases; I'm just interested in how you have a 10 per cent increase in one area and an almost 50 per cent decrease in another. That's the question I'm asking.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. Over to you, commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks, minister, and I'll hand over to Mr Higgins in a minute. What we're actually seeing is that we're getting more drug drivers than drink drivers, which is a concern for us.

**Mr DEAN** - Which is something I said 15 years ago.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. I know we've had that conversation over a long time. We're seeing more drug drivers than drink drivers. We've changed the way we actually do our random breath tests, as in whilst we're reducing, it's a lot more targeted. We're actually catching - detecting more drink drivers, with mobile patrols rather than the static, high-volume RBTs. They've still got a place because people go through RBTs and they go, 'Ah, that's right, you're still about, the police is still about'. But we're actually detecting more offenders in drink driving through targeted mobile patrols, and we're doing the same with drug and alcohol. Sorry, drug testing. Whilst it's a 10 per cent increase, it's a lower number obviously that we're actually increasing, so that is very targeted in relation to either a known offender, or there is some indication that the person has been using drugs.

Now, that has some concerns for us about the more - who were actually detected with drugs in their system rather than alcohol. One would like to think that the message is starting to get through about drink driving, but, sadly, you know it's going to take another generation or two before we get that through into the community. Those of us who have young people, you know, there's a lot more examples. Saying, 'No, no. I'm not drinking tonight, I'm doing the driving' - or, to my great expense, Uber for my kids. But again, the message is getting through, but the drug driving is a concern.

I'll hand over to Mr Higgins just to get a little bit more detail, if that's okay.

**Mr HIGGINS** - As part of looking at our road safety strategy over the last couple of years, we have changed our approach, and trying to curb the road toll as well.

**CHAIR** - So really it's not all down to the COVID?

**Mr HIGGINS** - It's not all down to COVID.

**CHAIR** - So the note actually should have mentioned that as well?

**Mr DEAN** - The note is contradictory. I can't understand why note 2 applies to oral fluid tests when it's gone up.

**CHAIR** - But anyway, let's keep on with the answer.

**Mr HIGGINS** - It does because it started increasing last financial year. Following the change in legislation in mid-2018, we're able to do the roadside lick tests, we'll call them, the roadside tests, and we're able to do that. So in that targeted approach, we're getting more drug drivers. It means less large static sites, but we're still getting a large number of drink drivers from the targeted approach we actually have adopted. So this is a change that came in 18 months ago. COVID shut down our ability to do static testing altogether - March through to August - and that was a safety concern. That happened all around the country, which was trying to reduce the risk to the public and also our members conducting that test.

**Mr HINE** - Just that legislative change - to further explain, before when we got a positive oral fluid test, you had to take them back for a blood test. It took a lot of time, a lot of resources and, you know, tied up the hospital. Now you can do a saliva test. It takes away all that time, all those resources, and thus we can do more testing as well. It was an initiative that we put through to parliament, which just saved everyone time. Hopefully we can make our roads safer through that but, you know, we'll certainly continue to target drug driving.

**CHAIR** - My second question is around noncompliance with registration. How much of that is actually picked up now that we don't have registration stickers? Much to my disappointment and disapproval, I don't mind saying. I'm interested in how many times that's actually picked up now just generally in policing, whereas I'm sure it would have been picked up more regularly, but I don't have the figures, but I might now, to back that up.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes, over to you, commissioner, on that one.

**Mr HINE** - I'm sure I'll get the figures very quickly in relation to the number of unregistered, uninsured motor vehicles. When the stickers, you know, back in the -

**CHAIR** - In the good old days, and I liked them.

**Mr HINE** - We're in good old days now. While you could actually tell at a glance with a sticker, now every police officer has one of these and they can do a registration check through an app on their computer. I was out working some time ago with the traffic and road safety people, Road and Public Order Services - RPOS - and the person who was checking every vehicle was looking at registrations when they came up. We also have automated numberplate recognition systems on our cars, so they are driving along - you don't even have to stop the car. It'll recognise the numberplate and tell you if it's registered or not. As long as, you know, RBTs

and all those things, so we're actually doing a lot of recognition and detection of unregistered and uninsured motor vehicles.

State Growth has a system where they have a car that drives around with an ANPR - automated number plate recognition car - and picks up the unregistered cars without stopping them, and the owners are sent a reminder letter, 'You need to go and get your car registered.'. Has it had an effect on that easy recognition? What's actually happened is that technology has overtaken that now, so the police officer doesn't even have to look. If they can't see the registration sticker or it's expired, the technology will actually tell them to say that's an unregistered or an unlicensed vehicle, or if someone's wanted for warrant as well. So there are still a lot of detections there, and I'll certainly get the number of -

**CHAIR** - Okay, so you'll provide the number of unregistered and uninsured vehicles. Well, if you're unregistered, you're not insured.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That sticker was a handy reminder, though.

**CHAIR** - So I've got backup here on my side of the table.

**Mr HINE** - And year-to-date, we've detected 1477 unregistered vehicles, and that's for this financial year.

**CHAIR** - Okay.

**Mr HINE** - So unless you want a comparison going back?

**CHAIR** - I would like something back in 2017-18, just for my own information, but I'm happy to take that on notice.

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

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We've been hearing the road safety messages for a long time now, and obviously it's clear that people are still dying on our roads, with police still detecting people committing a range of traffic offences. What new strategies, or else what's been done other than the same road safety message that we've had for quite a long time to try to curb the road toll and change driver behaviour? Is there anything new coming up? Does Tasmania Police have any silver bullet it thinks might be worth trying to change the figures?

**Mr HINE** - Straight to you, commissioner.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It looks like Jonathan's got it.

**Mr HINE** - I'll hand over to Jonathan in a minute because he's a member of our -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Does he want to name the employee of the month who's come up with this?

**Mr HINE** - In relation to silver bullets, I think, as you look at the graphs about serious and fatal questions, with seatbelts, we had a dramatic increase in those figures, and then, 0.08

down to 0.05, had a dramatic decrease, and then random breath testing had another decrease. Now we're starting to plateau because everyone's looking for the next silver bullet and it's not coming. We know technology has an impact. We know we have unmarked motorcycles, for example, that we've deployed around the various cities, and they are detecting a lot of people on their mobile phones not wearing seatbelts. If you talk to those people who use those unmarked motorbikes, they cannot get out of a city block without finding someone. We've all seen, unfortunately, people on their mobile phones.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Just the mobile phone bit, before you go onto the other - and I know that, you know, we're talking handheld mobile phones here. Mobile phones, talking on your phone through your car or through the car system, is there a time that that will become illegal? That can be just as distracting as having one hand off holding the phone, actually talking and thinking of answers when you're driving along, it can be distracting. In fact, you -

**Mr HINE** - Yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So is there a move with regard to that?

**Mr HINE** - Any of us who have children in the back of our car know they can be quite distracting too.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I know, but mobile phones - I'm just saying, holding a phone, the only difference really is you're holding it in your hand, whereas still talking on the phone can be distracting.

**Mr HINE** - Look, it can be, but the new changes to the learners and provisional licences actually are changing that situation, where they can't have access to a mobile phone whilst they're driving, so that's addressing it as well. We're a very modern society. If you try to take mobile phones off someone, you know - there was a study done in one of the capital cities where they gave young people a choice between mobile phone or car, and they'd much rather do without the car.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I was going to say food, they'd probably choose phone. No, well that's good, because a lot of our work obviously is done when you're driving and you're on the phone. I was just wondering if you were going to change that.

**Mr HINE** - There's no future plans to actually ban them altogether, but I think it's a really good move about those learner drivers to take that distraction. I think that's a really good move by the Government to do that. We're looking at different technologies, as you know. Some states have those cameras that look down onto the vehicles to have a look to see who's using the mobile phone. We're always investigating that. Jonathan sits on that committee. We've got drones that we now use where people evade police, and we've used those on several occasions. We put the drone up to find where the driver is going, whether it's an unregistered motorbike, trail bike, and those situations. The Government gave us funding in relation to hooning and drones. They have been successful as well. I'll hand over to Jonathan.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So for preventative strategies, yes.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. The detection, and there are various new offences about evading police and aggravating circumstances. Now there's new charges and all those things, so we're all

looking for that silver bullet right across the world. It's about driver behaviour. It's about road construction to make it safer for road users as well, so there's going to start to be a combination. But if we jump forward into 10 and 20 years -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Road construction is a thing that's frustrating, particularly when you're driving to Hobart in a 40 zone. There's no road construction on Sundays.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, that's probably more like the wire ropes. You know, if someone makes a mistake that puts them back in -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I know, I was just giving that to the minister. Sorry.

**Mr SHELTON** - I travel that road, the same as any northerner does.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I know.

**CHAIR** - Some of us travel and some of us drive with all due respect, minister.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I mean, you don't dare not go down to 40 because you think there's no one working, but I know I'll still get booked.

**Mr HINE** - Yes. So we're all working together to say, 'Okay, what is the next silver bullet?' And as I said, you know, you jump 10, 20 years, our cars will do that for us. As in, the automated cars and things. But I'll hand over to Mr Higgins just to give a bit more of a nuance around -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - And a brief nuance, thank you.

**Mr HIGGINS** - We now use a range of different methods. So whether it's COVID, whether unmarked motorbikes or unmarked vehicles, or whether it's the change in the markings on our marked vehicles, because they don't all have markings on the front or the sides, and we do mix them up. With the changes on the highway -you've probably noticed that on the highway, you don't necessarily see a police car until you on the side, because there's nothing actually on the front of it, and that's just changing it up there. Targeting the high-risk behaviours is our mantra. We do that with those resources there.

So our country or city police, and our road and safety areas actually have cameras. Sorry, the radars inside them, the lasers. They all have the ability to do those. We also have the fixed speed cameras. Part of my role is sitting on the Road Safety Advisory Council for the commissioner, which does look at the greater good for the community, so safe road systems, talking about the roadworks, the wires in the middle of the road. We don't have fatals where cars aren't crossing the road. The Midland Highway predominantly has that all the way through that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I don't think motorbikes like them very much though, do they?

**Mr HIGGINS** - We don't have any motorbikes crash into them either.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Okay.



**Mr HIGGINS** - They use the cheese grater analogy, but we don't actually see that here. It was something used in argument against it. But the simple fact is that it's working to save lives, and that's the most important thing. We've changed our media messaging. You've probably heard me in the media changing that from more sort of pleading with people to education. The current board is more hard-hitting with what is doing in the community, how they're affecting each other, and how they're affecting the emergency services that turn up. Whether it's police, fire, ambulance or SES that have to go to these fatals and cut people out of them or deliver the next-of-kin notifications, and what that actually means. Just trying every different angle you can to actually change that driver behaviour and make them think twice.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are you increasing the signage? I know on the mainland they have a lot more frequent signage. Have thought about putting more signage up? I know it can be a bit confronting and a bit of a nuisance, but the mainland seemed to have a lot of signage. Has that been considered?

**Mr HIGGINS** - Signage as in speed signs or speed camera-type signs?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Or a variety of different signs to do with safety and reasonable speed.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes, it's not something certainly for Tasmania Police, it's the Department of State Growth.

**Mr HINE** - But you might have noticed it those coming up the Southern Outlet, we put a sign up there to say, yes, 'Keep left unless' -

**CHAIR** - Speed kills.

**Mr HIGGINS** - Yes.

**Mr HINE** - 'Keep left unless overtaking.' Sometimes it's the simple offences; if people are prepared to disobey that, what else are they prepared to take a risk with? The amount of reaction we had in relation to saying, 'Hey, we're going to start enforcing this, but we want to warn you first' was good. We used social media because we know young people use social media. There is some conjecture about using those hard-hitting, really quite horrific, crash scenes and ads, about whether they work or not, but it's the young people we need to get to and continue with, but also the older age group as well. So putting up extra signs, and we've got those mobile signs that we'll certainly use where we can to inform people. It's like when you go through roadworks as we've all gone through.

**CHAIR** - There are a lot at the moment.

**Mr HINE** - Sometimes you'll see police in force and police will be there. So we'd rather not catch anyone. We'd rather actually keep those people safe in the roadworks and not catch anyone. So we'll actually warn people.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It's only when there are no roadworks; you get frustrated when it's a Sunday.

**Mr DEAN** - Point upon speed cameras, minister. Have they been forgotten? They were talked about a number of years ago and it was said we were progressing that to point to point speed cameras. Has that dropped off the radar?

**Mr SHELTON** - To use an analogy or a pun. Look, the police are always looking at what can be done, and as you mentioned, they have been trialled before.

**Mr DEAN** - I don't know that they've been trialled in this state, have they?

**Mr SHELTON** - We're committed to looking at every opportunity. Mobile point to point speed enforcement, otherwise known as average speed enforcement measures average vehicle speed, technology allows zones and so we're working - we have trialled that, I don't know where those trials are at the moment. Commissioner?

**Mr HINE** - No, Mr Higgins can answer that, minister.

**Mr HIGGINS** - So point-to-point was trialled in 2018. It's not something that's been recommended we take up on the automated speed enforcement project. That's a state-led growth project. But the cameras in that will be more on gantries; it'll capture speed, inattention, have the ability for registration and so forth as well. That's some really exciting work being done there.

**Mr DEAN** - Thank you. My other question relates to evade police, and the commissioner has already raised that. Evade police is a very serious offence whether it's in the serious category and or not. There was another one in Launceston the other day where the offender finished up crashing in the CBD in Launceston. It's happening I don't know how many times a day, but probably every day or several times a day. So where are we at with that legislation, minister? Are we looking at giving police more authority, more power or looking at what more can be done to get on top of evade police? It's just everybody does it; it's just a common offence and it's dangerous.

**Mr SHELTON** - It is, of course, and technology has proven to be an advantage in these areas when it comes around to people evading police and so forth.

**CHAIR** - Hence the drones.

**Mr SHELTON** - It's given me an opportunity to quickly talk about drones and what police have been doing with that. The commissioner mentioned it earlier on. Particularly on those roadblock surveillance-type arrangements where we're stopping people en masse. There's typically a drone at those nowadays so that they can monitor anybody evading that situation. When it comes round to the issue of evading and police chasing then, of course, there's been a change of thought around that and how police now are using communications and spikes and so forth to arrest or to pull over people who are evading.

**Mr DEAN** - So what more are we doing to get on top of this? If I can look at the annual report, but is the offence increasing or is it just more publicity?

**Mr HINE** - Look, evading police is a serious issue, but the safety of our members is even more serious. The instructions are if it becomes dangerous, obviously there's certain criteria where police will not continue with a pursuit because I want to keep our members safe, and

those people you're chasing sometimes - when the police, say, are pursuing - take more risks. It's becomes a dangerous game, and so they'll do everything they can to actually stop the police pursuing. We can use road spikes; we can use drones. If you look at 2016-17, we had about 1600 reports of evade through our SCAD system. Last financial year there were about 1300, and obviously the offences have been increased in relation to the courts, but we certainly follow up every one we have to make sure we bring that person into account. As you said, up in Launceston we've had a couple over there in the last couple of days. Extremely dangerous.

**Mr DEAN** - I know, yes.

**Mr HINE** - We take it very seriously, but again, we are here to make sure the community is safe and we're not putting the community under any additional risk whilst we're pursuing. So there's lots of things we're doing. But again, we're always thinking about what else we can do to make sure we keep the community and our members safe.

**CHAIR** - Supplementary and final question in this area, member for Launceston.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Do you believe that the penalties for evading police are sufficient?

**Mr HINE** - Sorry, the minister?

**Mr SHELTON** - It's you, commissioner, yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Sorry, minister, but through - sorry.

**Mr HINE** - I think that's a matter for the courts. We need to put them before the courts and then the courts actually need to deal with them. We cannot be the judge and jury; that's a matter once we catch them. We have to operate within the law. The fines are there; we can clamp the cars, and we do take the cars off them, but the serious matters we put before the courts and then the courts have a whole range of sentencing options.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I guess it's frustrating though, as a police officer, to do that and then something happens in the court that is not up to your expectation.

**Mr HINE** - Look, sometimes situations can be frustrating but again, our job is to put them before the courts and let the courts deal with them, and they have access to a whole range of information. So whilst we may get frustrated at a lot of different things, that's quite rightly the separation of powers, and we support the courts in what they do.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, commissioner.

**CHAIR** - Thank you; now 4.1, State Emergency Services. I'd like to invite the honourable member for Rosevears to ask the questions.

#### **4.1 State Emergency Services -**

**Ms PALMER** - Minister, how is the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management prepared for managing the COVID risk?

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - I think you indicated some of these.

**Mr SHELTON** - I thank the honourable member for her first question.

**CHAIR** - Yes, some of these things were also touched on in your overview. We only want the abridged version, thank you.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. Of course, we're aware that the Premier declared the state of emergency back in March. The State Controller - and, of course, he's here beside me - Darren Hine had the responsibility of coordinating the whole-of-government response to COVID-19. While Mr Hine remains the State Controller, he has delegated that authority now to the Deputy State Controller, Deputy Commissioner Scott Tilyard, who is hopefully feeling better, but he wasn't able to be here today. COVID-19 has proven Tasmania's emergency management arrangements are scalable and flexible. They are underpinned by partnerships at every level and enable effective coordination across key players.

Tasmania Police, Tasmania Fire Service and the State Emergency Service have continued to deliver their core functions during the COVID-19 and in accordance with the COVID-19 safe workplaces framework, the Department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management has a COVID-19 safety plan to ensure risk mitigation and safety of all work sites. The plan was developed in consultation with the health and safety representatives, agency management and representative bodies. The plan addresses how DPFEM worksites are managed, manage risk and health and safety, implement and maintain a schedule of cleaning and hygiene, implement restrictions on entry into the workplace, practice physical distancing within the workplace, provide instructions training and supervision in respect of COVID-19 and respond to the incidents of COVID-19 within the workplace, provide instructions training and supervision in respect to COVID-19 and respond to the incidence of COVID-19 within the workplace. The COVID-19 safety plan is an overarching plan for the department in which each operational area maintains and updates policies and procedures for additional risks identified in specific areas. The department has conducted a number of exercises to test the plan and has developed a DPFEM COVID-19 outbreak management plan that provides guidance on managing suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases at DPFEM premises. I thank the department for all its work.

**CHAIR** - You've already thanked the minister and we all supported that.

**Mr SHELTON** - There is significantly more to go through, but it's been a wonderful effort by everybody to get on top of this and I appreciate all the effort.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Ms PALMER** - Thank you, minister. The SES workforce is quite a diverse workforce. How are vulnerable members managed during the COVID-19 emergency?

**Mr SHELTON** - Good to see Andrew arriving. Yes, and so look, managing vulnerable members of course, has been critical and I have -

**CHAIR** - Because we're not going to get to them. No.

**Mr SHELTON** - How are we going for time?

**CHAIR** - We're terribly behind time. Next year we'll make sure we've got you after lunch as well, minister.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - We're not having lunch; we've been working through.

**Mr DEAN** - You can work through.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It'll go quicker if we don't have your questions.

**CHAIR** - So -

**Mr SHELTON** - I'll just talk, not that I was looking for Mr Lea. So far, it's been a fantastic effort by everybody involved. There have been some circumstances where we have had challenges. Mr Andrew Lea is here with us from the State Emergency Service and he'll take that question.

**Mr LEA** - Thank you, minister. About 14 per cent of our volunteers have risk factors to COVID-19. Back in March, we took them away from work or took them away from the workplace and asked them to stay at home. As the year progressed, we introduced further risk controls for them and those whose health conditions allowed were allowed to come back to do certain tasks. We've used that model since then. At the moment probably about 8 per cent of our volunteer workforce isn't working for us. That hasn't affected operations at all. It hasn't affected any of our units.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Minister, you'll note that the South Australian situation last week was quite a challenging one where there was a person who misrepresented the truth. They actually lied about their circumstances. Under the Emergency Management Act 2006, do section 60C infringement notices help Tasmania? Where somebody intentionally misrepresents the truth and we could end up in the same situation as South Australia last week? Have you had a look at that section?

**Mr SHELTON** - The 2006 act along with the Tasmanian Emergency Management Arrangements - TEMA - have a number of areas dealing with the specifics of that one, where it is illegal to give false declarations at any time.

**CHAIR** - We know South Australian legislation did not cover that specific aspect. Does Tasmania's?

**Mr SHELTON** - And for that detail -

**Mr HINE** - Yes, specific directions are given under the Emergency Management Act or the Public Health Act. It's like when you come into the state, there are certain declarations that are offensive if you don't say the right thing or if you provide false information. But I'll hand over to Mr Bodnar.

**Mr BODNAR** - Thanks, commissioner. Under section 60C there are certainly provisions leading through to section 60 in relation to providing false or misleading information to an emergency services worker or an emergency management worker. I can't remember the

exact definition. So there's false and misleading information. There are also provisions in there in relation to failing to comply with the lawful directions of an emergency management worker and there are some other provisions there. So I think to answer your questions, it would depend as to whom that statement was made under the Emergency Management Act.

**CHAIR** - We're in a no better situation than SA, then?

**Mr BODNAR** - We will have to take that question on notice.

**CHAIR** - Well, I'll expect it - you probably need to do it as your homework right now. Because it could end up happening to Tasmania. Just as easily as it did in South Australia, minister. I know that's a statement, but are you concerned about that?

**Mr SHELTON** - Very concerned that anybody in the community would misrepresent their position when it comes to the police doing their tracing and checking. It's not only illegal, but when we're dealing with the whole community, it's immoral to think that one individual can cause so much damage to the community.

**CHAIR** - But it can happen. It did happen.

**Mr SHELTON** - Indeed. I'm sure there are people within the process, looking at that very thing at the moment; at the end of the day, of course, we have to keep our community safe and Tasmania's done a great job of that so far.

**Mr HINE** - Can I just add to that, if you don't mind, minister> As we rely on people telling the truth -

**CHAIR** - But they don't always tell the truth.

**Mr HINE** - Legislation doesn't make them tell the truth either.

**CHAIR** - But you've got to be able to put a penalty or an offence and a penalty to that and that was my question. Do we have it covered?

**Mr HINE** - Yes. Even if there's not a penalty or if there is a penalty, it's about the situation of someone telling the truth. Everyone who comes into Tasmania, all whom we deal with, we rely on them to tell the truth. Legislation doesn't always make them tell the truth and reviewing that to see what the circumstances were, who asked the question, what was the question, how was it answered and whether it was misleading or not can become very subjective.

We'll always look at whether we can make this situation better. We're always making sure that we test some information as well. With COVID-19, it is so dynamic and people have to make decisions on the information they have at the time, whether or right or wrong, and then they also need to test that information later on. So, yes, we will continue to look to make sure we can get it better, to make sure there are the appropriate penalties, but we've also got to balance that in relation to making the decision in a timely manner to protect the community.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Ms Armitage and then to Mr Dean, and then I'm back up the table to Ms Siejka.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - On the subject of volunteers, minister, and, as we were talking about, vulnerable volunteers, what's the age profile of our volunteers? Have we an ageing group of volunteers? Do we have younger people coming in and volunteering? Do we have sufficient volunteers? Because I know in many different areas, volunteers are the older people. There tend to be fewer young people coming in.

**MR SHELTON** - Can you ask gender balance? Ask gender balance.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, I will. I'm never so interested in gender, but, anyway, we'll put gender balance in as well.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. Well, I'll go to Mr Lea on this in a moment.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So is it an older cohort basically or do we have younger?

**Mr SHELTON** - Well, as we all know and it's been in the community and debated for a number of years that we have an ageing demographic in Tasmania, and, of course, our volunteer cohort represents that to a degree, the SES, of course.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Bit more exciting area so there might be more volunteers, you would think.

**Mr SHELTON** - We have - but we do have, of course, a younger cohort among the Tasmania Fire Service volunteers.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes.

**Mr SHELTON** - The SES volunteers has been sustained at over 600 or above across the state. Twenty-nine per cent of them are females and 71 per cent are males. The average age of volunteers is 45.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - That sounds young.

**Mr SHELTON** - Service time has remained steady at 8.35 years with some volunteers having served in excess of 40 years. The Tasmania Fire Service has a younger cohort, whereas SES have an older cohort. I'll go to Mr Lea.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - So are we getting younger people coming into the SES as well? Yes, where are the younger people applying?

**Mr SHELTON** - On specific SES issues? Mr Lea?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you.

**Mr LEA** - Thanks, minister. The age group between 20 and 24 is the third highest age group in our service.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Oh, good.

**Mr LEA** - That drops off a little bit due to people getting busy at work and with families and things like that. Which is to be expected. As the minister said, our average age is 45. It's been like that for some years now. We keep an eye on that with volunteer surveys about every five years, to look at trends. If there's an issue or we think we've got a problem with ageing populations or whatever, we can deal with it.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Is there an age limit that people can no longer work?

**Mr LEA** - Ninety years, yes.

**CHAIR** - An age limit on age? Yes, there is.

**Mr LEA** - Age limit on age?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - With the SES, I'm wondering whether -

**Mr LEA** - SES volunteers.

**CHAIR** - Are you sure it's not 80? I had a friend who was told we no longer need you at 80.

**Mr SHELTON** - That's news to me.

**CHAIR** - I'll put him back on the volunteer list then immediately, Mr Tim Fletcher.

**Mr HINE** - I know some volunteer organisations do have a limit of 80 for insurance purposes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - There may be no insurance after that.

**CHAIR** - But not the SES?

**Mr HINE** - No, I wasn't aware of that. Andrew would know certainly better than I.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Are they insured after 80, do you know? Through you, minister.

**Mr LEA** - All our people are insured through the Tasmania Risk Management Fund. There's no age limit on that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you.

**CHAIR** - My constituent is the fittest 80-year-old person I know.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - He'll be very happy about the news today.

**CHAIR** - Yes, so he'll be delighted.



**Mr DEAN** - On that survey, minister, there was a survey undertaken last year regarding the volunteers in the SES. Was that survey undertaken? If not, when's it going to be done?

**Mr LEA** - Thanks, minister. Yes, the survey was completed, and it should be available on our website.

**Mr DEAN** - Right, okay. I'll go and get that.

**Mr LEA** - If you have any difficulties -

**Mr DEAN** - No, thank you for that. Now that the SES is responsible and reports to the Chief Fire Officer which has been the case now for a while, what is the situation with the volunteers in the SES and in the fire service, what's happening there? Is it visualised that there's a crossover of skills. A lot of the volunteer fire officers would also be members of the SES, and perhaps the other way as well. What is the position there in relation to presumptive cancer? Are all employees within the SES, the volunteers there, are they entitled to be supported under the legislation in place for volunteers in the fire service?

**Mr SHELTON** - There are dedicated volunteers in all our communities. Many of them have dual roles as they are Tas Fire Service volunteers and SES volunteers under the State Fire Service. They remain their own entity as far as that goes, and they work through - on behalf of the community. I know the Deloraine crew more than any other crew, but there are a number of those which are on the SES. They're also volunteers in Tas Fire Service at Deloraine. I know a couple of them are also ambulance volunteers as well. They all do a fantastic job for the community.

For the specifics, Commissioner, as far as presumptive cancer legislation goes?

**Mr HINE** - The short answer, the presumptive cancer legislation only applies for TFS personnel, and not SES volunteers. Any other specifics, I can hand to Andrew.

**Mr LEA** - No, that just about captures it.

**Mr DEAN** - The number who are volunteers in both the SES and the Fire Service, have you got percentages on that?

**Mr LEA** - Yes. Sixteen per cent of our volunteers are also TFS. Ambulance Tasmania has 5.3 per cent, and 6.1 are others, which is St John Ambulance and various other emergency services, including Surf Life Saving.

**Ms SIEJKA** - My question is about the firefighting appliance replacement scheme program. In 2016-17, it was first budgeted and it's been rolled over over a number of years. Then there's a commitment to \$15.8 million made now. Does that include the \$3.6 million earlier budgeted for the area of firefighting? Has that been rolled into that figure?

**Mr SHELTON** - The area of firefighters?

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. What we have, and for the benefit of -

**CHAIR** - Or who we have.

**Mr SHELTON** - Who we have, Chief Fire Officer.

**CHAIR** - Joining us, Mr Chris Arnol.

**Mr SHELTON** - Mr Chris Arnol has come to the table.

**Mr ARNOL** - Thank you, Chair.

**Mr SHELTON** - As far as the budget goes and the commitment, there's \$17.6 million in this budget for fire in general. You're talking about a \$3.6 million vehicle.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Yes. I know aerial appliances will arrive in Australia, I think this week, and be in operation in December 2020. I'm curious, if it's been committed previously, is this part of that amount of money we have been re-announced? Yes.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes. I'll throw to the chief.

**Mr ARNOL** - The short answer to that is yes. That is the case. Our fleet program is all wrapped up in one, whether it be our tanker fleet, our aerial fleet, our pumper fleet, whatever.

**Ms SIEJKA** - Okay.

**CHAIR** - Members, we are still in 4.1. I have asked the Minister for Racing and Sport and Recreation if we could push her timeslot back to 2.30 to allow us to finish our output groups, if that's amenable to you to go past 1 p.m.

**Mr SHELTON** - I'm in your hands, Chair.

**CHAIR** - We are waiting for confirmation of that, and I hope to receive that very soon. They are all important output groups, so we'll see how we progress with that. Mr Dean, you had a question?

**Mr DEAN** - It was on the \$250 000. You mentioned that earlier, minister, to support our volunteers in emergency services. What's that all about? Where's it going to go to? What's it going to provide?

**Mr SHELTON** - It was the \$250 000 for the -

**Mr DEAN** - Across the emergency services, wasn't it?

**Mr SHELTON** - For Emergency Services Health and Wellbeing Program. It's added to the \$6 million of the program that's there for our career staff. The volunteers put a case that it should cover them as well. The volunteers go out there, whether it be SES to a road accident or Volunteer Firefighters or some horrific situations in house fires and the health and wellbeing

of their volunteer cohort is also very important, it's to go towards that health and wellbeing work done in that area.

**CHAIR** - Do we have we some figures around the actual number of requests into the State controller's office around the COVID-19 state of emergency we've been through?

**Mr SHELTON** - Requests as far as security goes?

**CHAIR** - No, for support. Just for general information, the Good to Go Pass, the whole box and dice. Was there any data collected on that in regard to that?

**Mr SHELTON** - I have the State Controller beside me.

**Mr HINE** - I'll go to Mr Bodnar in a moment.

**CHAIR** - Please stay, Chris.

**Mr HINE** - We've captured every Good to Go, because Good to Go ones that came in have made it much easier to capture the data. We've captured how many ministerials and requests we have. We put it through what we call WebEOC to capture all that data as well. There is lots and lots of data that went through: how many exemptions, how many we did process. But Mr Bodnar would have some figures there.

**Mr BODNAR** - Thanks, Commissioner. Chair, would you like me to go back to the definition of an emergency management worker first just to help with that previous question you asked?

**CHAIR** - That would be fine.

**Mr BODNAR** - Okay. Under the Emergency Management Act 2006, when I spoke about an emergency management worker and providing false or misleading information, the definition of an emergency management worker is a member of a statutory service - such as Tasmania Police - whether for payment or other consideration was a volunteer. Under (b), an authorised officer.

For the benefit of the committee, it's important to note that our biosecurity officers through DPIPWE have the status as authorised officers to deal with COVID-19. If somebody was to come in through a gateway and provide false or misleading information to a biosecurity officer, they could be charged under this provision of providing false information. Under (c), a person who does or admits to do any act in the assistance of or under the direction or control of an authorised officer; or (d) a person prescribed by the regulations to be an emergency management worker; or (e) any other person who in good faith participates in emergency management or rescue and retrieval operations or performs or exercises or purported performs or exercises functions or powers under the Act or is involved in the administration or execution or the purported administration or the execution of the Emergency Management Act.'

So there's a very broad range of people that could fall within the parameters of an emergency management worker. It would come back to who that representation was made to and whether or not that class of person would fit within that definition.

**CHAIR** - Right. The question is, minister, are you comfortable with what's just been shared with the committee that anyone's actions that have put Tasmania at risk will be able to be pursued and ultimately an infringement notice given.

**Mr SHELTON** - I'm comfortable with the explanation that was just given and I'm sure it will be scrutinised even further as people look at South Australia and what came out of there.

**Mr HINE** - It's under the Public Health Act which actually represents what the circumstances were in South Australia. So we're certainly have a look at it.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, and some numbers.

**Mr BODNAR** - Just some statistics for you, Chair. In relation to the Good2Go application system, and the committee is probably aware that came on line on 16 July. So between 16 July this year and 30 September there's been over 34 000 applications we see through Good2Go. In relation to government accommodation quarantine facilities, since 29 March through until yesterday 22 November, there's been just over 8100 people placed into government quarantine facilities. Out of that we've had approximately 8060-odd people decanting from those facilities. As of yesterday, there are currently 39 people in government quarantine facilities in the State of Tasmania.

In home quarantining within Tasmania, as of today there are 506 people in home quarantine, so those people can be subject to compliance testing through Tasmania Police and through the new electronic app Whisper that we're using. People can opt in for compliance checking and by activating location services on their phone, that will give us a GPS location as to where that person is. I think the cost of that program was something like \$4000 with an administration fee of about \$95. We can send out bulk SMS messages at an average cost of about 8.8 cents per text message.

In relation to the Tas eTravel system which register people to come to the state from a low-risk region, so predominantly we're looking at Western Australia, Northern Territory, Queensland -

**CHAIR** - Formerly South Australia.

**Mr BODNAR** - Formerly South Australia, yes. You are correct, up until last Monday. Even those people from New Zealand because that's been categorised as a low-risk region. That came online around about 23 October, and since then we've had just over 22 800 people arrive in the state from those low-risk regions. That's over the last four weeks.

For the benefit of the committee, there's some pretty significant numbers there, and this has been one of the greatest challenges we've faced from an emergency management perspective, particularly when you look at the activation of the State Control Centre together with the number of agencies involved in this pandemic. Across all the government agencies and everyone is working with the best intent at heart to reduce the risk of importing this disease into our state. Hopefully that provides some clarity for the committee.

**CHAIR** - It certainly does. I place on the record my thanks to the State Controller office and those people, Commissioner, who have been working diligently in that space. Their response, I know from two members of parliament in particular, have been exceptional.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Been exemplary.

**CHAIR** - Yes.

**Mr HINE** - I have to say that I haven't worked with a lot of them and we've all come tougher in the State Control Centre from Mr Bodnar to people from Department of Premier and Cabinet, Sophie Moore in relation to the policy team, Mandy Debney and the PIU, the legal team, as I said Adrian's team, Dr Scott McEwan as well. We've all worked together, up to 50 or 60 people up to 14- to 16-hour days seven days a week. I have a renewed respect for those right across the State Service and everyone else who has worked tirelessly.

**CHAIR** - Including Jim Semmens.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, he has worked very very well on long hours as well. There are always learnings out of these meetings. I certainly pass on my thanks to every one of those people.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Particularly of a weekend, I think that's the thing that I've found that you can find and as I said, we've only been dealing with Detective Sergeant -

**Mr HINE** - It's Senior Sergeant Semmens, yes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Senior Sergeant Semmens and to be able to get someone to answer the phone on a Saturday or a Sunday when you've got constituents who are stressed has been absolutely fabulous.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, I agree.

**CHAIR** - Minister, can we have a quantum of the cost of government quarantine for the COVID-19 pandemic and state emergency? Thank you.

**Mr SHELTON** - Through the Commissioner to Mr Bodnar.

**Mr BODNAR** - Certainly, through the minister and the Commissioner. I have some of the most up-to-date figures for the period through to September for accommodation and for meals in hotel quarantine across the state. It's in the vicinity of \$20 million. Then if you add the security costs on top of that and probably Communities Tasmania will provide some really accurate information. All up thus far, we're looking in the vicinity of about \$25 million including the security services and other add-ons, I suppose, if I can use that term. It's a pretty significant cost to the state.

**CHAIR** - Yes. It is, but well worth keeping our communities safe.

**Mr HINE** - Plus the process about those invoices being charged back since the end of September, beginning of October. There's a number of invoices, as we know it was \$2800 we charged those individuals that have to do a mandatory paid quarantine. Adrian's area is responsible for issuing those invoices.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If there are no further questions in this area, we'll move to 4.2 State security and rescue operations. Ms Armitage.

## 4.2 State security and rescue operations -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, if I can go back with state security to the recent budget announcement of the additional 20 SOG police officers. It was mentioned earlier that you may have probably made them part-time officers; when they're not on SOG duty they would be undertaking regular police duties. When we have 24 specific SOG, will they be - when they're not in sieges or critical incidents - undertaking normal regular police duties to assist or will they be doing specific training and not actually other policing work?

**Mr SHELTON** - They have to be at the ready for any serious issues that come their way from a security point of view and so forth. I visited the SOG and what they do when they're training and so forth. A lot of their day hours will be making sure they're proficient in using the equipment they have available to them. Once they're in place there'll be policies and procedures in govern how a fulltime SOG will actually work. We have a period of time to develop the finite detail. There is always crowd enforcement and bog events and different things happening around that have to be planned and managed and so on. So for that detail, Commissioner.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, I reiterate what the minister said. They will be fulltime SOG, that is their main role. There's work planned about when they're not engaged in SOG work. There will be duties to assist in other areas as well. Fulltime SOG is not always about being in their full SOG equipment. They've also got COVID-19 roles to assist in searching and entering into premises not in their full SOG kits. So there's lots of duties that they do, it's not just waiting for a siege to happen or whatever. They are a highly trained specialised area and we want to maximise their expertise. Work being developed when we have the fulltime SOG and it's a step forward for Tasmania Police to be able to support them to be able to do their job. There's a lot of training making sure they're efficient in their techniques, their equipment and also ascertaining how they can assist other duties, whether it's SOG or uniform, to be able to do their job in a safer way.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Will they still be part time? Will you still have part-time SOGs when you have 20 full-timers come on?

**Mr HINE** - There most likely will be a part time component to be able to supplement those as well. We're looking forward to getting forward to the 20 full-time plus the four that we already have, so that's 24. Then no doubt there will be part-time members that will assist those as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Will there be performance indicators to monitor and ensure improve performances? How would you do that with something like the SOG?

**Mr HINE** - That's all part of the planning process. We're developing a work plan to have a look at those things about how we can look at various aspects of - once we get them fulltime to support them in their role, and understanding what they do, and to make sure there are some performance measures. That's all part of the planning process into the future.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. I refer to your police annual report in another area of State security and rescue. Total helicopter hours; I noticed that was up significantly in the police annual report. Is that had to do with reconnaissance. Last year, the actual was - 867 and now the new actual, 1135 for 2019-20. Quite a significant increase.

**Mr SHELTON** - Search and rescue is a critical part of all that. During the lockdown period and at Eastertime this year there was significant concern about what people might do over Easter. Police utilised the helicopter as part of the surveillance on people who might be at their shack and so forth. The Commissioner can add more.

**Mr HINE** - No, the minister answered. We do know that the helicopter, other than the last time we used it, is going up. But certainly, during the COVID-19 we used it extensively to assist the community understanding the importance of staying at home.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - How many police helicopters do you have?

**Mr HINE** - There is one police helicopter, but there is a reserve one as well, so you can really say there's two that we have fully kitted out. There's one with health and ambulance at the moment as well.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you, Chair.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. If there are no other questions.

**Mr DEAN** - I have a couple.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Mr Dean. I was looking at you and you were busy on your phone. I thought this might be a pass for you, but anyway, there we are. We need to finish this section by around 1 o'clock so we can go to local government.

**Mr DEAN** - Rescue operations in relation to the mountain bike tracks and so on, minister. What are the numbers of injured people and helicopter uses for bringing people out of those areas as well?

**CHAIR** - I'd say weekly at Blue Derby.

**Mr SHELTON** - First of all, it's a service, of course, that's marvellous.

**CHAIR** - And expensive.

**Mr SHELTON** - Of course people who utilise the service are in very difficult circumstances, and so the search and rescue as far as flying hours for 2019-20, 372 compared to 298 the year before. Police operations, 90 hours. Flight crew training, 218 hours. For Ambulance Tasmania, 455 hours. And AMS -

**Mr DEAN** - That's general numbers you're talking about?

**Mr SHELTON** - Flight hours.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes. I want you to specifically look at the mountain bike tracks trails around the state because there are a number of them, and a number have been constructed as we talk as well, so I was just wanting to know what the numbers are.

**Mr SHELTON** - Interesting. And yes, what we do as a community, and there are plenty of people keeping fit and tearing around mountain bike trails and coming off the mountain bikes at the same time. So it has created some more work for Tasmania Police for rescue, and

of course for SES as well, who - a lot of the areas are covered by SES, but to the Commissioner for those hours.

**Mr HINE** - Thanks for that. We don't have any specific figures for mountain bike tracks because some may be Ambulance and the Health who are doing the rescuing or the attendance to that. We have been involved in assisting ambulance, and people are being injured, and we know some of the mountain bike tracks have their own ambulance service or their own first aid service on the track as well. Just like anything, as the sport becomes more popular, especially it's a little riskier, there is unfortunately some more injuries as well, and sadly a fatality as well. So whilst it's an absolute fantastic coup for the state to have the mountain bike tracks that we have, and they are world class, and there are some injuries in relation to that. To be specific, there's probably more an ambulance issue rather than a search and rescue issue.

**Mr DEAN** - My other question was in relation to - what has Government been responsible for and involved in regarding counterterrorism activity through the year. What's happened in that area through the year with activities? I suppose training. Are there any issues that have surfaced requiring police attention?

**Mr SHELTON** - Before I throw to the Commissioner, of course, we are involved in Alliance New Zealand and Australia in that counterterrorism area, and there's often meetings and discussions around the counterterrorism issues. What we do know is that COVID, of course, there hasn't been too many flights or members of the Tasmanian Police going off to these meetings and so on. But they have been, as I was reading through a brief, kept up-to-date with what's going on through video conferencing and so forth. There is a certain level of alert that within Australia, we need to make sure we're on top of, and the risk is always there. But to the Commissioner if he's got any further information.

**CHAIR** - I was going to say, if there's nothing relevant to add, then we can move on.

**Mr HINE** - Can I just say - and I appreciate the time limit - we are fully committed to the ANZCTC, the Australia-New Zealand Counter-Terrorism Committee. We fully participate. Whilst COVID's been going on, obviously these issues continue on, but we haven't dropped off this aspect of policing and our involvement from a national-international level.

**Mr DEAN** - It's a critical area, a very important area.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, I agree.

**CHAIR** - So now moving to Capital Investment. I've got a couple of questions in that area.

### **Capital Investment Program**

**CHAIR** - Minister, the body worn video, there's no forward estimate for 2021-22. Has that program been completed?

**Mr SHELTON** - A number - 751 or 756, something in that vicinity, have all been distributed and part of -

**CHAIR** - And it is completed.



**Mr SHELTON** - The rollout is completed.

**CHAIR** - All right.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - That's why there's no forward budget. And the Sorell Emergency Services Hub, and I know that's with the public works committee as we speak, and I won't be divulging how that's progressing. But my adding up, it's a \$12 million cost, and yet it's \$500 000 short of what it's proposed to cost and there's no forward estimate for that remaining \$500 000. So I'm interested in where that's going to come from, even if it comes in on budget, which they often don't.

**Mr SHELTON** - It was a \$12 million commitment, and there's work already being progressed, and that's where half a million dollars has already been committed through that process. So as part of the project, everything involved in the project is calculated, and so -

**CHAIR** - So there was \$500 000 spend in 2019-20.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - So that's where the \$12 million comes to. Thank you.

**Mr SHELTON** - May I add a little bit to your last - and while the rollout of body worn cameras has been completed, of course there is an ongoing recurrent requirement for that in order to replace broken ones, get them fixed, whatever.

**CHAIR** - But that will just come out of general revenue.

**Mr SHELTON** - There is a \$654 000 annual recurrent funding arrangement in the budget to allow that to happen.

**CHAIR** - But it doesn't go forward. That was my question. It doesn't go forward in the forward Estimates. There's nothing.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes, it just comes out of ordinary recurrent funding from now on, but there's been additional funding put in to cope for that.

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

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. The increased police support, \$90 000. I'm just wondering if you can expand on how that will be spent.

**Mr SHELTON** - Increase?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Well, it just says \$90 000, and it's just for 2021. There's no forward Estimate on that one. I'm wondering what it was for. Increased police support, \$90 000.

**CHAIR** - Page 216?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Yes. Under the same area as the body worn video and the crackdown on antisocial driving, then it says, 'Increased police support: \$90 000', just for the one year. Is it to do with COVID-19?

**Mr SHELTON** - That actually related to the Special Operations Group, the funding towards that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - To do with what?

**Mr SHELTON** - Equipment replacements, equipment issues.

**Mr HINE** - Yes, it was equipment issues.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Noting the budget is always useful, what is the \$7 million for the Launceston police station for? Will the department be seeking resources to make improvements to any other police stations in and around Launceston?

**CHAIR** - Including the St Helens police station.

**Mr SHELTON** - The \$7 million is to upgrade the Launceston police station. It's been 35 years or something like that since there were any renovations done and it needs contemporary facilities for all the members. There's an upgrade happening around the state as far as those upgrades go, whether it be police housing, police stations in Norfolk or Longford, and when it comes around to the St Helens, there have been preliminary discussions with the local constable down there to understand their position and some agitation - agitation is not the right word, and some -

**CHAIR** - It's called lobbying on behalf of your community.

**Mr SHELTON** - Some lobbying from local members as far as what's needed to be done in certain areas around the state. I was in Queenstown only recently and there's work to be done down at Queenstown and so I'm happy to be in the situation where a lot of work is being done. Yes, I think that answers that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think so.

**CHAIR** - Thank you, Mr Dean, last question in Capital investment because we need to get to State Fire Commission and we need to get to local government and I've got another question down the other end.

**Mr WILLIE** - On the Fire Commission.

**Mr DEAN** - There's \$3.5 million allocated to a new State Operations Centre for crisis coordination. Where is all that occurring and where is it being built and so on. Is that all in relation to the SOG premises that have been programmed to be built. Where is that happening?

**CHAIR** - A million dollars.

**Mr SHELTON** - All this is a good news story. I don't know whether I've got enough time to get through it all, that's the only issue.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes, you have.

**CHAIR** - Straight to the point.

**Mr SHELTON** - Look, as far as the allocation goes and the AFAC reviewer was about to determine that we needed one and government has allocated the money. There's a process going through at the moment to work out which is the best site and so on.

**Mr DEAN** - Is that for the coordination centre, you're talking about? State Operations Centre.

**Mr SHELTON** - That's the State Control Centre.

**Mr DEAN** - Yes.

**Mr HINE** - So it's dual, Mr Dean. There's the SFOC through the Fire Service and also the State Coordination Centre as well. So it'll be a dual facility.

**Mr DEAN** - Right.

**Mr HINE** - October next year is what we're aiming for.

**Mr DEAN** - Organised, planned by, is that?

**Mr HINE** - As in operational.

**Mr DEAN** - Operational by then.

**Mr HINE** - Yes.

**Mr DEAN** - So where's the building?

**Mr HINE** - We're still negotiating in relation to that.

**Mr DEAN** - It's going to be ready, okay. Yes, and the SOG premises?

**Mr SHELTON** - We're looking for a suitable site.

**Mr HINE** - Basically we have a site identified, we're just going through planning approvals for that million dollars we spent.

**CHAIR** - Up in the north, Mr Dean.

**Mr DEAN** - Whereabouts is that?

**Mr HINE** - The academy is where our preferred site is, so we're going through various application processes in a planning application process.

**Mr DEAN** - But it's in the DA stage now, is it?

**Mr HINE** - No, not yet.

**Mr DEAN** - Not at the development application stage, yes, right. Okay.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Now we'll move to the State Fire Commission and I'll invite Mr Willie to just ask his question before I go back to Mr Dean.

**Mr WILLIE** - I've got a few questions for this. The fuel reduction teams were announced in early 2020 and the positions were advertised in July 2020. Have those positions been filled?

**Mr SHELTON** - You're talking about the remote area fire-fighting teams?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes.

**Mr SHELTON** - Sorry, we'll just clarify. The remote area fire-fighting teams or the fuel reduction?

**Mr WILLIE** - Fuel reductions teams.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. So there were 12 positions that had been highlighted.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, 12 mitigation crew supervisors. Yes.

**Mr SHELTON** - We're going through a process at the moment and, as I understand it, and I'm sure by the end of November they will be on the ground and working.

**Mr WILLIE** - So can the Commissioner provide some further information? Is there training happening?

**Mr SHELTON** - So that's the time lines they keep.

**Mr WILLIE** - Have they been recruited.

**Mr ARNOL** - Through the minister, yes. We're currently interviewing those people. We've got the supervisors already on board, and so there's four positions already appointed. We're interviewing now, we had a lot - we had like 300 people apply so we had a lot to go through. That should be finalised in the next fortnight and then we'll get those people on board and splitting into two teams, north and south, but we could split, of course, into other configurations. Notionally we'll have half a dozen in the north and half a dozen in the south to speed up any opportunity to get our fuel reduction programs done through any window of opportunity that comes.

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, okay. Through the minister. We were fortunate to have a briefing on the upcoming fire season. Commissioner, you talked about the private landowners program which is -

**Mr SHELTON** - Red Hot Tips Program?

**Mr WILLIE** - Yes, which has by all reports been reasonably successful. Can you give some information on the number of landowners involved and the activities undertaken?

**Mr SHELTON** - I certainly can and, of course, the commitment was \$295 000 invested in this years' budget to the Red Hot Tips program. The new and enhanced program is aimed at farmers and landowners or groups of landowners who are responsible for large tracts of land in rural areas around Tasmania. Red Hot Tips program provides a central point of contact, a one-stop-shop service for landowners or landholders on matters relating to bushfire risk including: on-ground practical advice on effective bushfire management planning including obtaining appropriate permits, developing burn plans and property management plans; opportunities for private and public landholders to work together to plan for and undertake vegetation fire management activities, training and mentoring including planned burn demonstrations; assistance in identifying resources required for planned burns and advice on alternative fuel reduction treatments and access to helpful resources.

Facilitators have a key role in stakeholder engagement, visiting landowners' properties, fostering relationships between farmers and landholders, for the government agency and industry to prepare for and undertake vegetation fire management activities particularly where bushfire risk is identified across boundaries. The Red Hot Tips program is in full swing. I recently attended the first demonstration burn the landholders conducted on the Hazelwood property at Copping. The Hazelwood property was impacted by the 2013 Dunalley fire and property owner Sarah Jacobson is a passionate advocate for landholders owning and mitigating their own bushfire risk. Sarah also sits on the Red Hot Tips program advisory group. Prior to the demonstration burn, landholders attended the workshop to increase their theoretical knowledge and complete their own burn plans.

There have been so far 84 landholders signed up to the Red Hot Tips program. In the last two months, 35 planned burns have been undertaken by landholders registered with the program. These vary in size from half a hectare to 155 hectares. I note that a number of these landholders with mentoring and assistance carried out their own burn plan safely on their own property. Registration events are also forecast to be held or they have been held, Dunalley had 35 people there, Marrawah had 43 people attended, Fingal has 15 and in the future in the next couple of weeks, there will be a session held in Alveston on 2 December and in Bothwell on 3 December.

**Mr WILLIE** - That's all good stuff, minister, but the program finishes in seven months. Is there a plan to continue it? The \$295 000 includes three staff members, I understand.

**Mr SHELTON** - What we do is look at the programs and assess the programs. From my point of view the program seems to be very much a success with the number of people coming on board. I'll be promoting the fact that it should be continued.

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

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Mr Dean?

**Mr DEAN** - Josh has asked some of my questions, but I'll go to -

**CHAIR** - I thought he might have done, but anyway. We're a team here, it doesn't matter who asks the questions.

**Mr DEAN** - Minister, we had the marine fire at Launceston here a week or so ago. I've had some contact from Fire Service personnel to say that the department is not sufficiently

resourced for the purposes of fighting marina fires, fires on water and rivers and so on. What is the position? What resources does TFS have? What's their training in that area, and what's the vision in future?

**Mr SHELTON** - Tasmanian Fire Service already maintains the marine firefighting response capability, with career firefighters trained from their third year - from their third year of their career. Fire response on marine vessels is a responsibility of the captain. The Tasmania Fire Service plays a secondary role if required, and only at the request of the captain. In these circumstances, the priority is evacuation rather than fire suppression. Fire suppression, should any yacht or motorboat catch fire, given the time associated with any boat catching on fire to be fully consumed is very rapid.

The Tasmanian Fire Service also works collaboratively with Tasmanian Police when responding to marine fires, and utilises Tasmanian police vessel fleet to deploy if the fire is in open water requiring assistance. This model makes sense given the size of Tasmania and Tasmanian Police, existing marine fleet capability. Tasmanian Fire Service leadership is currently assessing the level of service delivery that could be required in locations across Tasmania to ensure the current arrangements are appropriate and fit for purpose. Any modern emergency service organisation should take an evidence-based approach to assessing the service delivery. This ensures that we have the right resources in the right place to address the risk.

When we talk about marine, Mr Dean, we need to distinguish between whether it's a boat in a marina or a large ship that's in open water somewhere. Calling it 'marine' really doesn't specify close enough what we're actually talking about.

**Mr DEAN** - I'm referring to the marine fire at Launceston only a few days ago, which was close in where TFS doesn't have the resources. Does TFC have the resources of their own to fight a fire on a vessel moored in fairly close? Let's put it that way.

**Mr SHELTON** - Yes, they are equipped, of course, with all that firefighting gear. And I've heard the Deputy Chief describe it in the past as similar to a caravan fire in the sense that boats have particular peculiarities with them, and all firefighters are trained - the first thing they're trained in is risk assessment and what they have to do to keep themselves safe in those circumstances. But for specifics around this issue, I'll go to the Chief, who's been dealing with it.

**Mr DEAN** - Do they have any vessels that are fitted out for firefighting?

**Mr SHELTON** - No. Tas Fire Service don't have any boats.

**Mr ARNOL** - Without going to the tactics, perhaps, of every circumstance that we might come across, but say in marinas, the priority won't be the ship or the vessel that's on fire. It's the exposures that are immediately next to it. The tactic involved there would be to immediately protect the adjacent assets. That's normally what occurs. By the time Fire Services are notified and arrive, it's inevitable those vessels are lost. That's the circumstances we're confronted with. It is normal for the tanker base firefighting or pumpers or the equipment that we carry normally to deal with those sorts of events. We can and we do, as the minister mentioned, do have collaborative arrangements with police where we do place pumps on boats and the like to do things that are a little bit offshore.

When we're really talking ocean-side and large ships, a completely different thing. We have had ship fires in the port of Hobart. I can remember attending them. We managed to contain those. Those are done in conjunction with the ship's captain and the crew, and we're a secondary all-support element in that. It's a major issue about where who is control the control authority. The captain or the port authority will have controls around those.

**CHAIR** - Thank you very much. Ms Armitage, final question, and then we're going to local government.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Thank you. I don't think this has been asked, but maybe I missed it. What is the number of fulltime and the number of volunteers?

**Mr SHELTON** - 334 fulltime. Volunteers, over 5000.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Over 5000?

**Mr SHELTON** - 5100.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I'm interested in the age comparison with the SES, the age profile of the volunteers. Do we have similar age groups, or do we have older groups with the firefighters? My understanding is that they are. We have the comparison of the age groups with the SES. I'm just wondering with the volunteers, the age groups.

**Mr SHELTON** - Average age of the volunteers?

**Mr ARNOL** - It's similar to the SES. It's around 50, late 40s.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I think it was 45 at the SES.

**Mr ARNOL** - Yes, but we've got specific demographics, minister, that we could share with the committee, but we don't have them right now. We could table them later.

**CHAIR** - Are you happy to provide those to the committee?

**Mr ARNOL** - Indeed, Chair, we're happy to do that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Do you have an age limit?

**Mr ARNOL** - No.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Since we were talking about that with the SES.

**CHAIR** - Is there an age limit?

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Age limit for volunteers?

**Mr ARNOL** - No age limit.

**Mr SHELTON** - No.

**CHAIR** - No age limit.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - No age limit.

**Mr DEAN** - What's been the draw on the presumptive cancer in the legislation? We need that answered, Chair, because we were told it would be overused and that's why they couldn't bring it into place. What's been the actions by members within the volunteer Tas Fire Service accessing that legislation in the past financial year?

**Ms ADAMS** - Through you, minister. Since the introduction of the legislation, there's been a total of 18 presumptive cancer claims that have been accepted. Nine of these claims have been finalised and closed, and a current nine active claims at the moment.

**Mr DEAN** - Among the volunteers. Are there any numbers?

**Ms ADAMS** - Yes. Of the 18 claims, nine relate to career firefighters and nine relate to volunteers.

**Mr DEAN** - Excellent, thank you.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. Good question. Thank you, minister, for your team in regard to Police, Fire and Emergency Management. Now, can I thank you all? I'd normally thank you individually, but we don't have time. Local government, thank you very much.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you, Chair. But before they do leave, I wish to thank them, and I know it's taking up some of your time, but -

**CHAIR** - No, it's taking up your time now.

**Mr SHELTON** - Incredible effort by everybody. First one I've been through and now I appreciate the work that goes into every department.

**CHAIR** - And you appreciate having the Commissioner and others next to you.

**Mr SHELTON** - So to everybody, thank you very much.

## **DIVISION 9**

(Local Government)

### **Output Group 6 - Local Government**

#### **6.1 Local government -**

**CHAIR** - Local government, are we ready to start?

**Mr SHELTON** - How long have we - we cut some out.

**CHAIR** - We've got 12 minutes.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - It won't take longer than that.



**Mr SHELTON** - Is that what time we're going to finish?

**CHAIR** - We're finishing at 1.30.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay.

**CHAIR** - Might give a couple more minutes.

**Mr SHELTON** - I have to cut my opening statement short then?

**CHAIR** - Yes, we don't need an opening statement. We've got 29 councils and that's far too many. Minister, you might introduce your team at the table, thank you.

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you very much. On my right, Craig Limkin, the Deputy Secretary of Policy and Intergovernmental Relationships and Statutory Director and Director of Local Government.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Craig.

**Mr LIMKIN** - Hello.

**Mr SHELTON** - And on my left, Mat Healey, the Director of Policy and Sector Performance, Local Government.

**CHAIR** - Welcome, Mat. Experienced with Estimates. So, yes.

**Mr HEALEY** - Yes.

**CHAIR** - Minister. Local government, important.

**Mr SHELTON** - Local Government is the closest level of government to the people and has played a fundamental role in assisting our communities through COVID-19 and they play a critical role. Do I have a chance to read any of an opening statement?

**CHAIR** - Summarise. Not three pages. No. Sorry, minister.

**Mr SHELTON** - Look, the division's work was as in most work places affected by COVID-19 outbreak and needs all levels of government to adjust their priorities as part of the response. A number of the divisions team members were reassigned to assist with the government's intermediate efforts on the COVID-19 front.

I take the opportunity to thank them for their dedication and flexibility at an extraordinarily challenging time. I also want to thank the staff who remained within the division in their substantive roles for their efforts to ensure that the division's core business kept ticking along.

Over the past year, the Government has delivered on commitments to strengthen and clarify Tasmanian regulatory framework from cemeteries, crowds and crematoria with the Burials and Cremations Act 2019 coming into effect on 25 December last year and also saw successful amendments of the Dog Control Act. I won't read the rest of it.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr WILLIE** - Thank you, Chair. Minister, you said it yourself, the local government's the closest to the people. I'm interested if there's any councils that are still not allowing public to attend their council meetings?

**Mr SHELTON** - As we know, as I just said, COVID-19 interrupted councils and the way they work and there were special provisions put through to enable local government to operate during that time. Part of it was to work away from their local council chamber and so on, and allowed for signing and instead of the advertising the announcement those documents could be put online.

**Mr WILLIE** - So the question is.

**CHAIR** - An extension.

**Mr WILLIE** - Are any councils still not allowing the public into open sessions?

**Mr SHELTON** - I've been monitoring the accessibility of council meetings since the notice came into place and I am advised that councils have been complying with their obligations as set out in the notice. Currently around 17 councils can facilitate physical public access to their ordinary meetings. Noting that the majority need to limit numbers in the gallery to accommodate physical distancing requirements. Ten council chambers are not open due to COVID-19 conditions. We are currently inquiring with two councils regarding the status of their meetings. While we have been lucky in Tasmania in the terms of COVID-19 numbers in recent months, I recognise that not all councils have the same level of access to physical facilities and venues that can accommodate current social distancing.

**Mr WILLIE** - Can you provide the 17 that are having open sessions? The 10, I think.

**CHAIR** - That aren't?

**Mr WILLIE** - That don't have the infrastructure.

**CHAIR** - Of 12.

**Mr WILLIE** - The two that you're talking to about it. Can you please provide that to us?

**Mr SHELTON** - We don't.

**Mr WILLIE** - You can take it on notice, if you want to, if we want to get to the next questions.

**Mr SHELTON** - Identifying.

**CHAIR** - Interestingly all local government areas have at least a town hall. Even if they can't put or accommodate people at the council chambers, it's a nonsense to say that they don't have a facility where they can hold a meeting. My view. Question? Does the minister agree?

**Mr SHELTON** - Look, there are different situations in different communities and the physical distancing. Part of the other requirements is that through that process if they are operating remotely, they either put that up online and or take a video of that and put it up as soon as practicable. Some councils have demonstrated that ability to do that. There're variations.

**Mr WILLIE** - We know there's no mistake.

**Mr SHELTON** - There's variations of what's happening around the state.

**Mr WILLIE** - Digital inclusion is a big issue in this state, so that's not accessible to everyone, minister.

**Mr SHELTON** - Look, I understand that.

**CHAIR** - We're happy for the minister to table that.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay. The ones that are still closed, Break O'Day, Central Coast, Clarence, Derwent Valley, Glamorgan-Spring Bay, Huon Valley, Kingborough, La Trobe, Northern Midlands, Tasman. So open to public, 17. Closed to the public, nine. Live-streaming is nine. Recording on website is 19 and unclear with Flinders Island.

**Mr WILLIE** - I did have some other questions, but this is starting to draw out some more questions because open sessions for local government are an important accountability measure. We've got through the lockdowns now. I know you talked about infrastructure problems, but some of the councils you just mentioned then, I've been in those council chambers. I suggest that some of those council chambers are as big as some that are conducting open sessions. Does it concern you that some councils are running closed sessions when they might be able to open their doors?

**Mr SHELTON** - They're not actually closed sessions.

**Mr WILLIE** - Well, not closed sessions, but they're not open to the public.

**Mr SHELTON** - Public access is the issue, not necessarily closed sessions. As far as the requirements go, in my discussions with the local government areas, they're complying with what they need to comply with, but access and accountability is fundamental. I expect them to be open to the public as soon as they deem it practicable.

**Mr LIMKIN** - Through you, minister, it's not just about the actual council chambers. It's also about the social distancing in the public gallery space. It is not just about the size of the chamber; it's also about the movement and size in the public gallery.

**Mr SHELTON** - Okay.

**CHAIR** - How long is the minister going to allow councils to enter into the arrangements where they are not allowing public access before the minister says enough is enough? Get some practices in place?

**Mr SHELTON** - As I've already indicated, and we're coming up to Christmas time and I would have thought what would have been going through council's mind - when do they change their processes and practices and so forth. They would have their AGMs have been deferred and so they would be looking at Christmas and what they can do I presume before Christmas and after Christmas. I haven't had direct conversations with them about when they determine that they need to be open. I would expect changes to happen in the New Year.

**CHAIR** - Is that a commitment, minister? That you will engage?

**Mr SHELTON** - No, like I said, the New Year is a new year and they need to comply with public health requirements. I'm not going to force them to comply with something when they don't have the ability to do that because of social distancing.

**CHAIR** - Okay. Mr Willie. Another question?

**Mr WILLIE** - Our next question. Minister, can you explain how local government will be involved in the \$676 000 regionally-based model for coordinating the recovery from COVID-19? It's on page 227 under DPAC but it's a whole-of-government approach to the recovery. What is local government's role in that?

**Mr SHELTON** - Thank you very much for the question. As I have Mr Limkin and he is also the recovery advisor I will throw to him.

**Mr LIMKIN** - Thank you, minister. The funding for the local recovery arrangement involves a couple of things. First of all, we have since the start of COVID-19 had a regional based centres set up and local government is part of those. As they sit on the state emergency management council they provide advice through the recovery working groups and they are also in each one of the individual regional centres. So north, north-west and south. When we move into recovery, consistent with similar processes I am advised previously happened in Tasmania that we will stand up regional recovery centres and local government will be partners in that. We are currently working through exactly what role that is with LGAT and councils. We do want it to be a co-designed process with them and it will be about ensuring that recovery comes bottom up as well as top down, and hopefully there is a join in the middle.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. I have a question in regard to the number of complaints to the local government office by the community. Can I have the number and a breakdown by local government area?

**Mr SHELTON** - I will throw to Mat Healey.

**Mr HEALEY** - In the last [inaudible] we have had 27 complaints. I don't have them broken down by local government area. I can say that the total is 27.

**CHAIR** - Can I have that made available? If there are only 27 it would be pretty easy to work out where they are coming from.

**Mr HEALEY** - Through the minister, yes we can provide that detail.

**CHAIR** - Thank you.

**Mr DEAN** - Also, what do the complaints predominately relate to? Can we get that as well?

**Mr HEALEY** - Confidentiality is really important when it comes to complaints. We can provide you with some broadbrush areas but we can't provide detail because there are provisions under the act to ensure it. Nine time out of 10 it is more about operations within council but I can't really go into any more detail in relation to that because of the confidentiality of each individual complaint.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - With 524 170 people in Tasmania as at June 2020 and 29 councils, is your Government looking at any amalgamation or enforced amalgamations particularly with worst-performing councils in the near future?

**Mr SHELTON** - As I have state publically the Government went into this election with a commitment not to force amalgamations. The reality is what we are dealing with today should be the operation of the local government division and not getting into an argument about -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I am not looking for an argument. It is just a question.

**Mr SHELTON** - Well, a debate about what we should or should not do as far as the policies go. From my point of view, I am working with local government to create a situation where they are as efficient as mthey can be, that they respond to their community needs as best they can, and if there are ways and means of doing that and they are working together then I will be part of that.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - Just a yes or no - that is fine. One last question: how many inquiries does the local government office have on foot and how many fines have they issued?

**Mr SHELTON** - As the director mentioned a minute ago -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - They were complaints. I am talking about how many inquiries the actual office has - that Mr Limkin is investigating and how many fines have been issued.

**Mr SHELTON** - We can't specifically go into the investigations -

**Ms ARMITAGE** - I don't want to know that -

**Mr SHELTON** - but as you only need a number, 19 inquiries were undertaken in response to complaints, eight were own-motion investigations, 21 have been finalised, and six are ongoing.

**Ms ARMITAGE** - How many fines have been issued?

**Mr LIMKIN** - I believe there are no fines currently issued in this financial year.

**Ms ARMITAGE** -Thank you.

**Mr DEAN** - I was going to ask whether the issues in relation to Glamorgan Spring Bay and all been sorted out? Are there any other issues with any of the other councils in regard to their performance and so on? Have these issues been sorted?

**Mr SHELTON** - Glamorgan Spring Bay - the director and I have been up there. There is a new mayor and a new general manager in place. I came away from that meeting very pleased with what I heard around the table. In their words, they were back on track and working together for the benefit of the community.

As far as other issues -

**Mr DEAN** - Arising from COVID-19, are there any other issues councils are confronting in relation to their funding and so on?

**Mr SHELTON** - From a general perspective, local government areas individually went into COVID-19 in completely different social and economic situations. Some went into COVID-19 from a better position than others. I am sure they will come out of COVID-19 in a different position to others. We will be working with different councils to overcome their issues. As you know, Mr Dean, local government goes into their budgetary processes post-Christmas so the issues you raise will probably come more to the fore then. As far as assistance to the local government area, with the \$200 million interest-free loan situation for councils for ongoing works, either capital works or other issues they have within council, \$144.4 million of that \$200 million has been taken up by the local government sector in various sized loans.

**CHAIR** - A follow-up question. Is it possible to have the number of fines issues in the previous financial year in the local government office?

**Mr SHELTON** - We will have to take that on notice.

**CHAIR** - I was expecting that to be the case. It is just so we have a comparison.

Minister, we thank you for your flexibility this morning and this afternoon and also your engagement with the committee. We apologise that we had such a brief time with local government and we will make sure we rectify that next year. We will allow two hours for local government to make up for it. All areas are important and we thank you for time today.

**Mr SHELTON** - I thank the committee and I also thank Craig and others for their work and the department's work in putting all this together. I also thank my staff who have worked tirelessly over the last number of weeks to get all this ready. I wish you all the best for the rest of your deliberations. I know it is a fairly torrid time.

**CHAIR** - Thank you. We will resume at 2.30 p.m.

**The Committee suspended from 1.38 p.m. to 2.31 p.m.**