



PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA

TRANSCRIPT

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Hon. Felix Ellis MP

Monday 23 September 2024

MEMBERS

Mr Simon Behrakis MP (Chair)
Ms Ella Haddad MP (Deputy Chair)
Mr Vica Bayley MP
Ms Kristie Johnston MP

OTHER PARTICIPATING MEMBERS

Ms Jen Butler MP
Ms Tabatha Badger MP
Mr Rob Fairs MP
Mr Craig Garland MP
Dr Shane Broad MP
Mrs Miriam Beswick MP

IN ATTENDANCE

HON FELIX ELLIS MP

Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Management, Minister for Housing & Planning,
Minister for Skills & Training

Donna Adams

Commissioner of Police/Secretary, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency
Management/State Controller

Ross Hinkley

A/Deputy Secretary, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Adrian Bodnar

Assistant Commissioner Operations, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Jeremy Smith

Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency
Management

Scott Wilson-Haffenden

Director Finance, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Tyron Clark

A/Deputy Chief Officer, Department of Police, Fire & Emergency Management

Grant Dreher

Chief Executive Officer, TasTAFE

Stuart Hollingsworth

Director, Jobs Tasmania, Department of State Growth

Eleri Morgan-Thomas

Chief Executive Officer, Homes Tasmania

Jessemy Stone

Director, Housing Policy and Programs, Homes Tasmania

Mathew Healey

Acting Deputy Secretary, Strategy and Delivery, Department of Premier and Cabinet

Richard Gilmour

Director, Community Infrastructure, Homes Tasmania

Claire Hynes

Deputy Executive Commissioner, Tasmanian Planning Commission, Department of Justice

Sean McPhail

Acting Director, State Planning Office, Department of Premier and Cabinet

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The Committee met at 9 a.m.

CHAIR (Mr Behrakis) - The time now being 9.00 a.m., the scrutiny of the Police, Fire and Emergency Management portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. At the table we've got Donna Adams, Commissioner of Police, secretary of DPFEM and State Controller; Jeremy Smith, Fire and Emergency Services Commissioner; Jonathan Higgins, Deputy Commissioner of Police; Ross Hinkley, Acting Deputy Secretary; Scott Wilson-Haffenden, Director of Finance; Adrian Bodnar, Assistant Commissioner (Operations); and Mick Lowe, Executive Director, State Emergency Service and Volunteers.

CHAIR - Thank you. The resolution of the House provides for a minister to provide additional information to a committee either later that day or in writing as an answer to a question taken on notice. To submit a question on notice, the member must first ask their question of the minister, and the minister must indicate they will take it on notice. The member must then put the question in writing and hand it to the committee secretary so it can be included in correspondence for the minister to answer.

I remind you that the microphones are sensitive, so I ask you to be mindful of Hansard and be careful when moving your folders, documents and water glasses around the table. Also, it is difficult for Hansard to differentiate when people are talking over each other, so I ask that members speak one at a time to assist with this.

Minister, would you like to make an opening statement?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. I'll begin my brief opening remarks by acknowledging the exceptional work of our Police, Fire and Emergency Services who helped our communities through the worst of the recent storms and floods. On behalf of a grateful state, my thanks go to the extraordinary Tasmanians who put up their hand to help, not only during the floods and damaging winds, but every day.

The Tasmanian Government recognises that our emergency responders provide critical assistance when our communities need it most. That's why in the 2024-25 Budget, we're investing more than \$144 million in new support that will bolster our frontline police services and more than \$41.5 million of new investment into our people, equipment and infrastructure, significantly bolstering our critical fire and emergency services.

To name a few initiatives, Tasmanians can expect record police recruitment to continue to crack down on crime and 60 additional police, with police numbers now at the highest level in history. The Budget delivers for our multidisciplinary Arch centres that support victim-survivors of family and sexual violence, including establishing a new centre in the north-west.

Our people are at the heart of what we do and we are committed to supporting them as they support us all. We've increased funding to our nation-leading health and wellbeing program and are supporting injured workers with substantial ongoing funding. Building emergency services hubs at Kingston, Rosebery and Wynyard in conjunction with broadened

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operational capabilities will ensure our communities receive diligent and timely assistance no matter where they are. This Budget prioritises investment in frontline services, will deliver stronger communities and make it clear that the Tasmanian government is committed to investment in our operational capabilities to keep our communities safe.

CHAIR - Questions.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, 80 per cent of this department's costs relate to employee salaries; \$11.7 million will be cut from the Police, Fire and Emergency Management budget over the next three years. What were the final saving strategies relating to positions to meet your Budget efficiency dividend?

Mr ELLIS - We've been really clear. We're looking to invest in frontline services. As I mentioned before, we'll see an additional 60 police officers in Tasmania Police to go with our record number of police that we've got at the moment. If I'm not mistaken, we have a new recruit course starting at the academy today and they are exceptional people who continue to put up their hands to work for Tasmania Police as well as our fire and emergency services.

We're continuing to work through our Budget efficiency strategies, but noting that key priorities of ours will be making the bureaucracy more efficient rather than directing work at the frontline of our services. As I mentioned, we're increasing the investment for our frontline services. We think there are opportunities in things like travel, advertising, consultancies and other areas that we can make savings and make our bureaucracy more efficient, as well as investing in information technology strategies like that.

I can tell you, Ms Butler, what we won't be doing is \$4 billion worth of savage cuts, which is what your party promised when you went to the last election. We can absolutely rule that out.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, I am asking the questions here and this isn't an opportunity for you to use marketing tools right now. I would like some answers. So, minister -

Mr ELLIS - I mean that was your budget plan, Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - What roles will be cut from DPFEM and what services will cease as a result?

Mr ELLIS - You just asked me that and I just told you: we're looking to invest in more services and that our focus in terms of efficiencies will be on making the bureaucracy more efficient so things like consultancy, travel and other opportunities.

Ms BUTLER - What services will cease as a result and will you table the saving strategies that you've approved, minister? Can we just stop wasting time and please just answer the question?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, you're fundamentally misunderstanding what the opportunities are. So rather than do what you did when you were in government last, which was sack 108 police officers -

Ms BUTLER - Relevance, relevance, Chair.

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Mr ELLIS - we're looking to find savings when it comes to areas where we can make bureaucracy more efficient.

Ms BUTLER - Chair, can I have the minister please answer the question and be relevant to the question? This is an Estimates committee. It's not a public relations exercise.

CHAIR - I can't put answers into the minister's mouth, but I'll ask the minister to be relevant to the question.

Ms BUTLER - Can you direct him to answer the question and be relevant? Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, sure. As I mentioned, we're looking to make savings when it comes to travel, consultancies, advertising and finding additional efficiencies as we continue our major investment into information technology. We haven't finalised our Budget efficiencies strategies just yet, but we have some good opportunities that we're continuing to work on, noting that we're looking to increase investment into the frontline. I'll pass over to the -

Ms BUTLER - Just to interrupt you there, minister, can I ask you, so you were confirming then that you can't table the saving strategy that must have been approved prior to you announcing this Budget because you haven't finalised that yet. Is that correct? And if it is finalised, can you table that?

Mr ELLIS - No it's not finalised yet. That's what I'm saying. We've got some good opportunities and we're looking at those. But, look, I'll pass over to the commissioner of police to maybe give us a further sense of what we think some of those opportunities might be.

Ms BUTLER - I really do want to go through you to speak to the to the commissioner, but to clarify, you don't have an approved saving strategy, even though you have released your Budget for the year? And you're confirming that, first, you don't have it and that's why you can't table it?

Mr ELLIS - We're looking to finalise our saving strategies. Once the Budget has been handed down that gives us a sense of what those opportunities might be. So we're working through that. Obviously, we have our allocated task when it comes to efficiencies, like every other part of government, and we think that there are strong opportunities. I've outlined some of the some of the areas that we're looking at as far as opportunities, but I'll pass over to the secretary and commissioner to give you some further sense of what those opportunities might be.

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister, the department set up a project control committee and we're working through a number of options to put to the minister in terms of achieving our savings strategy. We're looking at it from a perspective of short- to medium-term controls and strategies and then we'll look to medium- and longer-term strategies. The short- to medium-term will include a review of our CBD accommodation expenditure. We think that there's some opportunities there to consolidate and make some significant savings through the co-location of some of our corporate areas. We see that as a really important strategy in the short term.

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We also seek to reduce and manage the operating costs of the department. We're a department that's been managing our establishment for over two years. We have some very strong controls to make sure that we review every position that becomes vacant so that we ensure that we're replacing those positions in the areas that they need them to be replaced. We also have a number of non-salary-related expenditure items that we're reviewing at the moment. To reinforce the comments of the minister, they include travel, transport, advertising, consumables, and we'll also be reducing the cost of consultancies.

Ms BUTLER - Okay, thank you. In the proposed saving strategy sought by Treasury in December, minister, and released through RTI for the period 2024-25 to 2027-28, there were 29.7 FTE cuts of police staff and they'll be reduced from the current total police force of 230.7 FTEs. PAT -

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, as in?

Ms BUTLER - Full time positions.

Mr ELLIS - Of police?

Ms BUTLER - Yes, current total police workforce, this is from RTI documents.

Mr ELLIS - There's about 1400, give or take, about 1450 police officers, so I'm not sure you're referring to the right -

Ms BUTLER - I'll finish my question, minister -

Mr ELLIS - Are you sure you are referring to the right -

Ms BUTLER - I'll finish my question, minister. Police support staff.

Mr ELLIS - Oh, police support staff. Sure.

Ms BUTLER - PAT and the CPSU have said there is no scope for police officers to assist with these roles and duties due to being overworked, with absences due to workers comp and long-term sick leave. Will police officers be diverted to assist services like prosecution, radio dispatch and front counter triage?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I think probably the question misunderstands the nature of the information provided under RTI. That was initial proposals that were put to me by the department, which I didn't accept and for good reason. I think there's more opportunity and now that we've had time to work through what those other opportunities are, the commissioner's outlined quite clearly that there are some pretty significant opportunities for us to do things better and more efficiently in terms of our Budget, things like CBD accommodation for our corporate services, travel, consultancies, all those sorts of things.

As the minister, I'm very committed to making sure we're growing our service and growing our service to the people of Tasmania. That's why I didn't accept those initial proposals. Of course, I do thank DPFEM for the initial work that went into scoping that and I think that's what the community expect. They expect us to invest in the frontline and they expect us to find opportunities to make the bureaucracy more efficient.

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Ms BUTLER - If the position reductions cannot be met through vacancy control, minister, what other methods will you be considering? Are you considering redundancies?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I think you've prepared some questions and you're maybe not listening to the answers. We didn't accept those strategies and we have different strategies that we're looking to put in place, so I think your questioning is based largely on a redundant last question.

Ms BUTLER - So you won't be considering redundancies if you can't find the efficiencies through other means, minister?

Mr ELLIS - We're looking to find the efficiencies.

Ms BUTLER - But if you can't find the efficiencies, minister, I completely understand.

Mr ELLIS - That's a hypothetical matter obviously, Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - It's not hypothetical.

Mr ELLIS - Well, it is because you started it with 'if'. So, I'm sorry, but that is a hypothetical. Our focus is around ensuring that we can meet the efficiencies that we have been tasked with and doing so in a way that supports the growth of our frontline as we committed to at the election and ensures that we're responsible stewards of taxpayer money because that's what the taxpayer expects of us, and finding those efficiencies within the bureaucracy is how we're looking to do it.

Ms BADGER - Minister, a couple of questions about police services and equipment. The multipurpose protection vests that are currently being worn by operational police are expiring and will need to be replaced at a cost of around \$4.8 million over the next four years. How are you expecting Tasmania Police to fund the replacement of the vests while they're also dealing with the significant efficiencies placed on them over that same four-year period?

Mr ELLIS - I think we've outlined, Ms Badger, what some of those efficiencies will be. None of those have anything to do with personal protective equipment. So, if that's potentially helpful in terms of your thinking, we've clearly identified that there are opportunities to make savings that have nothing to do with frontline services. That's what our commitment to the Tasmanian people is and what we're looking to deliver.

In terms of equipment, our government has always had a strong focus in investing for safety equipment. We were the government that brought in body-worn cameras for police officers and we've made significant investments as part of the Budget to continue to increase those opportunities for rolling out.

In terms of our police protective vests, obviously we have a range of different investments there and we have some opportunities to continue to work with the department around renewing and refreshing the fleet of vests. I'll pass over to the commissioner to add further.

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister, the actual MIPV program of the vests is a rolling program, so the vests don't all expire at the same time. They've been brought on in different

allocations over a number of years. The first cohort of vests to expire will be at the end of next year and we have a number of opportunities as to how we manage the replacement of the vests. We can get them recertified, which will then provide a number of other years where they can continue to be operational and used by our members or we can replace those vests with new vests.

We're currently trialling a number of vests across the organisation at the moment because technology changes and we want to make sure that we make a decision to get the right vest when we move forward. It's a program of work that we've been managing and, as I said, we have options. At no stage will we be leaving officers in a situation where their safety is compromised. That is absolutely our number one priority, to make sure that we've got safety equipment that's fit for purpose and that's hence why we've got the trial.

Ms BADGER - Following on from that, further on the equipment, and as the minister mentioned, the body-worn cameras, there are we understand some detectives across the state who deal with some of the most vulnerable people in Tasmania - children - and they don't have access to the technology of the body-worn cameras at this point. How does the government justify not having the funding for the full roll-out of the body-worn cameras to all operational arms of Tasmania Police?

Mr ELLIS - I'm glad to hear that the Greens are supportive of the body-worn cameras because I don't think that was necessarily always the case. We've brought body-worn camera funding from zero to where it is now, which is rolled-out right across our frontline for our police officers. It's an important investment because, particularly for those frontline officers in uniform in our busy 24/7 stations, for example, that's important in terms of evidence-gathering and also as a deterrent in terms of assaults on police. We're always looking to review the way that we continue to provide those and make them available. Perhaps the commissioner might want to speak to the kind of risk assessments that we do around which particular staff might have access to it.

Ms BADGER - Yes, and noting that the question was very specifically just about the detectives.

Mr ELLIS - I understand.

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister, this funding will continue to support our newly-graduated recruits. Obviously, as we have an uplift and a growth of police numbers, it's important to ensure that our frontline numbers have access to body-worn cameras. The program has been a rolling program over a number of years. Every time we've been supported with funding, we've undertaken risk assessments to determine which specialist areas should next have the body-worn camera. An example of that risk assessment is our special operations group now has body-worn cameras. As part of this particular funding, that's what we'll do, we'll conduct a risk assessment to determine which areas should next have the expanded opportunity for body-worn cameras.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Through you, minister, to the commissioner, can you give us an indication of the numbers of police officers currently on workers compensation and long-term sick leave, and also a breakdown of how long they've been on workers compensation or long-term sick leave, please?

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Ms ADAMS - In terms of police numbers, there are 201 open claims that are relevant to Tasmania Police, 59 of those claims relate to physical injuries and 142 are psychological-injury open claims. In terms of staff totally incapacitated, we have 108. That's 7 per cent of our organisation. And, was there another?

Ms JOHNSTON - The length of those times that they've been on worker's compensation?

Ms ADAMS - I don't have the period of time for each of the claims, and they do vary.

Ms JOHNSTON - Is that something you're able to get if I put that on notice?

Ms ADAMS - It may be a challenge because we'd have to go through the 201 to actually understand when the claim was open and accepted and how long they've been on, but I'll certainly get some advice and come back to you.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you. Further to that, I'm interested in police fatigue management policies, in particular how that relates to when officers need to attend across for another agency. For instance, when officers need to attend court appearances and they're not rostered on, but they might have come off a shift or about to go onto a shift, how is that managed between the courts and police in managing fatigue policies over that time?

Ms ADAMS - Fatigue is an issue that we have responsibility for managing under the work health and safety legislation. We have a fatigue management policy that we've been working with our police association, our union, with over a number of years. That policy is being trialled in a number of work areas, which has included some frontline stations and our special operations group. We want to make sure we get that policy right. It has reference to how we manage overtime and where we have officers who may well be members of specialist groups, there's a requirement to do a fatigue management plan. At this stage we're actually evaluating that particular policy. We've got some independent evaluation criteria that we've used. At this stage it's about now working out when we implement the policy.

Ms JOHNSTON - Through you, minister, does that interact with other agencies? So, for instance, when an officer comes off night shift and then has to attend court at 10.00 a.m. that matter might be adjourned until 2.00 p.m. and then he's back on night shift again. They are potentially doing a night shift in court sitting and waiting, and another night shift. How's that managed in terms of fatigue policy?

Ms ADAMS - Again, through you, minister, it's not - the other agencies, in terms of the court, what we do on our files is we ask our officers to obviously indicate if they are on leave, so we understand their periods of leave and, hopefully, we're able to work with the courts to ensure that they're not recalled to duty when they're on leave.

But, in terms of the shifts, the shifts, they're 24/7 shifts, they move through a cycle and sometimes it's really difficult to actually alleviate overtime and recalling people back to duty for court. That's why the policy is going to be important, ensuring that supervisors and members manage fatigue and that we're aware of the cumulative effects of being recalled to duty, and we've got strategies in place to ensure that we get members having the right breaks at the right time. But any member who is feeling fatigued, they are very clear responses and we can't have people at work unless they're right and fit and ready to go.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you.

Mr ELLIS - Commissioner, I think as well maybe it might be worth providing some information around say some of the legislative work that we've had underway regards the different police officer court appearances. So, say, for example, I'm thinking outlaw motorcycle gang matters where evidence can be provided by a different member of Tasmania Police.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, that is true. We have made some legislative change where the consorting legislation with OMCGs was requiring officers to come and give evidence, which now we've got the opportunity of submitting a statutory declaration to provide that evidence.

One of the other things that we've been doing is we've had a small trial in relation to police officers giving evidence from police stations and not actually travelling to the courts. And, again, we're always looking at opportunities to manage the fatigue and every time you're getting, for instance, an officer not driving from Oatlands to the Hobart Magistrates Court and giving evidence via video-link from their station, that's a really good example of some of the things that we're trying to work with the courts and to do differently.

Mr FAIRS - It's apparent significant investment in police and, in particular, recruiting at record levels. Are these recruits Tasmanian residents and what's being done to ensure that this bright talent is attracted to the career in policing?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. I can say at the outset that Tasmania Police has increased its recruit intake and training to meet the government's commitment to boost police numbers by 226. As a cricket fan, you'll be delighted to know it's an increase of 334 additional police roles, of course, Don Bradman's and, I think, Mark Taylor's number.

There are currently 30 growth positions scheduled to be recruited in the next two years to complete the previous election commitment from 2021. In addition, a further 10 growth positions will be scheduled each year for the next six years to implement the 2024 election commitment.

Tasmania Police continues to attract recruits despite a very competitive employment market and attrition challenges, and that is being experienced by all police jurisdiction across Australia.

The second year of the This Is Tas Police recruitment campaign has again proved successful with advertising across social media platforms, on mainstream media, bus backs, static signage and podcasts. A review of the recruit training has resulted in a recruit training course being set at 28 weeks in length, including a six-week infield training component and this style, of course, maximises the on-the-job training, providing recruits with an increased amount of practical experience, and, in January 2024, Tasmania Police commenced its new training regime with a recruit training course commencing every 10 weeks.

These courses include six recruit training courses at the Tasmania Police Academy, one recruit training course at the northern campus in Launceston and one accelerated training course that was also held at the Tasmania Police Academy. The planned training regime will see up to 164 recruits commence their training in the 2024 calendar year and, as of

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30 June 2024, a total of 109 police recruits have been in training during that financial year and this includes 21 who graduated in March 2024 and 88 currently in training at the Academy.

That's the largest number ever in training with Tasmania Police at any one time, and funding of \$160,000 is provided to Tasmania Police to support the cost of each new recruit. The increased training regime being undertaken by the police academy has required the secondment of additional staff to the area to deliver the increased training requirements, and these are an excellent way for people to also deepen their engagement with the next generation of Tasmanian police officers.

So, we've got a strong pipeline of recruits coming through at the moment and Tasmania Police is widely regarded as an employer of choice. We certainly see a great deal of recruitment among Tasmanians and also people from interstate looking to start a career here as well.

Ms BUTLER - In RTI documents, the department asked to have no savings attached to them as they are a frontline agency and could not afford any cuts. They were fearful of them. Yet \$35 million of cuts were applied by you. You've mentioned frontline quite a few times as having no cuts. What is considered frontline services in DPFEM? Is radio dispatch answering 000 calls not considered frontline?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I think we're potentially going around in circles here because I've outlined what some of the savings opportunities are and they have nothing to do with frontline staff. We've made it quite clear, it's quite obvious to the community what frontline staff looks like: police officers and firefighters, their SES -

Ms BUTLER - I am asking you what is considered frontline.

Mr ELLIS - And I think I've just said police, firefighters, SES. There's a whole range of amazing people in our organisation that provide those critical services. In terms of our savings strategies, I'm not sure we can be any clearer.

Ms BUTLER - Would you like me to reclarify the question, minister?

Mr ELLIS - I understood it. Maybe I need to be reclarify what we're talking about with our efficiency dividends. So corporate accommodation -

Ms BUTLER - Can I re-ask my question, Chair, because he's going nowhere near it again.

CHAIR - Sure.

Ms BUTLER - What is considered frontline services in DPFEM? And is -

Mr ELLIS - I have literally just said police, firefighters and SES.

Ms BUTLER - Is radio dispatch answering 000 calls considered frontline?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I think you're again -

Ms BUTLER - Yes, no?

Mr ELLIS - I think we've made it pretty clear what we're talking about in terms of frontline. I've also made it pretty clear in terms of what our savings strategies will look like. I mentioned before around travel, I mentioned before around consultancies. I assume that's something you support?

Ms BUTLER - Are police counter staff considered frontline services? Some detail instead of the big generalistic talk. I want to know what you consider frontline services within DPFEM as the minister.

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned before, I think the community has pretty clear understanding of what that is -

Ms BUTLER - No, you, minister.

Mr ELLIS - and things like police, fire, SES. I also reject the premise of your question because, as we've clearly outlined here today, our strategies and our opportunities in terms of savings look like consolidating the accommodation that we have for our corporate services in the CBD here in Hobart. Is that something that you support? I assume so. That's what we're looking to do when it comes to -

Ms BUTLER - I'm happy to step over that side of the room and become the minister if you want to ask me questions? More than happy for that.

Mr ELLIS - Well, your plan is for \$4 billion worth of cuts, Ms Butler, so I don't think people will want you to do that.

Ms BUTLER - Touché. Did you give the department instructions on what is frontline given they say the whole department is frontline.

Mr ELLIS - I gave very clear instruction to the department that I didn't accept their initial proposed savings strategies. I appreciated the work, but I had a sense that there were more opportunities for efficiencies. Working closely with our leadership in terms of Tasmania Police, fire and SES, we've come to that agreement as well. Some of the strategies I've outlined to the committee that you don't seem to want to commit to whether you support or not are pretty clear in that -

Ms BUTLER - What are you talking about?

Mr ELLIS - I'm talking about the fact that you won't tell us whether you support our -

Ms BUTLER - Come on, I'm asking you questions, minister. This is an Estimates committee. Can you please have a crack at it?

Mr ELLIS - support reductions to our travel, our consultancies, our advertising and also the opportunities to consolidate our CBD leases. I think we made it clear that those are the kind of opportunities that, while they're not immediately apparent, with time and with analysis, we've been able to land on it. That's a really positive thing because the Tasmanian community work hard for their money and they expect us to be responsible stewards of taxpayers' money. Where there's opportunities for us to find savings in terms of things like corporate

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accommodation or travel, we should take those and that we should be that we should be looking at those opportunities to provide those savings.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, going back to my questioning, the commissioner previously referred to an efficiencies committee. Will you be sitting on that efficiencies committee?

Mr ELLIS - No, I don't sit on it although, obviously, as they work through, it's my job to approve or not approve of the strategies they identify.

Ms BUTLER - Who will be sitting on that then?

Mr ELLIS - I might pass over to the commissioner, or secretary, I should say, in this case.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you. The deputy secretary, who's here with us today, Mr Hinkley, chairs that particular committee.

Ms BUTLER - Any other?

Ms ADAMS - It has our director of Business Services and our director of People and Culture. I'll look to our deputy secretary just to make sure I've covered.

Mr HINKLEY - The executive director of People and Business Services.

Ms BUTLER - Okay. The agency has identified psychosocial hazards brought about by increased workloads. How will increased workloads be managed, minister?

Mr ELLIS - By recruiting more police is the first answer. We had a commitment at the last election to increase our police from a record level of about 1450 by an additional 60 officers. We're looking to continue to deliver on that commitment. I just mentioned before that we are looking to make significant gains in recruiting. We've also been very proactive in recruiting for new firefighters. It was a real delight to be there at the graduation we had for our firefighters only a couple of months ago. We're continuing those recruitment drives so that we can help meet the needs and expectations of the community and continue to grow our frontline services.

I might pass over to maybe both commissioners to give us a sense in terms of what strategies we have for managing fatigue beyond increasing the number of people we have.

Ms ADAMS - We will continue to look at what we do in each of our work areas and where we can reduce administrative burden. Obviously, we will look to those initiatives.

We've been an agency that has really demonstrated how technology can help in the delivery of our services and we'll continue to do that.

In terms of our frontline policing, we currently have a review being undertaken by ANZPAA, which is a policing research body that represents all police forces across Australia. They're actually looking at the workload and the change in responsibilities of our frontline police. We're doing that review with our union and we're looking forward to getting the report on that particular body of work next year. We're very active in always looking at how we might

do things better, how we might do things more efficiently, and that includes listening to our staff.

Mr SMITH - Tasmania Fire Service has additional staff identified through a workforce planning position that was recently established. We're looking at ensuring that we get additional staff right across the state. We're looking at putting an additional day work crew on the north-west coast, additional field works officers in the north and south as well, and also looking at opportunities to value-add to positions throughout the state.

Mr ELLIS - The field works officer's opportunity is also about supporting our volunteers who, in many ways, are key parts of our workforce in that space. I don't know if you want to elaborate further on that one, Mr Smith?

Mr SMITH - It certainly has been identified the workload of our field works officers and district staff is, at times, overwhelming. We are looking at additional staff to support those positions, as well as the volunteers throughout the state.

Ms BADGER - The Weiss review made some important recommendations, including the establishment of a restorative engagement framework and scheme for victims and survivors, a framework to build engagement and trust between police and the community, the establishment of a victim management team. What progress has been made so far on each of those recommendations?

Mr ELLIS - This is a really important area of work. It's an extension of the commission of inquiry in many ways. I want to, first, again put on record our deepest support for victim-survivors, both of Paul Reynolds and anyone, sadly, who have been victims of those heinous crimes. Certainly, in Tasmania Police, we are committed to rebuilding the trust of the community. Mr Reynolds was in a high position of trust in the community and he quite clearly failed that. We need to ensure that the processes around people that might seek to abuse a position of authority and trust in the community, that we can stamp that kind of behaviour out.

At the request of Commissioner Adams, an independent review was undertaken in relation to the conduct of Paul Reynolds across his 40-year career prior to his death on 13 September 2018, which was -

Ms BADGER - Sorry, minister, we understand the background of it. We are asking you about the progress on those three very specific recommendations.

Mr ELLIS - That is okay, I understand. In terms of the review, there is a range of recommendations that sit across different parts of government. So, for background, the reviews we fed into the broader commission of inquiry process, we have 191 recommendations for the commission of inquiry. The work is being broadly led by DPAC but supported by all agencies. These five include matters that are for Tasmanian Police, matters that for DPAC and matters that sit with the Attorney-General, for example, the Integrity Commission. In terms of the Tasmanian Police matters, we have made some quite strong steps towards this, including increasing our capability in terms of community engagement, noting that there's much more that needs to be done.

Tasmania Police is often strongly embedded with our sporting organisations, which was at the heart of Ms Weiss's recommendations but there are greater opportunities. One of the

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things that Ms Weiss identified was that Paul Reynolds was not only able to groom his victims, he was able to groom the sporting communities that he was a part of -

Ms BADGER - Absolutely. They are the recommendations that I have just read out. What progress has been made on the - I can read out the three recommendations again if that is helpful?

Mr ELLIS - That is alright, I understand what they are, Ms Badger -

Ms BADGER - Great, so has any progress been made?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to Commissioner Adams to talk about that further engagement that we have in terms of our community team.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. Through you, there has been work that has commenced in relation to the three recommendations. In terms of recommendation 2, I have actually participated in a restorative justice process already. Our Department of Justice has a framework that we were working through to ensure that it is fit for purpose for us but we want to make sure that any victim-survivor who feels that they want to be heard can come forward and that we have a framework that's consistent across whole of government.

In terms of recommendation 3, that is well advanced in terms of the work that we've done to establish a community engagement unit. Ms Weiss actually recommends that it has the same status as a geographical command or one of our crime commands. That is a recommendation that I support. I think it is important that our engagement with our community is the strongest feature of what we do in our policing organisation.

We have promoted our first inspector in charge of the community engagement unit. This inspector has been working with the Office of the Independent Regulator and Sports Integrity Australia and has done numerous workshops and face-to-face sessions with our sporting bodies across the state and that work will continue.

What we want to do is develop our strategy before we turn the unit, I guess, into a command. We want to make sure that we're getting the right feedback from some of the vulnerable communities to ensure that we get that right and it is linked to one of the commission of inquiry recommendations around having a community engagement strategy with vulnerable communities. There's some well-advanced work that's been done in that space.

And the last ones in relation to the dedicated victim management team to ensure that victims of from police perpetrators are actually supported in the right way. We have an independent chair of our Police Family and Sexual Violence Independent Committee, and independent chair who's actually providing us some advice about how we should construct this support unit to make sure that we're providing the best support to victims, and we will continue to work through that so that we get that recommendation right as well.

Ms BADGER - The government's committed to implementing all the recommendations of the Weiss review, but there's no funding specifically, at least budget line, allocated to it. How are these recommendations going to be fully funded?

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Mr ELLIS - Yes, obviously we've got significant funding in terms of the commission inquiry. As I mentioned before, this is largely an extension of the commission of inquiry. The commission identified some of Mr Reynolds offending and, from that, the commissioner then commissioned the further review.

Obviously the funding for the commission of inquiry in the Budget already is extensive but, as the Premier has clearly said, as we continue to work through these recommendations, more funding will be needed and more will be available. So we're working through, in terms of the redress scheme, the design of that as a whole of government. DPAC and the Attorney-General are working through those matters.

Obviously, recommendation 5 suggests an expanded role for the integrity commission too, and as we work through those policy matters and those legislative changes, we'll continue to work through in terms of additional funding that's required once we get the scope and the design right.

In terms of Tasmania Police, this is an area that we're already looking to continue to expand. It's part of why we need to continue to expand our police force, Ms Badger. I note that in your budget reply, you propose that we reduce the number of police officers. I don't think that's the right way to go, because policing is so much more than -

Ms BADGER - I'd definitely double-check that and I'll just -

Mr ELLIS - Well, it's absolutely true, Ms Badger. Sadly, you have it in one of your line items. It might have paid to read that before that was put out.

Ms BESWICK - We've talked about having quite a few officers on extended sick leave and 108 incapacitated, and we've talked about how many we're recruiting. We've got 108 positions there that cannot be filled because of our structure and how our system works. What are we doing to try to fix that gap and actually make those positions substantive and to actually really retain people for more than five years?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Beswick, and I note your strong support of Tasmania Police as well and I know as an emergency services volunteer. So, I give you a big shout-out for that as well. It's amazing work.

Look, this is certainly a big challenge. It's a challenge for police jurisdictions around the country and around the world because it's tough work. It really can be extraordinarily rewarding but our police officers and our other emergency services are exposed to some of the most difficult things that people will see in life. They do so, so that the rest of us don't necessarily have to be. As part of that, we need to be making sure that we're supporting them.

Now, we are seeing net increases in officer recruitment but, as you identify, we need to be making sure that we're wrapping the support around those people so that they get the support that they need before they might find themselves being long-term incapacitated. It's part of the reason why I've committed \$4 million per year for our nation-leading health and wellbeing program. That involves a mix of proactive, preventative and intervention measures, and that's 24/7 for our emergency responders. So, that's police but it's also fire, SES, ambulance and whether that's career or volunteer.

That's been a huge uplift. When we came to government 10 years ago, there was only a handful of people who were working in that unit. The growth we've seen there is really pleasing to see, because we need to be making sure that people have that support. Often it can come at unexpected times and ensuring that 24/7 support is there, the peer mentoring as well, is a critical part of our critical incident stress management process and is really important too.

I might pass over to the secretary to add further around that support.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. In terms of retention, which was part of your question about how do we retain officers beyond the five years, retention has a number of key drivers and it's a really important focus for us. Professional development of our staff is one of those areas where you can invest and have our officers develop their capabilities so that they're continually growing. The work that we do do in the professional development space is a key retention strategy.

As an example, we've got a number of training programs; we've reviewed our promotion pathway so that our staff can become supervisors at a much earlier stage than they could back in my day. When they go through the promotion pathway, it's now linked to UTAS and the department pays for the tertiary qualifications that they study for and become accredited for.

We've also got lots of examples of specialist training, whether it be detective training, trauma-informed training, search and rescue, and also we provide opportunities for our staff to go interstate to build their capability and work with interstate peers.

The second key part about retention is making sure you've got a good work-life balance and making sure you've got key parts in your award that prioritise leave and having opportunities to be away from the workplace.

Six weeks annual leave a year is in our police award. Our staff work a 38-hour week. They have the opportunity to take time off in lieu. There's the police accumulated leave scheme where, as an example, they can work four years and take the fifth year off in terms of a model of that particular leave scheme, and we see a lot of people having a career break and taking their families across the country using that particular leave scheme.

A third thing for retention is about being family-friendly and making sure you've got the supports around so that all of our staff who have parental responsibilities are well supported, whether it be primary caregiver leave, grandparent leave, adoption leave, and keeping-in-touch days, up to 10 days when a person is on parental leave, so they keep in touch with the workforce. A really important retention strategy.

The other thing is about workplace incentives. As an example, people who work in our country areas have rent free; they don't pay rent and we've invested significantly again from funding from the government to make sure that all our housing is at a high standard and families can move into country areas without having to pay rent because we think it's important that our police officers are part of those communities.

The other thing is a strong recognition framework, actually recognising the tough job and what our officers do. As an example, we have an annual investigator of the year where we recognise an individual for their outstanding investigative work. What we then do is provide that individual with a development opportunity. They can either go on a training program or

they can go and in another state. Our first recipient last year went to the Serious Organised Crime Division in New South Wales and worked two weeks after she won that award. It's really important to us to recognise the efforts of our staff.

The last piece of retention is around having incentives to come back. Some people will go and try something, it might not work for them. In the past, if someone wants to come back, they start back down the bottom. We don't do that. We now recognise the skills that these individuals, our former members, have and we have a process in place where we recognise their same salary, their same qualifications and their rank and we look at the value that we can get from that individual coming back. That's been some recent work that we've done through the introduction of a re-engagement policy.

There's a lot of work to be done. It's not something that you stop thinking about, because we want our staff to feel that they are well supported. You may well be aware of the research that the generation today has 10 jobs before they're 50. We want them to do their 10 jobs with us. Frontline policing, traffic policing, being a detective, being a specialist, they can do their 10 jobs with us.

Mr ELLIS - And there are some future commissioners already in the academy as well, which is wonderful to see.

Ms ADAMS - I'm sure there is.

Ms BESWICK - So have you found it being effective?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, absolutely. The policy has only been newly introduced and we've got six who have come back.

Mr HIGGINS - Can I just add to one part that I don't think we did answer. Of the 108 people who are incapacitated, there'll be some of those who have been off for many years, some who are more in the short-term, but there are positions within that 108 we've actually filled or shadowed for want of a better term. It's not 108 positions with nobody doing the work. They're spread right across the agency. For example, in the 24-hour stations there are about 450 people, we've got 1450. So there are a lot of police spread around the state doing different roles. Some of those more identified roles where people may have been off for a year or more, the positions are replaced so there isn't that added burden on the person who may be off and feeling that they're letting everyone down or anything. That shouldn't be the case, they should be just trying to get better, the best they possibly can. There are positions that we have done that right around the state with.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, one thing I do want to ask about is the Family Violence Offender Electronic Monitoring program. I understand these devices are very effective in regard to helping protect victims of family violence. Are there plans for Tasmania Police to continue with that?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. As part of the Tasmanian Government's ongoing commitment to protection of victims of family violence, the department of Police, Fire and Emergency Management commenced a technology trial involving the GPS tracking and electronic monitoring of high-risk family violence perpetrators in November 2018 and since this time the electronic monitoring program has been used operationally by Tasmania Police

and is regarded internationally as a highly successful intervention mechanism to address family violence.

The electronic monitoring program is a joint initiative between DPFEM and the Department of Justice, and Tasmania has experienced a year-on-year increase in the number of perpetrators and victims who receive electronic monitoring. The family violence program is world-leading and Tasmania is the only Australian jurisdiction currently applying monitoring technology in this way and there's been significant national and international interest in the program. We confirmed that the other day, again at our National Police Ministers Council meeting. People are looking at what we're doing here in Tasmania.

The defining feature of the program is centred on the application of electronic monitoring as a condition of a family violence order - you might hear me saying FVO - rather than as an alternative to imprisonment or a custodial sanction, which is the practice in many other jurisdictions. Under the legislation, electronic monitoring can only be applied by the court through an FVO, this brings someone onto the monitoring program and the family violence unit must apply for the full or interim FVO with electronic monitoring conditions. That's not an option of the police family violence order at this stage, but in this way the program is referred to as a front-end strategy that can be applied at the early stages of police involvement in a family violence matter. It's particularly valuable as far as an intervention mechanism because it's proven to enhance the safety of victims and to ensure perpetrators are compliant with their family violence order conditions at a critical point in the family violence offending context when, for example, judicial, criminal or support service activities may also be underway.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. You might want to ask a similar DD of the minister for Corrections because I believe the electronic monitoring comes under that remit. Just to be helpful.

Mr ELLIS - Both Tasmanian Police and Department of Justice, as I mentioned Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - In RTI documents, minister, there was a proposed reduction in the 2024-25 to 2027-28 period of 4.1 FTE from the Forensic Science Service (FSS) Tasmania workforce, reducing 31.7 current staff to 26.6 staff. Upon hearing this, forensic science staff commenced industrial action to stop these cuts, and they've said that they are already severely understaffed and cannot complete important work like cold case files. You haven't ruled out radio dispatch or police counter staff being considered frontline, and so they can expect cuts.

Mr ELLIS - No that's rubbish, Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - Is FSS considered frontline? If not, what is the impact of cuts to FSS and how do you expect FSS to complete their full scope of duties?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I don't want to tell you how to do your job, but I've answered this question significantly around about this. We have not accepted the initial proposed strategies and we've come up with other strategies. If you'd like to ask me about the strategies that we are actually thinking about rather than the ones we're not -

Ms BUTLER - I'm asking you about Forensic Science Services.

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Mr ELLIS - we might have a more helpful conversation here, Ms Butler, because otherwise we're just going to go around in circles. We're talking about things like -

Ms BUTLER - You have no intention of answering my questions.

Mr ELLIS - We're talking about things like corporate accommodation, we're talking about things like travel and advertising. You know, if you look at the sort of the investment that we want to make in terms of forensic science, the FSST uplift program is a total allocation of \$3.67 million with \$2.5 million expended to date. And the program has allowed FSST to acquire a number of critical assets including, and I'll get a prize if I say this right, from the team there, liquid chromatograph mass spectrometer, which I think is just about right, a DNA extraction robot and a scanning electron microscope. \$190,000 is allocated over the next two financial years and the funding will be used to purchase additional technological assets. In addition, the residual funding, that's about \$968,000, will be used for the development of an additional storage capacity for critical forensic exhibits as well. This is an area that we're looking to continue to invest in and, and they do amazing work.

We actually restarted the cold case unit, Ms Butler, after it was cut when you cut 108 police officers when you were last in government, because we don't want to, we want to ensure that those families.

Ms BUTLER - You are tedious. This is tedious repetition.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I mean, this is new information.

Ms BUTLER - Just answer the question. This came from an RTI document, minister. Please take it seriously.

Mr ELLIS - As I keep saying to you, Ms Butler, I did not accept the recommendations that were provided at the time. We can continue going around in circles about a strategy that I did not approve or we can actually talk about things of substance here at this table.

Ms BUTLER - Are you telling us today that Forensic Science Staff are safe from cuts and that they are a frontline service?

Mr ELLIS - Look Ms Butler, I have made it really clear we are looking to continue to invest in this space -

Ms BUTLER - So am I right, that is what you are saying here today? So I can go back to the Forensic Science Staff and tell them that they are safe from cuts, the minister told us that in Estimates? I can confirm that with those staff and I am pretty sure they are watching right now and that they are a frontline service -

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I have said we are looking to invest in all of those things, we are making major investments in terms of our forensic sciences.

Ms BUTLER - So I cannot tell them that then? Can I tell them that, minister?

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CHAIR - Ms Butler, the minister is trying to answer the question. When the minister has incited interjections, I have not pulled you up on it, but if you ask a question, let the minister answer it, please.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. As I have said, we are looking to make major investments in that space. I can go through some more if you want, following critical assets as part of our acquisition, a DNA extraction robot \$443,000; a DNA liquid handling robot \$95,000; real-time PCR DNA instruments \$101,000; DNA thermal cycles \$29,000; a liquid chromatography mass spectrometer \$464,000; a scanning electron microscope \$183,000; a Fourier transformation IR microscope \$116,000; additional freezer fridge storage space \$29,000; a new security alarm system \$35,000; new cold storage temp humidity monitoring system \$21,000; replacement temp community air flow control in the DNA instrument room, that is \$511,000; one gas chromatography mass spectrometer \$89,000; that might have been glass chromatography mass spectrometer, and one glass refractive index measurement instrument of \$150,000.

The third and fourth year of our technology uplift, we will see the replacement of a Headspace gas chromatography-flame ionisation detector, which is \$65,000; a high-performance liquid chromatography \$42,000; a DNA centrifuge \$15,000; mobility solutions for remote crime scenes allocated \$23,000.

An additional storage capacity for critical forensic exhibits which will be developed, which is about \$968,000 in terms of the residual. We are clearly looking to make major investments in space -

Ms BUTLER - Can I get back to my question because you really have not touched it.

Mr ELLIS - We have identified areas that have nothing to do with these services when it comes to the efficiencies that we are looking to bring in. If we want to keep going around in circles, I am not sure it will enlighten anybody.

Ms BUTLER - I will go back to my question and I think it is wonderful that you are investing in all that equipment and that will certainly help with the gathering of evidence. But my question was whether Forensic Science staff safe from job cuts and are they considered a frontline service? You did not answer that question. Could you please answer that question? I know those Forensic Science staff are watching and they would be very pleased for you to confirm that their jobs are not at risk and they are considered frontline service.

Mr ELLIS - Look, our forensic science is an amazing job that is why we are making the kind of investments that we are. Now, as I mentioned before you are referring to an old RTI that we did not accept in terms of the strategies. We are just going to keep going around in circles, Ms Butler, if that is all the questions that you have for me over the next three hours. We did not accept that those suggestions and our focus will be on things like travel, consultancy -

Ms BUTLER - There is \$35 million in efficiency dividends over four years, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Things like CBD offices for corporate staff. They are a major savings that we can make that have nothing to do with frontline services. Your approach was to slash \$4 billion and you would not tell people what they are.

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Ms BUTLER - Have you visited the forensic science lab and spoken with the staff there, minister?

Mr ELLIS - I certainly have, they are amazing people.

Ms BUTLER - Did you go into the lab itself and see the critical work that they are performing?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly have.

Ms BUTLER - So you have been inside the forensic labs?

Mr ELLIS - I certainly have, which is part of the reason why I can say liquid chromatography mass spectrometer, but it is also part of the reason why we have such an understanding in terms of the investment that is needed. For example, even small things like the expanded storage facility for DNA exhibits - when seeing is believing and when you get a sense of just how small that that facility has been in the past for the storage, you can really see why the investments to continue to expand it are important. These people do incredible work and we're really pleased to be supporting them. As I said in terms of our strategies we clearly have to focus on different areas that are about making the bureaucracy more efficient and I'd hope that you'd agree with that.

Ms BADGER - Minister, just a question in relation to the coronial inquest into Robert Bo Xu and Jarrod Davies. The recommendations in this report did cross a couple of portfolios. In those strictly relating to Police, are you able to outline the government's position on the recommendations and any progress on implementing them, specifically the following two:

Formal guidelines be developed and implemented for information sharing between CBOS and Tasmania Police,

and

between Tasmania Police and the Liquor and Gaming Branch and Tasmania Police and CBOS so that regular, random spot checks of licensed premises are conducted, any potential breaches are fully investigated and if appropriate prosecuted and any proper disciplinary action is then taken against the licensee under the *Liquor Licensing Act 1990* or against the licensee or crowd controller.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Badger, I will pass that to the commissioner.

Mr BODNAR - Through the minister, in relation to those recommendations, to the second one involving Tasmania Police and CBOS, which specifically relates to security agents and their licensing and checking of their particulars, we have prepared a draft - I'll use the term 'letter of understanding' (LOU). I've recently sent that off to one of the deputy secretaries through Justice to consider. That's been some really good work that we've done since those findings were handed down, only very recently I must say. We have had an inspector work on those guidelines, or the LOU, with a senior member from the Department of Justice. They are

certainly well advanced. I'll continue following up with Justice to see their perspective on the draft that we've forwarded them.

In relation to the first recommendation around Liquor and Gaming, I met with the Commissioner for Licensing following a recommendation from a coroner. That related to the unfortunate death of a gentleman from Queenstown who was killed in a motor vehicle crash. From that inquiry it was ascertained that he consumed an amount of alcohol at a licenced premises in Queenstown and unfortunately drove at some stage after leaving. Unfortunately he was killed in a single vehicle crash. As a result of that coronial and that recommendation, as I say, I've met with the Commissioner for Licensing. I've written to our commands. As a result of that, there have been some random spot checks conducted since that coronial finding was handed down. From memory, I think it was Mr Webster who was the coroner who presided over that coronial matter. We're well advanced there.

There have been a couple of operations that I'm aware of, more so in the southern district, where we've had the divisional inspector from the Hobart Police station out with Liquor and Gaming representatives and also representatives from CBOS, as I understand it. We have issued some infringement notices to licensees. We've moved a number of people on. That's all designed about keeping people safe and also making sure that the licensees are complying with their obligations under the legislation. We're well advanced in relation to both of those.

Mr GARLAND - How is the current police budget impacting response times, particularly in remote and rural areas?

Mr ELLIS - Country station staffing is really important for us. Tasmania is a rural state. We have more people outside of the capital city than in it. I note yourself as a fellow member for Braddon, Mr Garland. We've made significant investments in supporting our frontline officers. We've talked about the historic recruitment for police officers that we've undergone here in Tasmania in the course of our government. Those investments are particularly significant when it comes to country stations. A country station relief policy provides new resources to our police stations in outlining areas.

We also have significant investment, as the commissioner mentioned before. Part of what we look to do to support our people is make sure they have good, comfortable accommodation when they're staying in our rural and remote areas. Those police officers may not necessarily be from the community originally, so we want to make their transition into that community comfortable. That's about providing comfortable houses that are well maintained. That's a \$22.9 million investment. I'll pass over to the commissioner and her team in terms of those response times and the support we provide.

Mr BODNAR - In relation to our operational dispatch times, when I look back over the previous five financial years, I'm going back to 2019 and 2020. For urban areas, it's 18 minutes back in 2019-20. In 2020-21 it was 19 minutes. Then we see a very slight uptick through 2021 to 21 minutes; 2022-23 is 22 minutes; and 2023-24, the last financial year, it's 24 minutes. So, a slight uptick in the urban areas.

Rural, to be more specific to your question, Mr Garland: 2019-20, the operational dispatch incidents was 30; the next financial year, 32; and then it averages out at 35, 35 and 37. What we do know from some of those jobs we attend in the country area, sometimes our travel times can be impacted by the tyranny of distance depending on where the particular job is.

I think at times in the past, as well, in years gone by, when we've had jobs called in, at some stage, a complainant or a victim may not be available to see the police at that particular time, so we can delay attendance till a time when the victim or the complainant is available. I believe that, at times, has distorted some of our figures in the past.

Our country relief policy, and the fact that we are putting an additional FTE in our designated country cluster areas around the state, will hopefully improve some of those times. What we're doing across our cluster stations, we're effectively putting another police officer in there, which will help provide those local communities. It puts an additional member in the community. So there's that additional support and connection with the community. When our members are on leave, there's a member who's already there available to take that position, particularly when it comes to planned recreational leave, professional development courses or short stints way.

I think our response times have remained reasonably consistent over the last five years in those rural areas.

Mr GARLAND - With regard to marine policing, marine resources, I believe not that long ago we only had two police officers to cover the area between Port Davey and Port Sorell. Has that increased? Where are we at now with the marine side of things, particularly with the Braddon electorate?

Mr BODNAR - Obviously, for the organisation, Tasmania Police, we have a centralised Marine and Rescue Command which is in the southern part of the state. We have a number of police officers attached to that central command, which falls within what we call statewide services. Those officers have a statewide responsibility for marine enforcement, fisheries enforcement across the state.

We do have a number of other officers scattered around the state as well. There is an officer at Strahan; there are one or two, I believe, who work from George Town. There are others around at St Helens as well. Some of those outlying areas are supported. When they've got operations underway, they are supported, depending on the nature of the operations or the complexity, by our staff through Marine and Rescue down here in Hobart.

I know that back in June, there was some work done around Macquarie Harbour in relation to some information we'd received around gill netting because gill netting is illegal in the harbour. There was some work with the local marine police officer and some of our other police officers from around the state to be able to do some work over a weekend. From memory, six offenders were prosecuted as a result of that work. That's just an example of our members working in collaboration. I must say they do a really good job with the statewide coverage that we expect of them, particularly for some of the complexities of the fisheries investigations they undertake nowadays. It's not as simple as getting into a vessel and going out and necessarily boarding a boat. There's a lot of work that goes into some of the marine enforcement activities. A lot of it is unheard of by the public and that's for a reason. There is that statewide support.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of some of that capability, uplift, it might assist the committee to mention our large vessel replacement program, which has gone from strength to strength.

Mr BODNAR - Going back a few years ago, we replaced one of our larger vessels, Police Vessel *Wickham*, which was one of two larger vessels we're looking at at the moment.

We are nearly in completion for PV *Van Diemen*, which is being built in Western Australia, in Geraldton. I understand we're likely to receive that vessel, as in it will be delivered here in Tasmania, hopefully towards the latter part of this year. That's a big investment by the government. That will obviously enhance our patrol capability, particularly that offshore capability. The previous PV *Van Diemen* was purchased by the Australian Federal Police and that is now operating in Papua New Guinea. We've got two large vessels, *Wickham*, and we'll take we receipt of *Van Diemen* shortly.

We also have PV *Dauntless* down here in the southern part of the state. That's more responsible for some work, more inshore capability. We received that vessel, I'm going to say about three years ago. It does a lot of work down around the southern part of the state, particularly around Bruny Island. We also use it for some medivacs off the island at times in addition to the marine and enforcement activities.

In addition to that, we have a number of Devil Cats and Shark Cats positioned strategically around the state for some of those members like at George Town, St Helens and around at Strahan, where I was recently talking to the marine squad member around there.

Mr FAIRS - Chair, I wanted to ask about an area I'm well versed in, youth crime. There's a perceived increase of offending in our cities. What operational policy measures are in place to help address youth crime across Tasmania and keep our community members safe?

Mr ELLIS - Mr Fairs, I acknowledge the work you do with our young people in this state. Ultimately, we want to be ensuring that our young people don't come into contact with the law because they're not offending and they've got great opportunities in life. I acknowledge the work of your foundation, and you as an individual, in terms of ensuring that they have other pathways in life because that's ultimately the best outcome for those young kids.

Tasmania is a safe place to live and we know that total crime rates in Tasmania are significantly lower than those recorded in the early 2000s. However, unfortunately, we know that Tasmania is currently experiencing an increase in youth crime. Youth crime charges increased by 38 per cent in 2022. That was obviously coming off COVID years where we had a very low crime rate in Tasmania, but it also increased 27 per cent in 2023. While not all youth offenders are repeat offenders, we also know that in 2023, it was only 52 individuals that made up 50 per cent of the total youth crime charges in Tasmania. I'll say that again, 52 individuals for 50 per cent of total youth crime. Any criminal behaviour by these youths is totally unacceptable. No business owner or member of the public should be assaulted or in fear of living in their communities.

Tasmania Police is a key partner in terms of major reforms for child and youth wellbeing that have resulted from the commission of inquiry. Implementation of the recommendations will need to be appropriately considered to ensure the ongoing need to prevent and disrupt organised youth crime, which is, sadly a phenomenon we're seeing.

In line with the approach to the *Youth Justice Act 1997*, Tasmania Police has a focus on diverting youths from the court system where appropriate. These diversions can include informal cautions, formal cautions and community conferences. However, it's important to note that for intentional recidivist offenders, Tasmania Police can take stronger actions and we have a zero-tolerance approach. We continue to undertake high-visibility patrols focusing on problem crime areas, particularly during target times when youths are known to congregate,

for example, after school or in bus malls and retail districts. I'll pass over to the team from Tasmania Police if they want to add further.

Mr BODNAR - It's probably important, just to give the committee a bit of an overview about what's happening across Australia when it comes to challenges with youth crime because what we're finding here is not dissimilar to what we're seeing anywhere else throughout Australia.

The Bureau of Statistics released some data in February this year. That showed that for the financial year 2022-23 across Australia, there was a shade over 48,000 youths proceeded against across Australia. That was an increase on the previous financial year of a little bit over 6 per cent. So about 2800 more young people charged in 2022-23 across Australia than the previous financial year. What I have ascertained through that year is every jurisdiction saw an increase in youth offenders. In our own jurisdiction and our own state in Tasmania for 2022, we saw just over 3800 crime charges attributed to youth offenders. Out of that calendar year of 2022, there were 40 youths who were responsible for 50 per cent of those youth crime charges. So only a very small cohort of youths that are continually offending, I suppose.

When we move into 2023, and I've actually got a handout here that I might hand out with permission of the minister, through the minister if I can, and I'd just like to highlight a couple of things for committee members once you have those. It's a really good visual representation of what we're facing here in Tasmania. As I say, we're not an outlier when it comes to youth crime and some of the challenges we're facing, but there are some really good news stories also.

CHAIR - Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. Minister -

Mr BODNAR - So -

Ms BUTLER - Oh, sorry, I wasn't quite sure if you were finished.

CHAIR - Was there more, did you have -

Mr BODNAR - I was just about to refer the infographic if I could, Chair, through the minister.

Look, a couple of things there. If you look at the bottom right-hand tile, as I spoke about, 52 youths made-up 50 per cent of those youth crime charges in 2023. That's an increase on the 40 that we saw from the calendar year of 2022, but really concerningly, next to that you see that there are 180 youths charged who had also been charged with a crime in 2022.

Now we do have some good news stories and our staff who work in the youth crime intervention units are doing some great work in the youth crime space. We do have some stories where we have been able to divert youths away from crime. The minister spoke about some of the diversions, informal formal cautions and community conferences. There are some good news stories where we have been able to change people's lives and change that trajectory of offending. On the flip side, there are also examples of where we haven't been able to do so.

PUBLIC

Again, we've got an obligation to keep the community safe and that's what we intend to do when we're dealing with some of those youth crime issues.

Mr FAIRS - Can I just say thank you sincerely for the police officers who work in the youth space for what they do and help.

Ms BUTLER - Going back to the Forensic Science area, minister. You haven't ruled out cuts for forensic science and you don't consider them a frontline service. What is the current number of cases unstated?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, as I mentioned before, you're referring to an old strategy that we rejected. I don't think it's helping the committee at all to continue to refer to a strategy that we're not looking to implement. We've been really clear: we're looking to find savings in terms of travel, consultancies and areas like that, our CBD accommodation for corporate staff, where we can make major savings in terms of leases. So if you were actually interested in getting an understanding of what our approach is, the line of questioning continues to be just inaccurate and probably unhelpful.

Ms BUTLER - I can ask again, what is the current number of cases unstated in Forensic Science, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I'll pass over to the commissioner.

Ms ADAMS - Through you, minister, I don't have that information.

Ms BUTLER - Could that information be taken on notice?

Mr ELLIS - We'll take it on notice.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. What is the oldest unstated case as well, also on notice if that's okay? Thank you, through the minister, and will Forensic Science Service Tasmania have four full-time employees cut, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. As I said, Ms Butler, you're referring to a strategy that I rejected because we think that there are other areas where we can make savings in terms of advertising travel, consultancies and our CBD offices for our corporate staff. The premise of your question is wrong headed. Our approach is around making sure that our bureaucracy is more efficient and that we're being responsible stewards of taxpayer money. We're looking to grow our frontline services -

Ms BUTLER - I can say it again, if you would like me to ask the question again. It might help you.

Mr ELLIS - I mean, you have been saying it for the last hour and I have been saying exactly the same thing, Ms Butler. We can keep going around on a strategy that we are not going down the path on or we can -

Ms BUTLER - I will ask the same question again. Will Forensic Science Service Tasmania have four full-time employee positions cut? Yes or no? You do not have to waffle talk, just a yes or no.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I am really not sure how we are going to progress this. I have said our focus in terms of budget efficiencies is on other areas. If you keep asking the same question, I will keep giving the same answer.

Ms BUTLER - The frustrating thing is that this morning, in his committee, the Premier has agreed to table his savings strategy. He has done the work and it is finalised. You seem to be very behind given we are three months into the financial year already. Will you table your current savings strategies and the funds allocated as savings to each item, rather than rattling off on your thought bubbles, which seems to be all that is going on here?

Mr ELLIS - I do not think CBD leases is a thought bubble, Ms Butler. That is quite specific and it is quite clearly a good idea. If you have a problem with that savings strategy, perhaps you might like to tell the committee. We are working to finalise that and we have been successful -

Ms BUTLER - Minister, that makes no sense, what you are talking about. Just answer the questions.

Mr ELLIS - We have been successful in finding new opportunities. We will be providing those strategies once they are approved and obviously we will be working through that with the secretary and police, fire and emergency services. We are continuing to work through that, but we think we have quite clearly identified good options in terms of making the bureaucracy more efficient -

Ms BUTLER - Will you table your savings strategy as the Premier has done today, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, absolutely.

Ms BUTLER - You will? Will you table it today?

Mr ELLIS - It is not approved today, Ms Butler, but when it is approved. Quite clearly that time spent in review has been worthwhile for us because if you look at the initial strategy that was proposed, that I did not accept, and you look at the strategies that are proposed now, that extra time has actually enabled us to work through and really consolidate how we are going to ensure that we make the bureaucracy more efficient while growing frontline services. We are not far away from completing that work and as I have just committed to, we will be making that available.

Ms BUTLER - That was my next question because you are many months behind any other agency which you have just stated just now. When will that be approved and tabled, minister?

Mr ELLIS - I would assume that it would be relatively soon. We are close to finalising, as I mentioned, we have been able to provide the committee a sense of what some of those opportunities are -

Ms BUTLER - You are that far behind that you do not even have a date?

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - We are working to finalise that, Ms Butler, but quite clearly, we have found some good measures. You have not told anybody whether you support that or not, you have \$4 billion worth of cuts that you will not tell anybody what they are for. The parliament ordered you to provide an alternative budget and you squibbed it.

Ms BUTLER - Like I said, I am happy to sit on the other side of the table and be the minister and answer questions myself.

Mr ELLIS - I think it is quite clear, Ms Butler, that we have some good plans to make the bureaucracy more efficient. You have a plan for \$4 billion worth of cuts and you will not tell anybody what they are.

Ms BUTLER - I think you are really struggling if you cannot even tell us when that can be tabled and when your saving strategy -

Mr ELLIS - As I said, it would be pretty soon, Ms Butler, but -

CHAIR - I will ask Ms Butler to stop interjecting and it might be easier if the minister is not inciting interjections. I will go to Ms Badger next.

Ms BADGER - Thank you, Chair. Minister, the commission of inquiry's scope did not cover Tasmania Police, which is one of the reasons why the Weiss review was needed.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, Ms Badger, but that is not actually true. The commission of inquiry made eight recommendations for Tasmania Police.

Ms BADGER - Yes, sorry, it did not delve far enough into part of the Paul Reynolds case. Obviously, we have had the separate Weiss review which has covered -

Mr ELLIS - It was actually a case study in the commission of inquiry, Ms Badger.

Ms BADGER - So we have had a separate review in full. Can you please confirm then that the Weiss review recommendations will be covered, all their work will be covered, all the funding will also definitely be covered for the Weiss review, even though, as you have just pointed out, it was going to be put in the Budget or it is put in the Budget through the commission of inquiry recommendations. Can you confirm that the money that you say is then going towards the Weiss review will not take away from any of the commission of inquiry funding and what is the timeline for the full implementation of the recommendations of the Weiss review?

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Ms Badger. Can I just clarify for the committee, because there were a few erroneous statements in there and it's important that we get these things right. Police were part of the work of the commission of inquiry. Indeed they made recommendations for police to do better and rebuild trust and we take those very seriously. We're committed to all of those. Paul Reynolds was looked at as part of the commission of inquiry. Indeed he was a case study in the commission of inquiry. For those members who haven't read the commission of inquiry document, it's an important one for us all to get an understanding of.

We went further in terms of Tasmania Police and again I support the work of Commissioner Adams in commissioning the Weiss review. We've made it really clear that

ensuring that children are safe is the number one priority of our government and we put significant investment in this Budget and in future budgets as well. We've made that commitment and we'll leave no stone unturned when it comes to ensuring that children are kept safe. We'll continue to work in terms of the Weiss review recommendations as they relate to police and we'll also be working across the whole of government, the policy work, for example the redress scheme and the changes to the scope of the Integrity Commission are also being examined currently. Our absolute commitment is to accept and deliver on the recommendations from the Weiss review as well the recommendations of the commission of inquiry.

Ms BADGER - Can you guarantee that, both - all the commission of inquiry recommendations and all the Weiss review recommendations - will be fully funded? Can you please give us more clarity on the timeline for the Weiss review recommendations.

Mr ELLIS - Matters for future budgets obviously will work through in future budgets, but we've made it really clear in this Budget that there's significant new investments in child safety, hundreds of millions of dollars, the largest uplift that we've ever seen in our state's history for child safety. We know that there's even more that needs to be done and as we're working through the policy development there, some of the commission of inquiry recommendations are recommended to be done by 2029 for example, so this will be really a long-term work of many parliaments to ensure we get this right and that we continue to fund these important services. We embrace that important challenge and our absolute commitment is on delivering all of the recommendations from the commission of inquiry and the Weiss review.

Ms BADGER - So you cannot guarantee that both will be fully funded, or give any further clarity on a timeframe?

Mr ELLIS - I don't think it's helpful to put words in people's mouths. I've made it really clear, Ms Badger -

Ms BADGER - It's a question. Feel free to answer.

Mr ELLIS - that we've delivered significant funding and as more is required, more will be delivered. That's how we've operated with the commission of inquiry. Our intent is really clear. This is the largest uplift in -

Ms BADGER - Sorry, I guess this just might be a bit of concern that as you said in the previous question that some of the funding for the Weiss review recommendations would come from that outlined for the commission of inquiry in the Budget. We just want clarity on that. Maybe you could provide us with a breakdown on notice for what funding is for which recommendations?

Mr ELLIS - I'm sure that there's plenty of publicly available documents in terms of the breakdown for different funding as relates to commission of inquiry across government -

Ms BADGER - There's not for the Weiss review, hence the question, sorry.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Badger, I'm not trying to frustrate you, I'm trying to be helpful here. We will continue to make investments in this space. The policy work's not finalised in terms of some of the Weiss recommendations. Some of it involves legislative change for example,

and until that legislative change is done, there's nothing funded. So we'll continue to work through those investments and future budgets. This is largely a matter for future budgets -

Ms BADGER - So there is not any in this Budget for the Weiss review?

Mr ELLIS - Well, as I mentioned, there's already work that we've got underway in terms of police. So we're continuing to make that uplift. We've appointed new leadership, we continue to grow our capability in terms of community engagement. The commissioners are being involved in restorative justice frameworks. Our commitment to delivering these recommendations is really clear. Now we need to work through the policy work there, redress schemes, we need to get the design right. We need to make sure the Integrity Commission has the powers and functions and funding that they need, and that'll require legislative change so we're continuing to work through that process.

Part of Ms Weiss' reviews also related to the way that we do complaints handling and things like that where we already make significant investments and it's a process change. But perhaps I might just look to the Commissioner. Is there anything further that you want to add?

Ms BADGER - Specifically around the timeline, I guess that's the one bit that still remains very unclear what that timeline is.

Ms ADAMS - The work that we're doing at the moment is to make sure that there's a real consistency around how the commission of inquiry recommendations are being managed, also in the context of the Weiss recommendations. As I mentioned earlier, the development of a strategy to engage with priority communities - we need to make sure that it there is no overlap, that it actually works together with the recommendations that have come from the Weiss Review in terms of our engagement with the sporting communities, as an example.

As the minister has said, the policy and research work is really important for us to get right so that we're directing our efforts and we understand the funds that we need to support the Weiss recommendations. It's appropriate that we have a whole-of-government position in terms of redress and restorative justice. We're not having a program within our department that's different to the whole-of-government approach to such an important issue.

Ms JOHNSTON - Hopefully I have a better chance of getting an answer to this, minister. Through you, perhaps to the commissioner, could I ask whether the commissioner collects data relating to the age profile of the workforce, and also the time in service, and if that can be provided to the committee, please?

Ms ADAMS - We might have it in here.

Ms JOHNSTON - It might be one you need to take on notice, I apologise.

Ms ADAMS - I will have a look and see if we've got it.

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm happy for that one to be taken on notice to keep the committee rolling if that's easier. Perhaps later today.

PUBLIC

Ms ADAMS - The gender profile, I can give you that breakdown. We have 37 per cent of the police establishment female, and 63 per cent male. I'd have to take the question around the age profile on notice.

Ms JOHNSTON - Also the time in service, is that possible as well? Thank you.

CHAIR - Do you have another question?

Ms JOHNSTON - I do if that's okay, Chair. Obviously Tasmania Police spend a lot of time responding to family violence instances. Do you have any indication of the percentage of time that frontline services are responding to family violence responses, and how is the Budget allocated for that?

Mr ELLIS - While the commissioner is looking for that, it is important to say that addressing family and sexual violence is becoming increasingly more important for police jurisdictions around the world. Sadly these horrible crimes have also seen significant under-reporting in the past. We're seeing a larger number of people coming forward to police here in Tasmania and around the country, which is a good thing. It's important that people are seeking support and that these crimes that were once regarded as things that happened behind closed doors are fully understood for what they are, which is heinous crimes against vulnerable people.

Ms JOHNSTON - I fully appreciate that, minister. I'm interested in how much policing time is spent in responding to family violence issues.

Ms ADAMS - I'll ask Mr Wilson Heffernan to give you the answer in relation to the allocation of budget. Time for frontline police response to family violence 2023-24 is 100,464 hours.

Ms JOHNSTON - What would that represent in terms of funding allocation? It might be a hard question to answer.

Ms ADAMS - It is hard in the way in which we align our budget to the full outputs.

Ms JOHNSTON - I understand you have a dedicated unit, but in terms of -

Mr ELLIS - We'll just have to come back to you. It is an entire command now, not just a unit. The Family and Sexual Violence Command has significant capability, our Arch centres, obviously, our sexual crimes unit. Those kind of investments are becoming even more important as we support victim-survivors coming forward.

Ms JOHNSTON - I appreciate that. I'm more interested in first responders in terms of officers from stations responding to a call, a dispatch call, and how much of the time that they've spent on that. What's that as a percentage of total time and also the allocation? Can you give me a breakdown on the funding to do that?

Mr ELLIS - When you say percentage of total time -

Ms JOHNSTON - The commissioner said, if I understand correctly, it was 464,000 hours.

Ms ADAMS - No, it was 100,464 hours in 2023-24. What that actually means is on average, we attend 18 family violence matters a day.

Mr HIGGINS - Which can take anything from an hour to a day or more, depending on the complexity of it. So, for example, one of our busy 24-hour stations could get a family violence incident that could tie them up, doing it properly, from start to finish for four hours, including supporting the victim, identifying the perpetrator, all the work they need to go into as far as their risk assessments, referrals, orders on place, and that would be for, dare I say it, a simple - if there is such a thing - family violence matter.

Ms JOHNSTON - So the 18 per day, out of how many total responses per day?

Mr HIGGINS - I have 4781 for a year for the last financial year.

Ms JOHNSTON - That's family violence responses?

Mr HIGGINS - Family violence.

Ms JOHNSTON - How many total call-outs?

Ms ADAMS - Call-outs. We'd have to get that for you.

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm trying to understand the percentage.

Ms ADAMS - Yes, you're trying to understand the percentage.

Ms JOHNSTON - How much of that workload that you do every day is related to family violence? If you'd like to take that one on notice, if that's all right, minister

Mr ELLIS - I think some of the offence data, that's publicly available, but we can follow up -

Ms JOHNSTON - Obviously not everything would be an offence. It's a call-out.

Mr ELLIS - Call-outs. Okay. Yes, sure.

Ms ADAMS - You want ESCAD jobs, is that what you're sort of after?

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes.

Mr ELLIS - Okay.

Mr FAIRS - Thanks, Chair. It's important that all our emergency services move with technology and the times, and I noticed that drones are being used a lot as operational policing matters and things like that. Are they a common part of operational policing procedures now and when are they used? What sort of areas?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. This is an area that Tasmania Police, supported by the government, has been increasingly involved in. Remote-piloted aircraft or drones remain an effective tool in terms of combating crime and ensuring the safety of the community.

Tasmania Police maintains 45 drones which are located in all geographic police districts, road policing services, forensic services, marine and rescue services, as well as specialist and tactical groups, and since the introduction of drones under this government in July 2019, Tasmania Police has used drones in 2755 operations statewide. The use of drones has assisted in tracking evading motorists, searching for missing persons and stolen property, and providing investigators with aerial views of crash scenes. They're also incredibly important for missing person searches and even firefighting response too, particularly for large urban scenes.

In addition to the operational flights, drones have been used for 870 training flights to enhance pilot skills. In the last 12 months, drones have been deployed to offenders associated with hooning vehicles on 27 occasions, to 3D-model serious and fatal crash scenes on 51 occasions, and to support 10 major traffic enforcement operations. Drone operations are specifically targeted at an incident or occurrence and are not used for general surveillance.

When considering a drone operation, remote pilots consider privacy, relevant permissions from landowners, as well as local government restrictions and bylaws, and drones are not operated on or over private property without owner permission, warrant or legislative authority. A major exercise was held in April this year to test the drone interoperability in a counterterrorism environment alongside other specialist police capability, and the feedback and evaluation will continue to assist in building the capability. I might look to either commissioner if there's anything further that you wanted to add in terms of what drone capability means.

Mr BODNAR - Thanks, minister. If I may, I think the real benefit for our staff is around that operational safety benefit we see out of these aircraft as well, because effectively this can help enhance our situational awareness irrespective of the job we're dealing with. So whether it be a search for a missing walker, whether it be a search and rescue incident somewhere else in the state.

If we have a siege type incident or a situation in the street somewhere where a person's armed with some form of implement or article, that allows us to use this to go into that with situational awareness, which then helps inform our decision-making and planning. In particular, we can get a live feedback from the aircraft in the sky to the police forward commander who is in charge of the operation. From a safety benefit, it is an outstanding tool for us. It's pretty much embedded as business as usual nowadays for our police officers when it comes to some of those operations. As the minister said, hooning evades lots of different uses, but we're really pleased to have the additional funding to have those 45 aircraft, which better support our police officers, particularly the safety of our members.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, I'd like to have a discussion with you around the police rostering system. All our team have had a lot of information provided to us on that area. It's quite important to police officers at the moment. Over 90 per cent of those surveyed supported the six on, six off roster, noting that it reduces fatigue and promoted general wellbeing. Do you agree that with almost 14 per cent of police on workers' compensation, your government should be funding a roster that is supported by the majority of members?

Mr ELLIS - We're currently working through some roster trials that have come off the back of additional police officers and the frontline staffing initiative that's ensured that we have more police officers available at 24/7 stations. That's been operating since 1 July 2022. I'll pass to the Commissioner of Police in terms of rostering.

Ms ADAMS - Police officer wellbeing and their safety is the number one priority for me and everyone in our leadership group. It's important that committee members understand the journey that we've been on in relation to rosters. What we have in our police award is a roster called Ottawa, which has seven day blocks of night shift. That has been building up fatigue in our staff and obviously doesn't manage the cumulative effects of stress when you're working seven nights of night shift. Since 2020, what we've been trying to do is find an alternative roster to the one that's prescribed in the police award, which has actually been in place for over 25 years. The goal is to find a roster that moves away from that seven night block of night shift, reduces fatigue associated with working at a 24/7 station, but also manages that cumulative effective stress that can occur when members are exposed to repeated critical incidents.

We've trialled a number of rosters. There are two notable trials that have occurred over the last 18 months: four days on, four days off, and six days on, six days off. Members need to support, through a vote, any trial of a roster. They have done that in both of those occasions. You are correct, the six on, six off is a popular roster among staff because of the provision of six days off. What the evaluation has told us in relation to that six on, six off roster is that it relies on overtime to be able to have the numbers that the roster requires. That's a challenge because, going back to the importance of member wellbeing and safety and the fact that you are quite across the number of people that we have on long-term mental health incapacitation. It's really important that we have a roster that is actually conducive to helping reduce those effects of fatigue and cumulative effects of stress.

One of the stations last week in a five-day period required 70 hours of overtime to fill the gaps in the roster. Just to give everybody an example, the roster is based on a 10.5-hour shift. We're asking members to work beyond 10.5 hours, pushing into 12, 13, and in some instances 14 hours. Making decisions at critical incidents when you have been working for those hours can put you into a position of risk where it can jeopardise your safety and the safety of the community that we are responding to.

It's really important that the roster is the cornerstone of that reduction of fatigue and does everything that it can to help us manage those cumulative effects of stress. We're also seeing members recalled to duty on their six days off. The six days off are about having a fatigue break. So what we're asking our team to do is to actually transition to another trial in February and I've been really clear with our team in saying we've had a roster in place for 25 years. It's going to take us a few years to get the right roster and what we want to do is work together with our staff, with our union and in a considered, evidence-based way to understand what are the benefits and the risks of each roster. What we're asking our staff to do is to trial a different roster in February and at the end of that particular trial, we'll sit down and then make some judgments around the benefits and those risks.

As the commissioner, I also have responsibility under the *Work Health and Safety Act*. I have an evaluation report now that tells me that this roster isn't reducing fatigue, in fact, it's compromising members' fatigue. Also, as I said, every time an officer continues to work on, they're getting exposed to critical incidents that have the potential to impact the cumulative effect of stress on them and not provide them with a break.

The roster we want them to trial next in February moves back to eight hours, not 10 and a half. It puts them into teams, five teams, which is extremely important to the members and has been a critical part of the feedback in the evaluation. They want to work in teams. The six-on six-off roster does not allow them to work in teams and hence why we're having so many gaps. This is a roster that's been recently trialled in South Australia and subject to a lot of review in South Australia. It's a popular roster among staff in South Australia, so what we're asking our staff to do is to trial another roster and then sit down together, staff, union and commissioners, and work out where is our risk appetite and so that we're maximising every opportunity to reduce those effects of fatigue.

Ms BUTLER - Through the minister, what's the South Australian trial? What did that rostering system look like? Was that a six by six or four by -

Ms ADAMS - That's a six and four, and puts our stations into five teams. At the moment we have them in six teams, so by putting them into five teams should naturally mean there's more staff and should naturally mean there's less reliance on overtime to fill the gaps. Overtime is important and we're never going to have an organisation and an emergency service organisation that doesn't need to have overtime. We respond to critical incidents. Matters will continue on beyond an officer's shift, but when we have a roster that actually creates gaps and we can't fill unless we've got overtime, well we're obviously not managing member fatigue and it's a roster that we need to consider the unintended consequences of.

I understand that members are concerned, but I want to work with members. We want to get the right roster. We want to have the best roster in Australia and we just asking our members to transition to a new trial.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, how many police officers have resigned in the 2023-24 financial year? How many police officers have retired in the 2023-24 financial year? Out of the 1496 police officers which you have referred to a number of times in parliament, how many are actually active as of today, minister, and if not, can you table those documents or can I place them on notice, please?

Mr ELLIS - I'll look over to the commissioner in her team in terms of the data.

Ms ADAMS - I can answer some of those and I may need to get you to repeat a couple. We had 101 positions or separations in the previous year at an attrition rate of 6 per cent per month per calendar year. You asked about acting; what is the context, if I could understand that?

Ms BUTLER - Resigned, retired and active as of today.

Mr ELLIS - Oh, active rather than acting.

Ms BUTLER - Active, as in serving as police officers. if you take out the workers comp percentage, if you take out the people who have retired or the officers who have retired and you take out the officers who have resigned, how many are you left? How many police officers are you left with that are actually active?

PUBLIC

Ms ADAMS - We have 1421 FTE and that's the operational strength that we have and then if you include our recruits, we have 1485.

Mr ELLIS - From memory, that data is not today, that's 30 June this year, isn't it?

Ms ADAMS - Yes, that is correct, minister.

Ms BUTLER - That total number, does that include or exclude retiring, resigned and on workers compensation? Are they -

Ms ADAMS - It's the current numbers that we have. The ones I've given you are the current numbers.

Ms BUTLER - Yes. So there's 101 police from - do I take that from the 1496 that are in separation?

Mr ELLIS - Perhaps, Ms Butler, it might be helpful to talk to 30 June, because the numbers go up and down.

Ms BUTLER - Okay.

Mr ELLIS - For example, new police recruit courses.

Mr HIGGINS - Perhaps there's some clarity there. So when a person resigns, retires, separates in other ways, termination or otherwise -

Ms BUTLER - Or is on a worker's compensation claim.

Mr HIGGINS - No. Take workers compensation out of it.

Ms BUTLER - Okay.

Mr HIGGINS - So if any of that 101 are not within that establishment, they're off. So then we're recruiting against them to go to our approved establishment of 1421 as of 30 June.

Ms BUTLER - Okay.

Mr HIGGINS - The other question was about the 108 people who are incapacitated. They are within the 1421 but they're not people who can be called upon because they're not in the workplace to actually work. But there are others, open workers compensation claims, where people are on different duties to return them to work and with restrictions they might have with injury, whatever it may be. So they'll be within that 1421 as well, of the approved establishment and that'll fluctuate. That's our establishment but it will fluctuate up and down depending on the recruit courses as they graduate.

Ms ADAMS - I actually have the current numbers if you want it as of today. We've got 1498 as of today, which also includes the 89 trainees.

Ms BADGER - Thank you. I have a couple of questions about -

PUBLIC

Ms BUTLER - I wasn't quite finished on that line of questioning.

CHAIR - We've got less than 10 minutes until we go to the 10-minute break. Have you got a final because I'm doing my best to keep the proportionality here as much as possible. I think you've had about four or five questions on this last one.

Ms BUTLER - Minister, is the real reason the newly-trialled rostering system supported by 90 per cent of surveyed police officers cannot be implemented is because there are not enough police officers due to resignations, retirement, sick leave and the workers compensation leave, and due to your budget cuts the DPFEM, the agency itself, cannot afford the overtime required to meet the criteria of the nation-leading rostering system?

Mr ELLIS - It sounds to me like you didn't listen to the commissioner's answer at all, Ms Butler.

Ms BUTLER - Can you answer my question, please, minister?

Mr ELLIS - The commissioner's just outlined that there's concerns around fatigue management from a roster that has higher overtime.

Ms BUTLER - Is one of the reasons why they cannot do the rostering and that they have to carve into existing staff who are on their six days off and provide overtime is because there's simply not enough police officers?

Mr ELLIS - So there's a record number of police in Tasmania now and we're looking to increase that further. We've had a record number of police on the parade ground at the last graduation. Some rosters derive higher overtime because of the nature of their structure. I'll pass back to the commissioner and her team.

Mr HIGGINS - To the crux of this and what you're trying to ask, I think, is that the roster trials for the six on/six off and the four on/four off, spread them from award-compliant roster, which has five teams crossed into six, spreading the workforce to fill the shifts at the minimum that is required to do that work.

So that's where, I suppose, the crux is and that's without normal leave that people will take six weeks a year, courses that people undertake which are absences from those workplaces as well. So to even do those - the last part of the trials over the last three to four months, we've had to put stringent controls in about making sure people take their leave but looking seriously at when courses are undertaken. If it's professional development, a person is released. If it's not, the question needs to be asked: can that workplace afford for that person to be away from there.

Under the Ottawa roster, which is the award-compliant roster which Launceston is working, that's our biggest station in the state, as soon as they implemented that roster and they voted to go back to that roster - they voted not to continue with the four on/four off - they went back to the five teams and within a week, they had seven secondments out to prosecution, investigative areas, and country, to provide those opportunities. When I've done station visits and talked about rosters and other things that people want to talk about, I had people pull me aside really concerned that with the six on/six off rosters and the four on/four off that they

won't have opportunities. They won't be able to do our taskforces now - they saturate taskforces dealing with recidivist offenders, which they love doing in each one of the districts.

The current six on/six off, it's extremely challenging to do that. It affects the workplace and then has to be supplemented. There was over 14,000 hours of overtime just at the 24/7 stations last financial year - 14,000 hours that staff had to do over that period. It's considerable. We need to look at that. That's why we're looking at a number of rosters. They've been trialling rosters. They started trialling rosters, the staff at these stations, before COVID. When we tried to stop them doing trials, there were stations that came to us in the control centre for COVID to say can we please keep going? They did, some of them. One of those was an original six on/six off roster back way back in 2020. They had to be staffed across the southern district with essentially collapsing areas. The commander at the time made a decision to do that, to collapse areas to see if it would work. It only worked when it was collapsed.

Ms BADGER - I reckon we can get through these before the break. I have two quick questions. They're broadly both about vehicles. The Motor Accident Insurance Board has historically funded Tasmania Police to provide full-time taskforces across the state to assist with road safety strategies. Can we have confirmation that that funding is still incoming, and that it's still being used for that purpose?

Mr BODNAR - Yes, certainly, that money is still forthcoming. We've had a good relationship with the MAIB for a number of years now. The agreement has recently been renewed, and we're just waiting on an updated MOU to come through. I have it on good authority from the CEO of MAIB that the funding and the MOU will continue in similar terms.

Ms BADGER - Fantastic. The other question was, back in June, *Drive* magazine ran an article that Tasmania Police is considering the new turbo six-cylinder BMW Series 3 to come in for highway patrol duties. I was wondering how that's progressing, and if any other vehicles were considered?

Mr ELLIS - I know you're interested as a motor mechanic as well.

Ms BADGER - This is my favourite topic, although not normally involving the police.

Mr HIGGINS - As you know, we have trialled different vehicles, particularly for our highway patrol, which was started a couple years ago. We brought in the Kia Stingers and were disappointed; not all staff loved the Kia Stingers -

Ms JOHNSTON - Shame.

Mr HIGGINS - But they were disappointed that they were discontinued. We looked at the Volkswagen Passat wagons, which they were quite keen on, but we have been unable to get those ones as well. That's to do with the ratings, I understand. The BMWs are the next ones to come, and I believe they are imminent.

Ms ADAMS - We have five on order.

Mr HIGGINS - I saw a picture and they look very nice.

Mr ELLIS - The police packs are quite different to what people might be imagining.

Ms BADGER - Yes, I'm guessing it's not the standard manufactured version. I was wondering what the cost allocation for those new vehicles was.

Ms ADAMS - I can't give you that. We normally go through Treasury in terms of the lease of the vehicles. No doubt it will come with an additional cost. We can certainly get that. It's about having a limited number of these vehicles that really catch the attention of drivers, that there's a highly visible marked up police vehicle, if I speed or am using my phone while I'm driving, I could get caught. It's really around that high visibility. It's not something that will be rolled out across the fleet. It's really to promote the branding that you could get caught if you offend while driving.

Ms BADGER - Thank you.

Mrs BESWICK - You briefly touched on IT improvements as a way of making some efficiencies. Can you give us more detail there please?

Mr ELLIS - This is one of my favourite areas of discussion, Mrs Beswick. I'm very glad you brought it up. We've actually got a really strong track record of delivery in terms of IT and communications projects. After the tragedy of the Dunalley bushfires, for example, it was noted that our critical response agencies had significant communication difficulty, particularly in a large scale event like that. That's been the catalyst for the Tasmanian government radio network. It is a \$763 million project, so it's enormous in scale. It is part of the reason I get quite frustrated when people talk about 'nothing to show for debt' and that sort of thing because that's a huge investment. It keeps Tasmanians safe and it's actually a world-leading government radio network. It's encrypted and it enables all our first responder agencies - police, fire, SES, ambulance, and also our land managers like Sustainable Timbers Tasmania, Hydro, TasNetworks and Parks to be on the one network and able to communicate together. That's a massive uplift in terms of our capability.

We're also making significant investments in terms of the in-house IT delivery we're doing. Project Atlas is, well, Project Unify is the headline name we use for a range of different projects designed to help us be more efficient in the way we operate and reduce member fatigue in terms of the number of duplicative times they need to enter data when a system should allow them to enter at once. That kind of thing. I'll pass over to the team to walk us through things like Project Atlas, Project Link.

Ms ADAMS - To expand on the minister's comments, we do have a key police transformational project underway at the moment to replace a number of our ageing end-of-life systems. Project Atlas, as an example, will introduce new offence reporting, crime statistics, family violence, property management, sudden death and coronial reporting. We'll also integrate with our call and dispatch system in the police radio room, which will be a significant integration piece for us.

Before the end of the year, our new online reporting for crime reporting will be released. It'll start off with an emphasis on minor crime and then we will look to use that capability to further develop it to address one of the recommendations from the commission of inquiry in relation to allowing victim/survivors to report sexual crime online. We'll introduce it, minor crime, before the end of the year and then do the work to expand that particular platform. That's a significant capability to allow members of the community who might have a damaged

letterbox to be able to go online, report the crime. It allows us to monitor crime in communities and local communities, while also providing an easy platform for members of the community to report the crime. It does reduce the work of our frontline staff, to attend a residence to take a report such as that, so there's a lot of benefits that we will see from that particular project.

We are also connected with Justice in relation to the e-prosecutor systems that have been led through the Department of Justice. We have key people on those project teams because police make arrests, they charge people, they prepare court files. To be able to do that through an electronic system that will integrate with Justice is going to be a fantastic change into the future. We're heavily involved with Justice.

The unified funding has also provided us with an opportunity to upgrade our forensics register. We've talked a little bit about the importance of forensics today. The forensic register allows us to be able to track exhibits. To have a system that's reliable and up to date is an important tool for us. That project is well advanced.

We've also, with the project unified funding, been able to replace the server that supports our ESCAD system, which is our call and dispatch system that our radio dispatch unit use. Every time a member of the community calls that particular, their information, their job goes into a system and then there is dispatch to our staff. We've made sure that the server has been replaced so that it's still reliable and enables staff to get up-to-date information as reports come into our radio room.

It's a significant body of work, the work that we're undertaking with the transformation project. As I've said previously, we're an agency that will always look to what opportunities technology can provide for us and I think that we've demonstrated our ability to manage these big projects and get good outcomes for our frontline staff and the Tasmanian community.

Mr ELLIS - I might quickly add, the National Firearms Register also plays an important part of this. Initially, when we funded Unify, it was also to include what we call Project Recharge, which was a significant uplift in our digital capability for our firearms register here in Tasmania. That's been superseded by work on a digital National Firearms Register. Basically, all our systems are paper-based in the firearm space, so that's going to be a huge uplift in our efficiency, but also to ensure better service to the community.

We've been funded \$16 million by the Commonwealth for Tasmania's part of this national project. We're working through that. Being part of the national register does mean we'll have to make some changes to Unify: make more uniform the way we register firearms in Tasmania to match the different - every state will have to do this, so that we can all be the same. That will be a piece that will be backed by legislation and also backed by funding from the Commonwealth. Tasmania Police also play their part in terms of the development of that significant IT uplift.

The Committee suspended from 11.06 a.m. to 11.18 a.m.

CHAIR - Before I go back to the minister, I'll just say, as the session's going on, I know the Order of the House provides for three questions for opposition, two for Greens, two for the Independents or JLN and one for government. There isn't any provision for supplementary questions. However, some flexibility is afforded to members to complete a specific line of questioning. It's important that the proportionality is maintained. I'm happy not to be too

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onerous and sticking to those 3,2,2,1s but if we can just maintain that sense of proportionality and if I do move on to other questions, you can touch base again after. Thank you all for your patience, it is my first time sitting on this end of the table, so many thanks.

Minister, you did say there was some more information before we push off again.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. I'll pass to Commissioner Adams.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. Just a couple of things. First, I mentioned 18 family violence matters that police attend per day. It's actually 23.

The lease cost for BMWs is \$2212 a month, which includes full servicing and a maintenance pack.

The number of ESCAD jobs, which are the jobs that come into our radio dispatch area, in 2022-23 we had 142,012 and in 2023-24 we had 150,106.

Ms BESWICK - Following on from the questions about the Weiss review and the commission of inquiry rollout, are we ready for reporting? The implementation monitor is due to start imminently. Do we have that reporting system planned and ready to hand onto their desk?

Mr ELLIS - We've accepted all 191 recommendations and Tasmania Police is working diligently. We are on track in terms of our recommendations and that's encouraging, with further rollout to be done in line with the timeframes set out by the commission of inquiry. I'll pass over to the commissioner.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. The independent monitor will be managed through whole of government. The head of the State Service, Ms Morgan-Wicks, chairs the Secretary's Board and a standing agenda item is in relation to the progress of commission of inquiry matters. They'll normally set the framework for reporting for agencies and I'm sure that is something they're working on. We haven't set what that framework will look like at the moment, but I'm sure that will be set and we will all be complying with that framework of reporting.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, with the summer bushfire season approaching full on, how's our fuel reduction burn program affected by the recent severe weather that we've had?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. This is a very important area when it comes to keeping Tasmanians safe because if we can be proactive with our fuel reduction burning, that ensures that we're able to protect them when a bushfire does actually come.

The government's \$112 million fuel reduction program is nation-leading in its tenure-blind and strategic risk-based approach to fuel reduction. The Tasmania Fire Service is one of the three main organisations partnering in the delivery of the fuel reduction program, along with our colleagues in the Parks and Wildlife Service and Sustainable Timber Tasmania. The program aims to strategically reduce the bushfire risk to Tasmania and its communities through fuel reduction. The government continues to invest strongly in fuel reduction because it's effective, it works. Fuel reduction may not prevent bushfires, but their potential intensity is reduced, making them significantly easier and safer for firefighters to control.

Since the program began in 2014, more than 1370 strategic bushfire risk reduction activities, and that's burning and mechanical, have been completed statewide and that encompasses an extraordinary 225,588 hectares. That is at 30 June 2024 and we're rolling into fuel reduction season now. During 2023-24, 81 fuel reduction burns were done, encompassing 27,680 hectares. In 2022-23, 156 burns were completed across nearly 20,000 hectares in strategic locations to protect Tasmanian communities

It's important to note that the La Nina weather conditions from 2020-23 did limit the opportunities to undertake fuel reduction activities which is why it's such a credit to our teams that we've been able to do so much burning despite the wet conditions. It in late 2023, weather patterns shifted to warmer and drier conditions and that allowed for an early start to fuel reduction burns in spring 2023, but a later start for fuel reduction burning in 2024. I'll pass over to the Commissioner of Fire and Emergency Services, Jeremy Smith, to add further about what the fuel reduction program means for Tasmanians.

Mr SMITH - Thank you, minister. It's important to note that this is a multiagency strategy to reduce the bushfire risk across the state and we are continuing to plan for fuel reduction burns when conditions allow. The team works around the state with all the stakeholders to ensure they have a complementary burn program with the appropriate plans in place. It also works with the landowners in determining what the risks are on their lands and, where appropriate, put strategies in place to deal with more localised events such as through the Red Hot Tips program.

Ms BUTLER - Thank you. Minister, in relation to the \$35 million in efficiency dividends for DPFEM, you didn't rule out cuts to scuttle radio dispatch. Do you consider them frontline? Have 000 calls this year been connected within 10 seconds with a radio dispatch operator? What percentage of those calls have to wait longer than this before being connected? I'm happy to take those questions on notice as well.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, I'm really not sure why this isn't sinking in, but we've made it pretty clear what our efficiencies are going to be. It's going to be things like travel, consultancy and advertising, as well as things like CBD accommodation for our corporate staff. If you're going to run a half-baked scare campaign, it's probably at least worth listening to the answers that we're providing. I'm happy to follow up in terms of the data but I completely reject the mischaracterisation in terms of our plans.

Ms BUTLER - Chair, could you please direct the minister to answer the question, please? His answer is not relevant to the question.

CHAIR - Order. Ms Butler, I can't put words in the minister's mouth or direct him to answer a question in a particular way. I will perhaps ask the minister to respond to the question.

Ms BUTLER - You can answer without patronising.

Mr ELLIS - Thanks, Chair, and as I say, I was asked about efficiencies and I reject the characterization. In terms of the data, I'll pass to the commissioner and her team.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. I don't think we have the data among the papers in regards to the percentage wait time, but we can take that on notice.

Ms BUTLER - Take that on notice - that would be fantastic. What is the average wait time for each of the last three years for those 000 calls, and what has been the five calls with the longest wait times for connection this year as well, if that can also be taken on notice? Within the last two years have any 000 calls that have had to wait for connection related to incidents where a death has occurred either before or after the call and can you provide the incidents where this has occurred? Can I take them on notice as well? Thank you.

Has the Atlas, or the intelligence database, I think that's how it was explained to me for a better understanding, minister, support staff - has that area been cut as a result of your budget cuts as well? Minister, you can liken that to our parliament version of IT helpdesk. Has the Atlas support service staff, the support service staff, been cut as a result of the budget cuts?

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned before, Ms Butler, your characterisation is completely missing the mark. I think we've had a fairly pointless two and a half hours of questioning from you because, like we said from the very beginning, I didn't accept the strategies that you're referring to. We've given you a pretty clear idea of the sort of strategies that we are looking to implement.

In terms of Atlas, we've spoken about, at this table, the massive investment that we're looking to make in that area, about \$32 million. That's going to be key in being able to deliver better service. It's also going to make our people more -

Ms BUTLER - Support service staff, minister?

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned, Ms Butler, I think your characterisations around efficiencies have largely been a pretty disappointing -

Ms BUTLER - I'm so sorry to disappoint you, minister, but can you answer the question?

Mr ELLIS - We're looking to invest significantly in terms of Atlas. A better Atlas system will actually will be more efficient and -

Ms BUTLER - Support staff?

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ELLIS - It'll be more user friendly because it'll be a new structure that won't require significant duplication in terms of keystrokes and those sorts of things. I'll pass to the commissioner if there's anything further to add on Atlas.

Ms ADAMS - The only thing I'd add, minister, is with the initiation of such a large-scale project, the support for Atlas is managed by the project now and as we get closer to the finalisation of the project we'll certainly look at a model to support the system with such a broad roll out. At the moment it makes sense that the support to the current system is with the project team.

Ms BUTLER - Okay, brilliant. Minister, another question in relation to contact points for our police officers and services. Do police have a direct dedicated contact point to Child

and Family Services? Is the process for police to use the same 1800 referral line as the public? Can you answer that?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, the information sharing between agencies is a critical part of the commission of inquiry work. We've continued our work in terms of Tasmania Police to do greater integration with our partner agencies, particularly Child Safety. In times gone by, sadly, information sharing was a key point of failure. That's why these significant changes are important. Some of the concerns around privacy in the past have been well and truly overtaken by the need to prioritise child safety as our number one priority. I'll pass to the commissioner and her team in terms of information sharing.

Mr HIGGINS - Police on a day-to-day basis will go through the ARL. Police in our specialist groups -

Mr ELLIS - That is the advice and referral line.

Mr HIGGINS - Advice and referral line.

Ms BUTLER - That's the same 1800 number that the public go through as well? Sorry to cut you off. I just wanted to clarify.

Mr HIGGINS - Yes, but specialist areas have child safety workers embedded in Arch, have had access to those. In the future we're working on a trial with Child Safety Services to have staff on an afternoon shift base and a pilot project working in each region after-hours to see how that goes. That will be in Launceston, I believe Glenorchy, and I think Ulverstone has been identified as a spot. So not to go out in the field as such, but to provide contact points there. That's something for 2025, not our agency, but we'll support them in finding a place in the station that they can work out of because it'd be a great benefit to our staff to have that point of contact where they can do referrals and get those supports if they do come across youth who are at risk.

Ms BUTLER - Through the minister, what's the average wait time from when police officers contact the 1800? Say you are in a country station, I will use St Helens as an example, you need to make a referral as a police officer to the ARL so you call that 1800 number because you're not working in Arch North or Arch South or potentially Arch North West. What is the wait time for police officers or the wait for them to have a response to those 1800 referrals as a police officer?

Mr HIGGINS - I don't believe we will have that type of data. That'll be something maybe the ARL group might hold. It's not something our frontline staff would capture in that way. The way that the referrals are done - that's an emergency through an ARL type situation. It is by entering the child safety report referral on ATLAS, the intelligence system, and then the notification goes straight across. That's how staff actually do it.

Ms BUTLER - Alright. And that's picked up by Child Family Services.

Ms BADGER - I have a couple of questions now on Fire and Emergency services. Now that a Fire and Emergency services commissioner has been appointed, do they have the powers of employment under the *State Service Act*? Do they also have the same or greater statutory powers as the chief fire officer?

Mr ELLIS - To provide a bit of background on this one, Ms Badger, we've just announced on Friday the next tranche of the reforms that we're looking to bring in as part of the fire and emergency services act, or the *Fire Service Act* as it's currently called. A key part of that is bringing together our Fire and SES into the one organisation. That unification is strongly supported among our first responders. By being able to do that, we'll be able to enhance the capability that we'll have right across the service and to be able to respond to different emergencies.

Until those legislative reforms come in, that needs to happen so that we can enable the full scale of powers that we envisage the commissioner will have. The commissioner will be the leader of both parts of the service. We'll have a deputy commissioner for Fire and deputy commissioner for SES. That will ensure that we'll be able to progress that. As part of the reforms, we'd initially envisaged that the commissioner of fire and emergency services would then be advised by an advisory committee. We received feedback from stakeholders as part of the legislation that we went out for consultation last year. The stakeholders still want to see a full commission model - a state fire and emergency services commission.

The commissioner has a range of different responsibilities and that includes things like the PCBU, person conducting business undertakings, I think that's right. With the commitment to maintaining the current full commission model, there will be some different powers for the commission versus the commissioner than what we previously envisioned with a commissioner that has an advisory committee below them. I might look to the commissioner if there's anything further you want to update.

Ms BADGER - Before you do, sorry, I was wondering if the intent was still to have powers of employment under the State Service as well at this point.

Ms ADAMS - In terms of employment powers, both the TFES Commissioner and I as secretary do not have employment responsibility for SES threes and fours. That's the head of the State Service. So we don't have that employment responsibility or function ourselves. In terms of SES ones and twos, that's for the secretary. All other employment functions are delegated to the TFES Commissioner.

Ms BADGER - In the state Budget there is money allocated to the department for emergency risk management and disaster mitigation. What specific programs in terms of climate risks does this relate to? I'm also assuming part of that would be for the national aviation fleet for bushfires. When are you expecting that these would be arriving? Are they still on the same three-month contract as they were in previous years?

Mr ELLIS - We're making major investments in terms of climate change mitigation. It's part of the reason why I'm being so passionate around the need to reform fire and emergency services in Tasmania. We have an old model that was set up in 1979, well before you and I and the Chair were born. It's no longer truly fit for purpose when we have a future of more severe and more frequent natural disasters. I'm not sure why everyone's laughing - have I said something that offends? I don't know. That change is important. It's part of the reason why we want to see continued growth in our capability. It's also part of the reason why we need to invest at the front end for our communities too.

You'll know the Latrobe Flood Mitigation project, potentially. That's a big investment that's been made jointly between the federal government, the state, and the local council. That's really come to fruition now. That will make a major impact in terms of protecting the town of Latrobe.

I spoke before about our need to do fuel reduction burning. I know that different members on the committee have been from parties that have a complicated relationship with fuel reduction burning, but it is important. We've reduced the risk in Tasmania by about 25 per cent since we started it 10 years ago. Those investments are key. I'll pass to the Commissioner of Fire and Emergency Services and the team if there's anything further you want to add.

Mr SMITH - Thanks, minister. I want to bring up to speed about the aircraft that we contract. We work with NAFC, the National Aircraft Firefighting Centre, which is a national body. We procure 15 aircraft into the state, roughly nine helicopters and six fixed wings. They complement our strategy of weight of attack. Over the last six or seven years, the weight of attack mantra for our crews of putting as many resources onto a fire as quickly as possible has proven very successful. To complement that is the aircraft, of which we've got those 15 national ones, but we've also got roughly 25 call-when-needed across the state. They supplement the contracted aircraft for those high-risk days or when we don't have those aircraft in the state, like today. They will go to our call when needed and stand those aircraft up to provide that critical resource.

Ms BADGER - Is there a rough date when they'll be arriving for the summer season, or until it's needed?

Mr SMITH - Our operational teams are monitoring the conditions daily at the moment. We had our state-based briefing last week. The conditions probably will trend towards those national aircraft coming into the state later in the year, so probably early or mid-December. We'll have them in place for the Christmas/New Year high risk period. They'll be in place for 60 to 90 days depending on the conditions. If we need to extend, we will.

Mr ELLIS - I might look to the Director of SES too around some of the flood mapping work that is very important.

Mr CLARK - Climate change predictions indicate that rainfall and flooding events in Tasmania are likely to become more frequent and more intense. SES is working to increase Tasmania's resilience to these risks by delivering the Tasmanian Flood Mapping Project. The project is jointly funded by the Tasmanian and Australian governments and is delivering a comprehensive and consistent set of strategic maps that show the current and future flood hazards across the state. These maps are being used to undertake state-wide flood risk assessments that will identify the current and future flood risks to a range of values across the state.

This flood mapping was used in the most recent severe weather event that we saw in recent weeks. It enables us to look, and use it as a predictive model to where flooding is going to occur. It's also the basis of the community flood guides and community flood plans that are used across local government areas across Tasmania.

Ms BADGER - So, all of those flood mapping scenarios are public for people in the community to be able to be informed and educated?

Mr CLARK - Yes, the data layer will be loaded onto LIST Tasmania, and publicly available.

Mr GARLAND - Given the volatile nature of monoculture eucalypt plantations, as far as a fire risk, we're advocating putting windfarms right through my area in the north-west where there are significant eucalypt plantations. The country fire brigades in Victoria are now boycotting attending and fighting any fires on transmission lines or turbine sites. How does the Tasmanian Fire Service plan to protect residents and farms in the vicinity of a renewable energy zone if similar action occurs here?

Mr ELLIS - I suppose the first thing to note, Mr Garland, is that our all our major plantation growers have their own firefighting capability. For example, in our neck of the woods, Forico and Reliance are two that have a few plantations out in Circular Head. Sustainable Timbers Tasmania is a native producer currently, but is increasingly going to be a plantation grower too. They've got significant firefighting capability; about 70 per cent of their staff are trained in it. They're one of our key partner response agencies. There's significant firefighting capability that's held outside of that. I might pass to the Commissioner of Fire and Emergency Service around that protocol.

Mr SMITH - I'm aware of those circumstances in Victoria. For a more localised in Tasmania aspect, we work closely with the local volunteer brigades to ensure they are aware of their risks and come back to our capability requirements for those particular brigades. At the moment they haven't raised those concerns with me. I talk regularly with Sustainable Timbers Tasmania about their preparations and their stakeholder engagement, and they haven't raised that with me either.

Mr GARLAND - Wouldn't it be prudent to have that conversation given the REZ zone that is proposed for the north-west area there?

Mr ELLIS - It's probably worth noting there's significant transmission right around Tasmania.

Mr GARLAND - But we're going to add more, minister, like significantly more and it is a real valid concern over there. We can't put our head in the sand with this. I was out the back of the Milkshakes when that fire went through quite a few years ago. The speed when the eucalypt oil ignited, the fire was passing the trucks with the drivers trying to get the hell out of there. We've got that all the way in the back of our urban and rural areas there, and this is something that we need to have a proactive conversation on because this is very relevant. You can get the perfect storm out there, imagine getting all the turbines spinning, the fire gets away, creating that draught. You could have something that is just Armageddon-like. It's a real possibility.

Mr ELLIS - As I say, we already currently have eucalypt plantations, a lot of transmission because we need to transmit power from remote dam locations right around the state, and we currently have wind farms around Tasmania as well. These are things that we've dealt with for many years, getting that balance right.

Mr SMITH - Another aspect is we have fire management area committees. We have 10 throughout the state. I'll bring it up with the fire management area committee for your

particular area and see if they've determined that it's a risk or how they're mitigating what they need to in that area.

Mr GARLAND - That would be good, because in the fires past, we've had brigades come from everywhere to help the ones that are there.

Mr FAIRS - With the bushfire warning, panic in the communities can set in, as we know. With the new TasALERT phone app, that has the most up-to-date info for some in an emergency, but for people with smartphones, will they still get the old alerts too?

Mr ELLIS - We've seen in recent natural disasters just how important it is that the community is informed and that communications are strong, because an informed community is a resilient community. They're able to take action as an event is unfolding and they'll have a better sense of what they need to do. Communicating information and warnings to the community when a bushfire is burning, in particular, is critical. The TFS uses a range of communication streams such as the TasALERT website and mobile app, they use social media, the emergency alert messaging system, mainstream media and the national emergency broadcaster, ABC local radio - and a big shout-out to them for their work during the flood and storm we've just recently had - as well as face-to-face communication like door-knocking in a flood zone.

The TFS uses the nationally consistent Australian Warning System to communicate warnings to the public. You would have seen the advice, which is yellow, watch and act, orange and emergency red. It's much simpler and more user-friendly. The Australian Warning System delivers on recommendation 13.3 of the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements.

The government's provided \$250,000 of funding for the operation of TasALERT, which is the Tasmanian government's official emergency information source, which communicates information from the Australian Warning System. When the TasALERT mobile app was launched in August this year, available to both Apple and Android devices, it was amazing to see Tasmanians responding so well. We had 40,000 downloads already when the flooding came through and I think we were number one in the App Store in the news category, which is incredible for a small state. Clearly, the communities responded well.

Mr SMITH - I've only got one thing to add: SMS or emergency alert SMS messages will be sent when appropriate.

Ms BUTLER - In the State Fire Commission Corporate Plan for financial years 2024-25 to 2027-28, it states that it's an amended version - and it's got the date 30 June 2024. If you go inside, and I do apologise if you don't have a copy of that in front of you, you've signed off on this corporate plan on 29 July 2024, approval by the minister.

Mr ELLIS - I have it here.

Ms BUTLER - You've signed off on this corporate plan on 29 July 2024, approval by the minister. Can you table the original State Fire Commission corporate plan? Can you provide the committee with the date the original version of the State Fire Commission Corporate Plan was approved by you as the minister responsible?

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Mr ELLIS - Look, I have to take advice in terms of providing drafts. This is obviously the version that we've approved,

Ms BUTLER - But it wasn't the draft. It was the previous, because this is the amended version. I'm happy to run through the act with you.

Mr ELLIS - I'll follow up and and get some advice. Obviously this is the approved version,

Ms BUTLER - Was the original version of the State Fire Commission corporate plan approved by you and the Treasurer, minister?

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, as in the draft version?

Ms BUTLER - The original. This is the amended version. If you run through all your previous State Fire Commission corporate plans, all of them have the actual date of approval written on the footer of each page of each document. This doesn't have that. Also, it's my understanding that - I'll run through -

The commission must provide a draft of the corporate plan to the Minister, the Stakeholder Minister and Treasurer not later than 90 days before the day on which the corporate plan will take effect. The Minister must approve a corporate plan prepared in accordance with this section and section 73F by no later than 30 days before the day on which the corporate plan will take effect.

So I'm looking for when the original corporate plan.

Mr ELLIS - Look, I have some advice here from Mr Wilson-Haffenden - I might pass down to him in a tick. But, due to state election delays to the Budget obviously to September, the original was never endorsed, but due to being endorsed after 1 July. It is amended. The original is -

Ms BUTLER - You were sworn in on 11 April.

Mr ELLIS - the previous year's version. As I mentioned, the Budget is later this year, which is why we're having this discussion in September. But I'll look at Mr Wilson-Haffenden.

Ms BUTLER - That's irrelevant, minister, in relation to what your obligations are under the act with the plans of commission corporate plans. I'm just trying to get to the bottom of it.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I'm just trying to pass over to Mr Wilson-Haffenden to provide some further information for you, Ms Butler.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Yes, through you, minister, obviously the corporate plan is a multi-year document and it provides forward Estimates over the four years. Due to the delays resulting from the election and the delay in the budget, as I understand, the state Fire Commission original draft had not been endorsed prior to 1 July.

PUBLIC

Ms BUTLER - I'm sorry for interrupting. Through the minister, hadn't been approved by the State Fire Commission, or hadn't been approved by the minister and Treasurer?

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - The State Fire Commission plan hadn't been endorsed by the Treasurer and minister. The legislation requires that if the plan is submitted after 1 July, then it is an amended plan. So an amended plan can be submitted at any time. The original plan stayed from the previous years, noting that that's a multiple years plan.

Ms BUTLER - Okay. There are big differences within this corporate plan and your actual budget itself, minister, if you look at your State Fire Commission income, on the reporting, so you'll find that on page 21,

Mr ELLIS - Are we talking the corporate plan?

Ms BUTLER - Yes, we're talking about the State Fire Commission corporate plan, so on page 21. And then you compare that with your actual budget, State Fire Commission and statement of comprehensive income, they're not the same figures at all. If you look at 2024-25, 2026-26, you'll see that there are significant changes.

Mr ELLIS - Which data points are you asking about in particular, Ms Butler?

Ms BUTLER - Which is true: the income statement provided by the State Fire Commission corporate plan or the income provided in the statement of comprehensive income in this Budget? They're the same line item.

Mr ELLIS - Which line item were you asking about?

Ms BUTLER - I can ask you first about the supplies and consumables, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Right.

Ms BUTLER - If you compare the two, you'll see that there's a nearly million-dollar difference in the supplies and consumables which is quoted between the comprehensive income in your Budget as opposed to the income statements by the State Fire Commission.

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to the TFES to provide a bit more information around it.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - Through you, minister, we'd probably have to take it on notice. There are always some differences between the budget statements and the corporate plan. The budget statements are compiled by Treasury based on the information that goes through our budget management system. It does contain some eliminations, noting the way the funds transfer through the department and through to the State Fire Commission. There are also some small timing differences with the Budget. As I noted, there were amendments due to the late issuing of the Budget. There still may be some further amendments resulting from the Budget. We could do that, I guess, reconciliation for you -

Ms BUTLER - That would be good.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - As there is a couple month-gap between where I signed that off when the Budget came through.

Ms BUTLER - Regardless of the gaps, minister, if you look at total expenses under the SFCCP as opposed to your Budget, there's about \$5 million difference. You can understand why I'm asking you the question of why there's such big differentiation. It was my understanding that your Budget should reflect what the corporate plan has within it. I'm concerned whether or not there's been a breach of the act and the reporting system in relation to this.

One of the other big concerns as well is the supplies and consumables. If you look at supplies and consumables, it's nearly \$1 million less. Can you provide us with some information about what the breakdown of supplies and consumables is? On a layman's way of looking at it, that's a hell of a lot of Post-it notes. It's a huge amount of money there.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Butler, if you think our supplies and consumables are about Post-it notes, I think you've got no idea about Fire and Emergency Services, sadly.

Ms BUTLER - And you don't understand irony, minister. Continue.

Mr ELLIS - I don't think it's a helpful categorisation for people who risk their lives every day to keep us safe, that they're spending \$47 million on Post-it notes -

Ms BUTLER - And the supplies and consumables, minister?

Mr ELLIS - As Mr Wilson-Haffenden mentioned, there are some months between when the corporate plan and the Budget were handed down this year. Obviously we continue to work through around revisions of those. I will look back to the team if there's anything further to add in particular.

Mr WILSON-HAFFENDEN - We can take it on notice, but obviously that supplies and consumables wraps up a vast array of various types of expenditure. We can table exactly what that comprises. It picks up supplies and consumables, it picks up community awareness, advertising, et cetera. Much of our firefighting equipment, other operational expenses, contributions for corporate support, and protective clothing are all wrapped up in that. We can break that down further.

Ms BUTLER - Is any of the income being siphoned or diverted through to other areas of DPFEM, such as SES or police, from the fire commission's supplies and consumables in their income statement?

Mr ELLIS - I think we've said that we're happy to take on notice the question about why the discrepancy. We've noted there is a couple months difference in terms of that. I thought one of your budget saving strategies was around supplies and consumables, so it's interesting that that you're now so cranky about it. We'll work through to provide you the information, and obviously we're looking to grow our fire and emergency services, which is why you can see such strong investment in both the corporate plan and the budget statements as well.

Ms BADGER - I wanted to clarify what we were talking about earlier. The commission of inquiry's terms of reference covered the institutions, being the department for Education and Tasmanian schools, the Department of Health, the Tasmanian Health Service and the Department of Communities Tasmania, as well as Ashley Youth Detention Centre. In those

terms of reference was not Tasmania Police, but obviously they were incidentally part of that and part of the recommendations. When the funding amounts were set for the commission of inquiry implementation, that was done with specific reference to the requirements for implementing the Weiss review. Was this done, and exactly how much of the commission of inquiry funding is being allocated to the Weiss review recommendations that you are currently working towards? I'm happy for you to take it on notice.

Mr ELLIS - As I say, because Tasmania Police is a key investigatory agency in all of those settings, we obviously have a role to play in terms of the commission of inquiry. The commission of inquiry had extensive discussion around the role of police and the importance of ensuring that we continue to keep children safe in our settings. We have eight recommendations. Paul Reynolds was a case study in the commission of inquiry, and in terms of the budget for DPFEM for our part of the commission of inquiry recommendation rollouts, the 2024-25 budget provided \$39.603 million to assist DPFEM to implement the recommendations of the findings from the commission's final report.

Obviously DPFEM is also committed to being a child-safe and youth-safe organisation in line with the Child and Youth Safe Organisations Act, and all staff are undergoing mandatory training regarding child and youth safe awareness and reportable conduct. We have two \$15.1-million multidisciplinary Arch centres for victim/survivors that are operational in the north and the south, and the government is part of -

Ms BADGER - Perhaps I didn't phrase the question properly. It's about the Weiss review recommendations and the funding allocated for that. I know you've said earlier that part of the commission of inquiry funding is for the Weiss review recommendations. How much?

Mr ELLIS - No, the broader funding that we'll be providing over many years - because that's the thing, this is a task that the government needs to meet over many years -

Ms BADGER - Absolutely, it's really important. Many Tasmanians and I would like to think that it would be explicitly outlined how much funding is going towards which recommendation, be it commission of inquiry or the Weiss review -

Mr ELLIS - I'm working through those recommendations, Ms Badger.

Ms BADGER - Sorry, they're for the commission of inquiry. We're just after the Weiss review.

Mr ELLIS - I thought you said for the commission of inquiry and the Weiss review?

Ms BADGER - We are asking how much. You said earlier, just to clarify, that some of the funding in the current Budget looking at the commission of inquiry recommendations flows on to the Weiss review recommendations. So if that's the case -

Mr ELLIS - If I could be helpful here, say, for example, we have currently employed an inspector of police. That's our community engagement inspector. So there's already money people are already getting paid in being able to deliver some of these recommendations. That's a key part of recommendation 3, from memory, in terms of our abilities to engage with the community. There are parts of our Budget that broadly go into this already -

PUBLIC

Ms BADGER - Great, so could we get a breakdown of that specifically for the Weiss recommendations?

Mr ELLIS - The reason why I can't give you that exactly is because not all the policy work is done, and some of it is whole-of-government -

Ms BADGER - Some of it is done though.

Mr ELLIS - I'm trying to be helpful, Ms Badger, honestly. Some of the policy work in terms of designing a redress scheme sits outside of our portfolio, and it's complex work. The secretary of DPAC in her evidence today has spoken about the importance of that work in terms of getting it right, so that we can understand the quantum of what might need to be provided and the best design for a scheme that can support victim/survivors.

We're working through that policy work at the moment as a whole of government, and I'm sure you'll have members in the other committee that will be able to provide a better sense in terms of the current detail that the secretary of DPAC is working through for her recommendations. There's obviously also the opportunity to scrutinise Justice in regards to the Integrity Commission. I'll pass over to the commissioner to see if there's anything further to add on this evidence.

Ms ADAMS - The policy design work has not been completed. We've initiated some actions within the community engagement space and, as the minister has said, we've appointed an inspector to lead up that unit. In terms of understanding what the command would look like, how we manage the restorative justice process and also our unit to support victim/survivors of police perpetrators, that design work is being undertaken at the moment.

Once we understand the various models and options, we'll have a conversation with the minister, and then we'll understand what the Budget implications will be to support those recommendations.

Ms BADGER - How many people have been charged under the *Police Offences Amendment (Workplace Protection) Act* since it was passed in 2022?

Mr BODNAR - I'm not aware of the figures of people who have been charged under that legislation. I know that for the last financial year 2023-24, we've charged just over 600 people with trespass across the state, but I don't have an answer to the specific question you're putting forward, Ms Badger.

Ms BADGER - Do you have the figures for that same period of time for the similar prior offence of being a public nuisance?

Mr BODNAR - No. We would have to see if we could work through that.

Ms BADGER - You can take it on notice too.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, happy to follow up. Our government's commitment is really strong. We want to make sure that people can go to work and undertake their lawful business, and I think it's a disgrace that the Greens continue to back people who are chaining themselves to equipment when they're just trying to do their job.

Ms JOHNSTON - Media reports have highlighted that a number of the recruit courses for the Police Academy have had recruits as young as 18. Minister, do you think it's appropriate that someone straight out of college is recruited to Tasmania Police? If so, what additional support have you provided to those young recruits given their lack of life experience and the difficulties that they'll have to deal with as police officers?

Mr ELLIS - At 18, you're an adult and you can serve in our military. You can undertake a whole range of different work. In Tasmania Police, I think we actually used to recruit people under the age of 18. Commissioner, you might have come in when you were 18.

Ms ADAMS - No, I wasn't. I came in at 19.

Mr ELLIS - At 19, sorry. Obviously, we need to continue to be supporting people. Eighteen is the age of majority in our community and that's a good thing. I don't think we want to go to an American model where you can't have a beer until you're 21. That being said, it is high-risk work and it's important that we're coaching and mentoring people as they go through their journey with Tasmania Police. It's part of why we've seen a significant change in the way that we mentor people in the field while they're still in the academy, which is a really innovative approach, to give people a sense of what the job's about before they graduate. I'll pass to the commissioner and the team to talk about some of that work.

Ms ADAMS - Thank you, minister. The selection process for a recruit is quite rigorous, and it includes some extensive psychometric testing to provide an assurance that we have people who have the life skills and are ready to join Tasmania Police.

As part of the recruitment program, as the minister has said, they are mentored and they're provided with a level of coaching. Then we give them some extensive outstations where they go out and work with police officers. We are sending our recruits to the areas that they're actually going to be graduating to, so they start to build that team-based culture and understand the level of support working with their future supervisors.

That is also supplemented by strong wellbeing support throughout their period of time at the academy. Each recruit has access to all the wellbeing support tools available to any other officer, and they get specific instruction and guidance around how to access the tools and how to put their hand up if they're struggling or they're feeling the effects of the training program.

We're also continually getting survey information from our recruits to understand where the pressure points are in our recruitment program. We want to be an organisation that's representative of the community in terms of gender, in terms of age and in terms of life experience. That's what we aim to do, without any preconceived viewpoint that any one recruit is going to be more experienced or better suited than another.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, commissioner. Minister, with the amalgamation of TFS and SES, there needs to be a clear plan for what will happen with the SES facilities currently owned by local government. How is the transfer of local government assets going to be managed under the government's reforms?

Mr ELLIS - Can I thank you as well, Ms Johnston, for your time in local government and your support for our first responders.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, but I'd love an answer to the question.

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely, but it is important because local government is a key partner of ours. We're working through this situation currently. There is a range of different - how would you say it - a range of different facilities out there. Some are pretty basic and a significant drain on local government resource and capability. Others have been invested in by local governments and they're important assets for them. The state is the right level of government to be delivering SES services, because wherever you are in the state, you deserve the best possible life-saving support - say, for example, if you're involved in a car crash - because we're all Tasmanian.

We're working through with our partner councils around what we do with the facilities. We're making major investments ahead of that in terms of things like hubs. We've spoken about Sorell, and pay tribute to that council for their proactive work. Kingston, Wynyard, and Rosebery too, where we're actually investing in new facilities to replace old ones, and ones that are not fit for purpose. I'll pass over to our Director of SES or the Commissioner of Fire and Emergency Services to add further.

Mr CLARK - SES continues to work very closely with local council. We do that as part of the units and part of our day-to-day business. We do have MOUs that are in place regarding funding arrangements at the moment. As the reforms develop we'll continue to work with those to make sure that the safety of the Tasmanian community is prioritised.

Ms JOHNSTON - To clarify, would the government be providing funding to purchase those local government owned SES facilities?

Mr ELLIS - As I said, we're working through the arrangements. We think that there's some really good opportunities to continue working together around it. With some facilities we're looking to just build completely new ones. I mentioned the hubs. Say, for example, the Wynyard SES is out the back of someone's house in sort of suburban Wynyard. We want them to come in together as part of a broader facility that's actually on council land. We're working closely with the council there. Other areas have really good facilities that are that are currently owned by the council. We'll work with them around what their transition arrangements are, noting that it's not one size fits all in this space, because there are starkly difference investments that have been made, and capabilities of council. That's been part of the problem, because we're talking about a life-saving service. It shouldn't matter how many people are in a council area when it comes to the jaws of life.

Mr FAIRS - While we're on volunteer firefighters and our SES workers, and I want to put it on the record I sincerely thank them for what they do, keeping us safe, offering their time and help in obviously very stressful and trying times, so thank you. What's the department doing to keep and attract volunteers to the SES, and the volunteer firefighters?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs, and I thank you as well for your support of our Fire and Emergency Services. It was great to see you at our medal presentation in the north in Launceston the other day. Some of those people are truly extraordinary, you know, 60 years of service to their communities is phenomenal.

We're having good success. Over the past 12 months TFS has recruited an additional 502 new volunteer members. SES has also been really successful, with a net gain of 88 volunteer members over the past 12 months. I think that stands in contrast to some of our other partner agencies interstate, and indeed other volunteer organisations that are struggling to get members. We still need to continue to invest in our people through volunteer support units, our new field officers with the fire service, and other capability-building parts of our service. Ultimately, nine out of ten people that get on a firetruck in Tasmania are volunteers. It's even more than that in SES.

It's part of the reason why we announced on Friday the next step in terms of our Fire and Emergency Services act, as you'll be aware. That will contain a volunteer charter to enshrine volunteers at the heart of our organisations. We need to be backing them in so that we have a workforce to keep the community safe. I'll pass to the commissioner if there is anything further you wanted to add.

Mr SMITH - It's important to recognise our volunteers. We could not operate without our fantastic volunteers, whether they're TFS or SES. There are probably three pillars that are fundamental to our volunteers, and they are retaining our current volunteers, recruiting the volunteers of tomorrow - and the minister and I were on the north-west coast at the weekend, looking at our new juniors coming through and it was fantastic to see, and to create an environment where volunteers are supported through a good culture with full engagement and recognition. They're the three pillars and, as I alluded to, volunteers are the backbone of our organisations and we thank them for their service.

Mr ELLIS - Those future volunteers, you'll see in the Budget, an emergency services cadet program. We're working through the design of that at the moment. Being a volunteer has been life changing for me and we want to provide those opportunities to our young people coming through. We already have great youth volunteer programs with the TFS, St John Ambulance and the ADF cadets. Wherever there are opportunities to -

CHAIR - Sorry, minister, I'm going to have to cut you off because the time for this session has -

Mr ELLIS - That's one of my favourite things in the Budget, Chair, but that's okay.

CHAIR - You could keep going for another 10 minutes, but, yes, the time for scrutiny has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Skills and Training. Thanks.

The Committee suspended from 12.13 p.m. to 12.16 p.m.

DIVISION 27

(Minister for Skills and Training)

CHAIR - I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions for the benefit of Hansard. For clarity if we can go from left to right so Hansard knows who's who.

Mr ELLIS - What I might do to ensure that we're going to seniority, I suppose, is so to my right is Jenna Cairney, acting deputy secretary of business and jobs, Department of State

PUBLIC

Growth, then Alexandra Patterson, general manager of skills and workforce, and Stuart Hollingsworth, director of Jobs Tasmania; and to my left is Dr Anthony Reed, my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions.

CHAIR - Thank you minister. The time scheduled for the estimates of the Minister for Skills and Training is one hour. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. It's been another busy period in the Skills and Training portfolio and we've been focused on making sure that Tasmanians have access to the training they need to get a job. The Budget delivers support for TasTAFE, which trains more than 20,000 people every year and continues our strong contestable training program that's delivering great outcomes.

TasTAFE has new facilities that have come online in recent times, the Water and Energy Trade Centre of Excellence or the WET Centre, the Agricultural Centre of Excellence at Freer Farm and a cybersecurity training facility. There's more to come with learning hubs and accommodations.

In the Jobs Tasmania space, we've doubled down on our nation-leading jobs hubs and they're secured now through 2027, and we're working with the Commonwealth on what more we can do together to support Tasmanians. We also have a new two-year workforce participation and training program, which will support local organisations to help vulnerable Tasmanians participate in our economy. The Budget also provides new funding for the expanded High-Vis Army program, which includes sparkies and plumbers for the first time.

In terms of migration, we've had success in negotiating outcomes with the Commonwealth to meet Tasmania's unique economic needs and we think there are more opportunities there on top of a refresh population strategy that shows how we're investing to manage Tasmania's growth and to deliver for our community. Finally, Tasmania's first-ever youth job strategy is all about investing in our young people so that we can futureproof our workforce for years to come. This is a strong budget for skills and training that will support thousands of Tasmanians to reach their potential.

Ms DOW - Minister, does the efficiency dividend apply to TasTAFE and the skills and training portfolios?

Mr ELLIS - Efficiency dividends apply across government and we'll continue to work with all of our partner agencies to make sure our bureaucracy is more efficient and that we're responsible stewards of taxpayer funds. But look, I'll pass over to Ms Cairney to update further.

Ms CAIRNEY - Thanks so much. The Budget indicated that government would seek operating efficiencies while protecting frontline services. As the minister outlined, the efficiency dividend is to be across government. The department itself plans to achieve these efficiencies through a combination of efficiency measures and ceasing or scaling-back on non-core and non-priority activities that are either not the highest strategic priorities or have been replaced with new commitments.

Ms DOW - Through you, minister, what would they be?

PUBLIC

Ms CAIRNEY - Regarding department efficiencies, we've identified several strategies that we will use to meet the budget efficiency dividend. Some examples: combining functions and service delivery areas to implement leaner operating models, reviewing how we administer programs, such as grants or our capital program to ensure they deliver value for the Tasmanian community and considering process improvements and systemising processes to ensure they're efficient.

Some other operational expenditure will also be considered as part of our efficiency dividends. So reducing operational expenditure on supplies and consumables. For example, marketing and consultancies, accommodation, ICT costs, travel, postage, which is significant, for example, registration and licencing, renewable.

Ms DOW - Thank you. Can you table the savings strategy for each of those areas, please, minister?

Mr ELLIS - I'll get to Ms Cairney, if there's -

Ms DOW - I can put that on notice if that's -

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister, the department. - yes, we'll take that on notice.

Ms DOW - At the 2021 election, you promised Tasmanians 100 extra TasTAFE teachers statewide. We've since had another election, an early one. Since the 2021 election, could you provide the number of additional net teachers that you have employed across Tasmania with a breakdown across each region please?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of each region, we'll follow up - and I don't know if it'll assist the committee if we bring TasTAFE forward but if the committee is interested in TasTAFE, we do have people here as well.

Ms DOW - We are.

Mr ELLIS - We've got 69 full-time equivalent teacher equivalents. That's through a range of different areas. It's recruitment - it's also part of our reforms as well that have ensured that our teachers are doing more teaching and being paid more, which delivers in terms of our equivalent -

Ms DOW - To be specific though, minister, the question was: how many additional net teachers have you employed across TasTAFE across the state since you made that commitment to employ 100 more?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, as I just said, 69 full-time equivalent teacher equivalents more than there were in 2021. From here on out, TasTAFE are focusing on making sure that we're putting the resources in the right place to meet learner demand. That's resourcing and recruiting to areas that learners and industry are telling us are a priority area. Tasmanians expect us to ensure that we're delivering those resources as efficiently as possible. Over the -

Ms DOW - Speaking of efficiencies, minister, will the proposed cuts across each of these areas mean that there is not money in the Budget to employ those additional - you've said you've employed 67 -

Mr ELLIS - It's 69.

Ms DOW - Sixty-nine; you've made that commitment of 100.

Mr ELLIS - That's right. You made a commitment of 80, by the way, so -

Ms DOW - Is there money still - well, you're the minister responsible.

Mr ELLIS - I assume that you're supporting our -

CHAIR - Order.

Ms DOW - Is there still money in the Budget to make sure that those additional teaching positions will be provided across the state?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. As I've mentioned, we've outlined quite well what our efficiency dividend process is across the Department of State Growth. That's things like travel, consultancies, supplies and consumables, as well as doing things more efficiently in our bureaucracy. We're continuing to grow the number of teachers.

The reason I've mentioned ensuring that we're employing the right people now is that we have particular areas of need nationally when it comes to increasing the number of TAFE and vocational teachers, but it's not uniform. For example, there are particular trades, and electrical is a great example, where there is a shortage nationally in our vocational education training workforce. We want to ensure that we're delivering the right teachers so that we can address some of those important skills gaps that are happening in our economy and in our community.

I might ask the team from TasTAFE to come up. I introduce at the table, if it works for you, Chair, Grant Dreher, CEO of TasTAFE. Grant, would you mind just giving us a bit of a sense of our teaching workforce around the priority hiring areas over the coming 12 months?

Ms DOW - Through you, minister, if we could also have the total number of teachers employed by TasTAFE, please.

Mr DREHER - Yes. Let's start with the number because that's probably easier. All right. The total number of teachers - and we're taking a point in time; you'd understand that those things change. On March 22, the total number was 483 teachers.

Further to the minister's comments, just a broad-brush recruitment campaign is kind of not what we need now. We really need teachers in specific areas. The areas we've identified, as the minister has already said, are electrotechnology and plumbing, allied trades and construction. These are national shortages and that's confirmed across the country. To a lesser extent, engineering and metal trades require some top-up, and there are new and emerging places like cybersecurity and blue technology.

CHAIR - Last question, then we'll go to Mr Bayley.

Mr ELLIS - I will clarify as well, Chair, for the benefit of the committee, I did outline it but just so that we're clear, the 69 full-time equivalent teacher equivalents, that's 45 FTE

recruited teaching staff and there's 24 FTE equivalent. That's arisen because our teachers are now doing more teaching as part of the reforms that we brought in. That gives the community a sense of why it was so important that we delivered these reforms, because it means that we get more teaching for Tasmanian learners. That's grown our capability significantly. The next part of the journey is finding those teachers that we need in areas of particular skills need, as Mr Dreher outlined, so that we're not just hiring any teacher for any course, but that we're really targeted in terms of that investment.

Ms DOW - Is that pronounced in certain regions of the state in those industry sectors? What initiatives or incentives are you providing to ensure that you can get the teachers that you require to deliver this coursework?

Mr DREHER - The issues are probably exacerbated on the north-west coast. We're working with potential applicants if they're new to the state, which we are having some success on. Housing seems to be the biggest issue when it comes to recruiting new teachers with families to the state. So that's an area.

Ms DOW - You should speak to the minister about that.

Mr DREHER - That seems to be that the biggest issue we have when it comes to recruiting people. We'll be launching a new campaign on letting people in industry know the benefits of working at TasTAFE. That will launch in the next couple of weeks. I think that should help people in trades understand how they can come back to TAFE and give back to the industries that they've come out of.

Ms DOW - Just to be clear, there's no regional incentives at all to try to get people out to the regions to teach?

Mr DREHER - Not at this stage, no.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, there is a new renewables training facility listed in the Budget. I'm interested in seeing whether you can confirm that this facility will offer presently missing courses in Tasmania, things such as a full Cert III in Automotive Electric Vehicle Transportation. Also, will it have a heavy focus on wind farm and turbine construction training to ensure that there are local jobs in those industries and skilled jobs don't go to FIFO workers.

Mr ELLIS - I thought you were opposed to wind farms.

Mr BAYLEY - We're not at all, minister, that's just a bit of convenient rhetoric on your behalf.

Mr ELLIS - Which ones do you support?

Mr BAYLEY - We support plenty. Answer the question, if you don't mind. I'm the one asking the questions.

Mr ELLIS - Okay, good one. We actually support the renewable industry, unlike the Greens, who want to pull the plug on Lake Peddar and stop every other wind farm that's being developed in Tasmania. It's quite an interesting question, that you actually want to skill up an industry that you're trying to shut down.

You are correct, we're going to invest \$4 million in terms of our state-of-the-art industry training facility on the north-west coast. We're going to partner with industry, and will have a dedicated focus on renewable energy skills. We think that there are some really good models available to us already in terms of partnering with industry.

I pay tribute to the agriculture industry on the north-west coast that was critical in providing input with our steering committee for the Freer Farm Agricultural Centre of Excellence at Burnie. We've got good opportunities to partner together to support students in our region to participate in the renewable energy future if the Greens don't shut it down. We will continue to seek to leverage additional Australian government funding as part of that project under the National Skills Agreement.

In terms of the specific courses you've asked about automotive -

Mr BAYLEY - EV in particular.

Mr ELLIS - It'll depend on the kind of approach that we take. We're continuing to scope this with the industry. We have opportunities to provide EV training, probably more about automotive facilities that we have around the state, but we have an open mind in terms of what industry is seeking the skills that they will need. There are big opportunities in terms of transmission, which of course the Greens oppose as well. I might pass over to the team at Skills to talk further around the kind of partnerships that we're looking to leverage and what that might mean for courses.

Ms PATERSON - We're looking to establish an industry-led approach to the north-west training facility. There are also opportunities under the National Skills Agreement to potentially leverage some national skills funding contribution towards that centre as well. The idea would be to work collaboratively with TasTAFE and industry to design the future training offering to meet needs both for now and also for emerging industries.

Mr ELLIS - I might look back to Mr Dreher in terms of our TasTAFE automotive opportunities that we have there.

Mr BAYLEY - Specifically around EVs, is the question.

Mr DREHER - In relation to EVs, we do short courses in EV at the moment and EV servicing and EV safety. We work closely with industry on those. The need for a Certificate III will emerge over the next few years and we'll be looking at it, but I couldn't make a commitment on it.

Mr BAYLEY - You haven't got a commitment to make that in that space. What about the timeframe for the establishment of the centre in the north-west? When's it going to be up and running and is it fully funded to the point where it can get up and running?

Mr ELLIS - I mentioned before, we are making a contribution of \$4 million, but we think there's some big opportunities to leverage Commonwealth funding in this space as well. The Commonwealth has rolled out five of their 31 national centres of excellence, all in other jurisdictions, and we think that there's big opportunities to work together, noting that Tasmania is a real renewables. We're continuing to work with them as part of the national -

Mr BAYLEY - So is it contingent on funding partnering?

Mr ELLIS - All I'll say there is that we think that there's further opportunities because if we can partner together, it will grow our capability. We were obviously the lead agency in terms of delivering the water and energy trade centre of excellence here in the south. But where we can work with the Commonwealth to leverage additional funds, we get more bang for our buck and we'll get an even better facility for our learners. It's also important in terms of timeframe, we'll be working with our industry partners around that, so in terms of our industry steering committee, we're working through the process of establishing that and we've got some great partnerships that we'll be able to build. I might look to -

Mr BAYLEY - It's already behind though, isn't it? Have you got a date that you're -

Mr ELLIS - What are you talking about? We committed to it at the last election and we funded it in the first Budget. Behind what?

Mr BAYLEY - Establishing. Have you got a date?

Mr ELLIS - We made the commitment at the last election. At the first opportunity, we're providing funding for it in the Budget just as we committed to at the election and we're looking forward to rolling that out. I'll look to maybe Ms Paterson in terms of anything further to add.

Ms PATERSON - Through you, minister, I can probably add a little bit more around the process under the National Skills Agreement for attracting that matched funding through the Commonwealth. The specific policy initiatives component of the National Skills Agreement requires an implementation plan to be agreed with the Commonwealth before we can release that funding or have that funding committed, if you like. We're working through that process at the moment as quickly as we can.

Mr BAYLEY - When do you expect to finish that implementation plan?

Ms PATERSON - It'll depend on the negotiations with the Commonwealth, I think. I would expect that we would have certainty of their position hopefully by the end of this year.

Mr ELLIS - We've had good conversations already with the with the new federal minister. A shout out to him, he's actually a West Coast Tasmanian, so obviously one of the real heartland areas for our country for renewable electricity generation. I know how passionate he is in supporting our state, too.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, minister. I'll direct you to page 122, budget paper 2, volume 2, which has the detailed budget statements about TasTAFE. What you'll notice here is that the grants are decreasing over time, and indeed, the expenses are increasing, which means that the net result is a significant deficit. Why is TasTAFE being forced to run at a deficit?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you for the question, Ms Johnston. It actually leads on reasonably well from my previous answer to Mr Bayley. As we work through our National Skills Agreement, funding opportunities become available over the over the forward Estimates, but we can't budget that until decisions are made by the federal government in terms of that support.

That's things like capital grants for centres of excellence that pop up from time to time. But it's also an area where the federal government is looking to step in further to provide operational funding. So, for example, we've had a number of new rounds for fee-free TAFE and commend the federal government for stepping forward into this area and make funding available. That funding continues to come through from time to time. So while we can't budget for it, we know there are some big opportunities to continue working with the federal government as part of that process and we'll always look to opportunities there.

I might just look back to TasTAFE and Mr Dreher and see if there's anything further that that he'd like to add as part of.

Mr DREHER - I don't think there's anything I can add, minister, no.

Ms JOHNSTON - Whilst you're hoping and praying that the federal government might come to the party for this additional funding, what happens in -

Mr ELLIS - It would be staggering if they cut Tasmania's funding, I think.

Ms JOHNSTON - Well, you haven't budgeted for it so you've clearly not considered it a definite.

Mr ELLIS - You might be able to ask Ms Dow whether her colleagues are planning on cutting -

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm asking the question, Mr Ellis. Whilst the deficit budgets are running, that effectively is a cut, is it not? Can you detail where these saving measures will have to come from?

Mr ELLIS - No, I think you completely misunderstood my answer there, Ms Johnston, so let me try to be clear. We can't budget until there's a decision made by the Commonwealth in terms of different funding. I certainly know that the Commonwealth has been very forthcoming when it comes to providing additional funds for things like fee-free TAFE. I'd be staggered if the Commonwealth was planning to make those cuts. I know that the opposition at a federal level is very keen to ensure that we're investing in more tradies to build our homes, more people to care for our loved ones, and more people that provide our food. We're continuing to work with the Commonwealth around some of those opportunities. It's very similar to previous years as well in terms of our budget -

Ms JOHNSTON - So you are prepared to say now that there will be no deficit budget for next year or a definite position at the end of the financial year because you're certain that the federal funding is coming?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work with the Commonwealth around those opportunities, but the National Skills Agreement makes it pretty clear that there are big opportunities for us to unlock federal funding as we continue to work through those processes and certainly know that the federal government as a partner of ours in the skill space, see very much their role in terms of backing-in TAFE and the learners that come through those institutions around our country. I'll look over at the team at Skills, if there's anything further to add on that one.

Ms PATERSON - Through you, minister, I can just add some more detail around the types of initiatives that the National Skills Agreement has committed to in terms of potential additional funding to TAFE. So there's \$41 million effectively additional funding for specific policy initiatives on offer to Tasmania under a number of policy initiatives including Closing the Gap foundation skills, improve completions, enhance that data and evidence and in particular in relation to TasTAFE, TAFE Centres of Excellence, TAFE professional networks and the VET workforce. As I mentioned earlier, that process of working through with the Commonwealth on those implementation plans is, is the process that we need to go to through to unlock that additional funding that's embedded in the agreement at the moment.

Ms JOHNSTON - So you're confident then, through the minister, that this result will turn around to a surplus rather than a deficit given the commitments from the federal government?

Mr ELLIS - Our intention has been really clear in terms of TAFE. We've had you know, more than \$100 million worth of additional investment from this government in recent times and certainly we're seeing additional investment from the Commonwealth too. We've been living through one of our largest ever skills and labour shortages as a country -

Ms JOHNSTON - The question was about the financial result. Are you confident that we'll be looking at a surplus budget rather than a deficit budget for next year?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work through it. We've got a strong track record of making investments in this space and we'd expect as part of the National Skills Agreement that our federal colleagues would continue to play their part as well.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, the government's legislation reforms have been in place for a couple of years now. Can you outline some of the improvements that have been made in this area and especially for learners and industry and what they're seeing?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. TasTAFE has made some really strong progress since the reforms came into force. In terms of the workforce, an important milestone for TasTAFE was reached this August with the Fair Work Commission approving TasTAFE's education facilities attendants fair work agreement. This approval follows enterprise agreements reached last year with general and with teaching employees and that means that all three employee groups have now voted to transition and have transitioned to the new national workplace system. The new teaching arrangements has meant an uplift in delivery of the equivalent of 24 full time equivalent teaching staff.

As a government, we've also taken the decision to invest strongly in our facilities, brand new spaces have been opened in the last couple of years, that includes the water and energy trade centre of excellence, the agricultural centre of excellence at Burnie and new butchery facilities and cybersecurity hub at Campbell St. We've also got works underway at Allanvale in the beautiful electorate of Bass to deliver a modern health training hub because we know just how important these services are for the local community, as well as a new student learning hub to make sure that students have a one-stop shop to access support.

We'll also be delivering accommodation improvements at Bernie and at Clarence and in terms of equipment, TasTAFE has made significant investments in technology and is in the market right now for new automotive equipment, including motor control boards that allow

electrotechnology apprentices to understand different methods of stopping and starting a motor, portable simulated engines and electrotechnology testing and verification boards that simulate faults apprentices will come across in the field and other new investments include milling machines for metals at Devonport and Allanvale, new plasma cutters for Allanvale, Devonport and Burnie, a new state-of-the-art CNC machine and training trail for civil construction at Allanvale and new equipment for TasTAFE's in-house hairdressing training salons.

There is more to come, and that's what we're seeing and what we're seeing is students responding to the opportunities available at TasTAFE. Enrolment activity for the second quarter of this year shows that enrolments are nearly 7 per cent ahead of the same time last year and around 32 per cent higher than 2020. We'll keep building on these successes as TasTAFE continue their transformation to focus on putting the learner at the centre, valuing their people and working even more closely with the industries they serve.

Ms DOW - Minister, I recently had the father of a student at Clarence Campus raise with me his concerns about accommodation at the campus and the travel allowances provided to students. His son was from the north west coast, our electorate. Can you advise of any changes to either of these to improve student and family experience and support and when will the student accommodation be completed in the north west and the proposal for Clarence? Will staff accommodation be considered as part of this as we've been updated today on the current challenges around recruitment when it comes to staff accommodation.

Mr ELLIS - A couple of separate things there, obviously you're talking about staff accommodation and student accommodation. It is interesting because I thought you guys were opposed to key worker accommodation being done by Homes Tasmania, but that's another story. So I'll address -

Ms DOW - Key workers accommodation was a part of our policy at the last election, minister.

Mr ELLIS - I certainly heard from Dr Broad some different things, but focusing on Burnie start off with - we committed \$7 million to build student accommodation at Burnie Campus that will house 25 students and increase access to the campus for rural and regional students. TasTAFE will utilise an existing building at the Burnie campus to repurpose towards student accommodation and they have commenced the design phase of the project and launched a development approval with the local council and the expected completion date is July 2025. I might just pass to Mr Dreher in terms of the Clarence investment at that facility too.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister, we have updated all of the accommodation at Clarence and modernised the current accommodation. We now have sufficient accommodation for Clarence and we're just looking at the operating model for that. It was a very dated approach and we've automated that and are just looking at how the support sits around that automation.

Ms DOW - Through you, minister, when it comes to the allowances that are in support that are provided to students that are travelling from regional areas, is there a view to review that? The feedback I had is that it reduced significantly over time from this father, and he was concerned about that. Are you able to provide any further advice about that?

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Mr ELLIS - Yes, so more than \$3.8 million was committed on travel and accommodation allowances in 2023-24 to assist more than 3300 apprentices and trainees to access training, but I'll pass over to the team at Skills Tasmania to provide an update.

Ms CAIRNEY - The Tasmanian Government does provide a contribution to the cost of travel and accommodation to support apprentices to attend training with their RTO, and that can be petrol or accommodation, and we will help learners who are attending Tasmanian-based RTOs -

Ms DOW - Is that petrol or accommodation or both?

Ms CAIRNEY - Petrol and accommodation. As the minister outlined, during the 2023-24 financial year, that \$3.8 million was claimed by more than 3300 apprentices and that's to help support them attend training.

Ms DOW - And nothing for meals?

Ms CAIRNEY - Meals, I don't believe so. The other thing I'd add as well is Skills Tasmania will pay the entire cost of flights for learners if they need to attend an interstate RTO or for learners who reside on King Island, Flinders Island or, importantly, Cape Barren Island.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, you mentioned fee-free courses. I note that TAFE offers some courses and some eligibility in that space. TasTAFE obviously provides a really important education and training opportunities to young Tasmanians and people wanting to get trained up and stay here and work. Obviously, the cost-of-living crisis is really biting and it's hitting young Tasmanians particularly hard. We don't want to discourage young Tasmanians getting an education and furthering their prospects and fee-free TAFE and fee-free education full stop is a positive way to give people a start and give them a helping hand. Will you commit to a fee-free TAFE across the board or just courses, just select courses?

Mr ELLIS - Sorry, what?

Mr BAYLEY - Would you commit to fee-free TAFE for all courses, or only some select courses?

Mr ELLIS - Oh, all courses, I'm with you now. Fee-free TAFE's a joint initiative of the Australian and Tasmanian governments that provides tuition-free training places to learners wanting to retrain or to train and upskill. Fee-free TAFE increase opportunities for workforce participation, for example, for First Nations Australians, young people aged 17 to 24, people out of work or receiving income support, unpaid carers, people with disability and women studying in non-traditional fields. In 2024, following the announcement of 4600 fee-free places in Tasmania, 3400 of those were allocated to TasTAFE across 52 products and the fee-free TasTAFE 2024 campaign has been very successful with 27 products having their allocated places filled. There are 348 places remaining across 25 products and it's a great opportunity for many Tasmanians looking to upskill.

I suppose the important thing there, Chair, is that we're investing in areas of need and for people who are in need as well. We want to be addressing areas that are key skill shortages for us. We want to be ensuring that we're delivering training courses that deliver great job outcomes as well. Skills for jobs is a really high priority for us. We're also investing so that we can support

people who are doing it tough or coming from a disadvantaged background. We also have significant funding to ensure that people can access concessional courses too, so that they're not bearing the full cost. Now of course, it is important that we're talking about taxpayer money, that we're not, for example, providing free courses to people who can well and truly afford it, people on very high incomes or, for example, in courses that don't necessarily lead to a great job or life outcome, but look, I'll pass over to -

Mr BAYLEY - So, that's a no is it, minister, in terms of offering it across the board for courses?

Mr ELLIS - If you want to fund people who are on very high incomes or people who want to do courses that don't have great life outcomes, then go for it, Mr Bayley. But our focus -

Mr BAYLEY - There's a strong case for fee-free education full stop and making it easier for people to get an education, get a trade, get into the workforce and have additional take up is clearly going to have positive benefits.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. I spoke about the kind of reasons why you wouldn't do fee-free for everybody and for every course. It would be silly to do, for example, the things that you've just proposed that you would do. We want to make sure that we're targeting our support for people who need it and for jobs that will give them better life chances too. For people on low incomes and disadvantaged backgrounds, regardless of our ongoing commitment with the Commonwealth, we want to make sure that there are significant concessions for those people too, so that your income isn't a barrier to you taking part in a TAFE course that could help improve your life chances -

Mr BAYLEY - They're not the only people doing it hard though, minister.

Mr ELLIS - Sorry?

Mr BAYLEY - They're not the only people doing it hard, concession card holders and the like.

CHAIR - Order.

Mr ELLIS - People who aren't necessarily doing it hard are not really the people who you want to be giving free TasTAFE courses to.

CHAIR - Order, I remind the committee -

Mr BAYLEY - They're probably not the ones doing TAFE either.

Mr ELLIS - Look, I think everyone in our community can do TAFE.

CHAIR - Order. I remind the committee that the place for debate is in House. This is for question and answers. Did you have another question, Mr Bayley or we'll go to Ms Johnston.

Mr BAYLEY - Can I go to the Strong Plan for Safer Roads funding and the prioritisation of learner driver programs in Tasmania? Millions of dollars have been granted over the forward Estimates to develop new driver safety programs. Why is funding for established community

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programs like the Learner Driver Mentor Program, which already delivers significant outcomes, remain unfunded post December 2024?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of learner driver -

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you minister, that would be a different output group, that would be the Transport minister, is my advice.

Mr ELLIS - I'll just look to Mr Hollingsworth, is there anything further you want to add?

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - No, minister. That is for another portfolio, although we do have some programs in the margins.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. Minister, how many TasTAFE courses have been discontinued or suspended since July 2022? Of these, how many were suspended or discontinued due to staff shortages?

Mr ELLIS - It's an important part of the reason why we needed to ensure that we were making our industrial relations fit for purpose and modern so that we can employ our teachers on a flexible basis, they can provide more training, and they can deliver better outcomes for learners in Tasmania. Now that we've completed that significant work with our teachers, we're very grateful for the additional capability. I'll look to Mr Dreher if we have those data from that date available on hand.

Mr DREHER - Thank you. Minister, I don't have those specific data on hand at the moment.

Ms JOHNSTON - Can we take that on notice then, minister? Would you accept that on notice?

Mr DREHER - Okay, can I clarify through you, minister? That's programs that have been suspended or discontinued through staff shortages.

Ms JOHNSTON - What was the total number that have been discontinued or suspended and then also of that, what percentages of those have been due to staff shortages?

Mr DREHER - I did make a clarification that training packages change all the time. Programs are stopped all the time and replaced. I'll clarify the bit that's important, specifically due to staff shortages.

Ms JOHNSTON - Yes, thank you. Minister, I want to go back to Ms Dow's question in which she extracted from you the answer that 69 additional teachers have been employed as part of your commitment for 100 additional teachers since 2022. Can you please indicate what the time line is for the additional 31 to meet that 100 commitment, please?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. As I mentioned, we want to ensure that we're not just employing any teachers, but that we're employing the right teachers and that we have to focus on areas -

Ms JOHNSTON - The right 31 teachers then, what's the time line for that?

Ms DOW - When will they be employed by?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I'm trying to help and answer the question. The focus now is on those areas of school shortage and areas that are hard to recruit for. For example, electricians can make a huge amount of money working in the mines or on a hydro project. Nationally, we're seeing challenges in that vocational education training workforce. For the remaining teachers, as part of our commitment, we're now looking to be very focused. We could run up the numbers very easily if we're hiring in areas that are not necessarily in need, but we're now addressing the areas that are hard to staff because they're very highly paid, for example in the private sector.

I suppose I'll look back over to Mr Dreher in terms of our strategy for hiring those teachers in the future.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister. I just reiterate what you're saying that the need for teachers now is in specific areas, so to put a date on when that will happen would be highly optimistic. The main thing that we'll be doing is focusing on the areas that the minister has already outlined where we need teachers. It's not just a macro number now; they're in specific skill areas and they're not always easy to recruit

Mr ELLIS - It's probably worth noting as well that the federal government has been working really closely with the states around the opportunities that we have to grow our vocational education training workforce. That's things like qualifications reform so that we can encourage more people to come off the tools and come into the classroom. It's working together to identify with industry how we can better support them to identify often the best people that are in their businesses, who might then want to come and work with TAFE. That's been a big part of the reason why our hi-vis army has been really focused on working with industry bodies to increase our teaching workforce across the vocational education training system.

There's significant work that's being done with TAFE, with the federal government and with our partner industry associations so that we can address some of those challenging areas. That's why, now that we've had this big uplift in teachers and teacher equivalents, we're much more focused now on being targeted and smart so that we can deliver the teachers that Tasmanians need so that they can get a job.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can I talk to you about the youth jobs strategy? I noticed that you and Jo Palmer released that recently. Can you tell me more about that work in that space and also what the government is aiming to achieve with it?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs, and thank you again for your commitment to the young people in Tasmania, both in this place and as a private citizen, young people are our future. I think your work is just so commendable.

Earlier the minister, Ms Palmer, and I released Tasmania's first ever youth jobs strategy. Young people are the future of this state, so it's critical that we're focusing on making sure the opportunities are there for them to build a life. We want to invest in them and support them to reach their potential so that we can future-proof our workforce and build a strong community.

The strategy focused on making sure the pathways are there for young Tasmanians in education, training and work, taking a comprehensive approach that builds on things that are

already working well. So far there's around \$59 million being spent on initiatives in support of the strategy. This includes our highly successful regional jobs hubs which are supporting local young people into meaningful employment, as well as important investments in school facilities and a comprehensive driver education program.

The Youth Jobs Strategy has some key targets that will measure our success, because we know that it's hard to achieve what you're not measuring. By 2030 we want to see Tassie increase the level of young people aged 20 to 24 who are engaged in employment, education and training to at least the national average. We want to increase the proportion of young people aged 20 to 24 with a successful year 12 completion or Certificate III or above to at least the national average, because those trade qualifications are equally as valid.

We want to reduce the proportion of young people aged 15 to 24 not in employment, education, or training - you might hear me say 'NEET' - to at or below the national average. We want to increase the mental health and wellbeing of our young people, which is the personal wellbeing index, to at least the national average. We want to increase the ratio of entry level roles to available candidates to the national average.

That's a big challenge for us to work together with our industry partners across the economy in the private sector. As I mentioned, we'll be working closely with local industry as part of this, because they need to have the confidence to invest in our young people, which has the benefit of attracting and retaining a skilled workforce that they need while improving productivity and participation across the economy.

I also thank all the contributors to this process. There were more than 200 consultation interviews and structured forums with employers, community and not-for-profit organisations, industry peak bodies, government, and of course young Tasmanians. The strategy is available online. I might look to Mr Hollingsworth if there's anything further to add, because I know how passionate you are about this process.

Mr HOLLINGSWORTH - Not really a lot else to add, but I encourage everyone to read the strategy and continue to engage in the conversation.

Ms DOW - Minister, in the Budget there is \$11.3 million in the 2024-25 financial year earmarked ask being for facility upgrades and in relation to the transition fund. Some of this, I think, dates back to the 2021 election where you made commitments around regional TAFE upgrades. Can you outline what this capital funding will be allocated to?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass to Mr Dreher to provide further information about those.

Mr DREHER - Thank you. \$11.5 million is not a number I have for anything, but I can talk more generally. Money included an additional \$1.5 million for the Freer Farm Agricultural Centre of Excellence, which is nearing completion at the moment. There was money in there for the health hub at Alanvale. That's a hub for all the health and care industries that has currently commenced and is in the process of being built, as is the taypani Learner Hub, which is in the process of being built at Alanvale. The planning for Devonport and Burnie is currently happening with architects at the moment. That will come on board shortly. Also there was regional access - sorry, money for the north-west and north of the state for equipment specifically, that \$7 million is almost fully expended, and has resulted in significant equipment upgrades in Burnie, Devonport and in Launceston.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Dow, are we talking about the capital grants TasTAFE facilities upgrade and transition fund, which is \$11.25 million? Is that the one?

Ms DOW - Yes, the \$11.3 million. That's what I said.

Mr ELLIS - That's cool, just making sure we're all on the same page.

Ms DOW - You've also outlined in the budget investment in schools and trade training and VET programs through schools. In some of the rural and regional parts of Tasmania, is there a view to work closely with TasTAFE around those facilities? I had thought in 2021 you'd earmarked funding to improve regional access, for example, on the west coast or on the east coast. Can you outline to me whether that will be done in partnership through schools or whether that will be done through the regional jobs hubs project?

Mr ELLIS - The investment in terms of schools is one for the Education minister, but absolutely, we're committed to working closely with our schools so that we can deliver the best outcomes for learners in the community.

Ms DOW - Don't you think it makes sense though, with such scarce resources, that you should be looking to where you can provide asset upgrades in regional communities so that there could be dual purpose or dual use across those educational campuses for the likes of TasTAFE to provide offerings as well, rather than duplicating things in rural and regional communities?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, for sure.

Ms DOW - That's something that you're looking at?

Mr ELLIS - Yes. That's part of the reason why we work closely with Education on the Youth Jobs Strategy, because that is the critical time for a young person - the transition from school into the world of work. We're making sure that they've got the facilities that they need at school and also that they get the learning that they'll need for a job in the future, and that they'll be able to connect in with those further and higher educational opportunities too. In terms of the specific investments, obviously they'll be led by DECYP, but they'll be strongly supported by us and industry as well, because we need to be making sure the training is relevant.

Mr BAYLEY - In light of the rising skills shortages, how does the government intend to boost funding for TasTAFE to meet future workplace demands and ensure that students across the state in all regional areas have access to quality future-ready vocational training?

Mr ELLIS - This is where we're looking to invest. We need to make sure that we have a strong pipeline of workers coming through. Tasmania has been successful in terms of growing our skills base in recent years, but we know that there's more investment that needs to happen. It's working with TAFE, obviously, but it's also working with industry bodies and our RTOs who provide one in two of the courses that happen in Tasmania.

Our High Vis Army project is a great example whereby we're working in an area of some of the most acute skill shortages that we have in Tasmania and around the country so that we

can unlock the experience that those different industry bodies and their RTOs and GTOs have on delivering great outcomes for the community. This is something that we talk about at national skills ministers meetings quite a bit - no one part of the economy can do all the heavy lifting. It can't just be individual businesses, it can't just be government and it can't just be industries as a whole. We've all got to work together so that we can deliver those outcomes to address the skill shortage.

We are having good success and expanding our Hi Vis Army program, for example, into taking into account the Electrical and Communications Association and the Master Plumbers is an important part of that. We need to continue to invest. That's why we need to have that real posture of backing in these industries, backing in TAFE with investments in new facilities and new teachers, and continuing to grow that training capability.

Mr BAYLEY - Can you commit? It's a competitive space, obviously, with the private RTOs, and we really need TAFE to remain a cornerstone of education in the state. Can you commit to increasing funding over time to make sure that it holds its place as the cornerstone of VET in Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - In our world, the learner is at the centre, so the learner is the focus. Ensuring that we're investing in TAFE so that they can meet the needs of learners and they're an attractive place for learners to go and get those qualifications is critical. Whatever the choices that learners are making around the pathways that they want to go down, for example, if you want a career in seafood or maritime training, then most of that is provided outside of TAFE. That's where the opportunities are. Similarly with transport and logistics. Whatever the choices those learners are making, we want to be backing them with funding that follows them and the choices that they make.

That being said, TAFE is a real cornerstone when it comes to delivering the training that we need. Say, for example, trades. I mean, I'm a plumber and Grant's a chef. There are a whole bunch of those vocational trades for which TAFE is perfect, because it's capital intensive and it also takes a long while to get people through a four-year apprenticeship. Continuing to invest in those key areas is important, but we also need to be really targeted. We need to be investing in areas that are going to help address those skill shortages and that are going to give learners the best opportunity to grow and thrive. We don't want to be providing courses that are dead ends. We want to be providing courses that are in areas of need and areas of growth. Getting that balance right is important. We mentioned the Cyber Security Training Centre - it might be a good opportunity, Grant, to talk about that as an area of growing need where we need to continue to invest in TAFE.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister. We need to look at cyber and technology, I think, on a vertical and a horizontal axis, and certainly our Cyber Security Centre will have a little bit of a vertical axis. More importantly, we'll be looking at how we role and skill Tasmania's workforce in this really important space. It hasn't been done until we started doing it last year at a Certificate IV level.

We're also delivering the Essential Eight programs and looking at what it is as far as how you use technology - whether that's AI, whether that's other types of ChatGPT - across your industry to do better than what you're doing. In reference to what the minister has said, that again is quite an expensive place to work in, but it's a great space for TAFE to be. We've opened

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that centre here in Hobart, and we're looking at how we roll those programs out across the state now.

Ms JOHNSTON - Minister, if I can take you back to those 31 teacher positions that are still yet to be filled. Could you give a breakdown on the areas of expertise that you're trying to recruit those positions for?

Mr ELLIS - That'll depend on the demand in the future -

Ms JOHNSTON - Or currently.

Mr ELLIS - But I might be able to provide a sense of what those areas might be, rather than if they're broken down by individual -

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm assuming you're trying to actively recruit for them now, so you should be able to give me an indication of what those areas you're actively recruiting for are?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, absolutely, the areas, I'll pass over to Mr Dreher.

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister. The key areas we're recruiting into at the moment are licensed trades. As has been mentioned, electrotechnology, plumbing and construction are probably the key three areas we're recruiting into at the moment in the trade space. Also, there's a shortage in the care industry, so nursing and it's called individual support, but that covers aged care and disability. Again, in the technology area, we're looking at teachers in that area.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you have numbers for each of those industry areas? In the electrical trades area, for instance, how many are you trying to recruit in that particular area? How many are you trying to recruit in aged care?

Mr DREHER - No, we don't have numbers for that.

Ms JOHNSTON - Right. Can I just get clarification, finally, on an answer you gave beforehand. Minister, you mentioned that 69 had been recruited already against that 100 objective. Can I just clarify, I think you said that 24 of those 69 teachers are now just teachers doing more teaching, is that correct? So the actual number of new teachers is 45?

Mr ELLIS - It's important that we're getting this right. We've employed an additional 69 FTE teacher equivalents, so that's 45 new people and it's also unlocking the equivalent of 24 new teachers because they're now delivering more training for Tasmanian learners as well. It's 69 all up, and that's been a part of that growth that we've had, as well as those teachers doing more training and so getting paid to do more as well.

Ms DOW - Minister, how many free TAFE places were offered to private providers in 2024?

Mr ELLIS - I might have provided the answer to that in 2023, so let me just double check I got that right. TAFE was allocated 3400 fee-free places in 2024. I might pass over to the team from Skills Tasmania in terms of the broader number, if we have that available.

Ms DOW - If you'd like we can pop it on notice, if that's easier.

Mr ELLIS - I think we should be able to find it.

Ms DOW - My next question, minister, is why were these places provided to private providers when my understanding is TAFE is short of places?

Mr ELLIS - We've had a really strong uptake in terms of TAFE. I spoke before about the fact that there are significant parts of our economy that don't have TAFE coverage because they're provided by industry bodies. For example, if you're in marine training, and this was an area that we spoke about quite extensively with the former minister, if you're in marine training, if you're in transport and logistics, if we're only funding TAFE, you're not funding any of those learners and so we had strong support from the federal Labor government to ensure that we're meeting the needs of all learners, that they're at the centre of those of that training that's being provided.

There are training places that are provided as part of the broader economy, the care economy is another strong example where a very large percentage of training places are actually provided by non-TAFE providers. It's about making sure that those choices of those learners, whether it's industry or provider, are respected, funded and supported. But look, I'll look over to the team -

Ms DOW - Are you concerned, minister, though that enrolment numbers are dropping off post-COVID, but also surely there is potential to enrol more students if they were offered those free areas of course work at TasTAFE. I'm sure you could increase the numbers -

Mr ELLIS - All those students are enrolled, regardless of where they go. So that's the thing, it's about funding the learner. So, if the learner chooses to go to a private RTO and receive fee-free training, then that should be a choice that is supported and particularly if they're in industries that TAFE doesn't have coverage of, I think it would be deeply inequitable for us to say if you work on salmon farms, you can't get fee-free TAFE, if you work in trucking you can't get fee-free TAFE and -

Ms DOW - I am not suggesting that. I was asking a question about the potential for TasTAFE.

Mr ELLIS - But that would be the consequence of denying those learners the opportunity to receive funding.

Ms CAIRNEY - Through you, minister, there were actually zero RTO places funded in 2024. There were some in tranche one in 2023, which the minister provided the numbers for.

Ms DOW - A final question?

CHAIR - Noting the time, I will move to Mr Bayley because we are about to run out of time.

Mr BAYLEY - Final question: in terms of the 2021 commitment, around 100 jobs, we've had extensive conversation across the table about that 69 FTE, including I guess 24 who have been bumped up to full time. That leaves 31 underneath the commitment of 100. You are

recruiting. Can you confirm that you're recruiting to meet that 100 full-time equivalent position target? Does that still stand that you are recruiting and trying to fill another 31 positions?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, but we're working, as we say, in a more targeted way. Rather than going out and being really scattergun, we're being much more focused. We expect it will probably take us a little bit more time because highly experienced electrical trainers, for example, don't grow on trees.

Mr BAYLEY - I understand that. So the target stands: you are still trying to get to 100 and is that fully funded in the Budget to meet that commitment?

Mr ELLIS - We're working through as far as delivery of this process. I'll pass over to Mr Dreher in terms of the sense of the timeframe that we might have. I mean, we've sort of already provided evidence that it will depend on who becomes available and some of that broader national work. Is there anything further you want to add?

Mr DREHER - Thank you, minister, only to reiterate that we are very specific in the type of skills that we need now. It's not just a broad brush let's get 100. It's very important that we get the skills in the areas -

Mr BAYLEY - I understand that, but through you, minister, the aspiration is still to meet that 100 target and that it is funded.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we'll continue to work through as far as providing funding as those teachers come online and become available to us. So yeah, we've got a strong target to recruit 100 and we think that there are some big opportunities to continue to work together but noting that now is the time to have that change in approach. We've had the broad uplift across TAFE's teaching capability and now we need to be more targeted and more, I suppose, discerning in terms of the different areas that we're looking to recruit for. So, that'll depend on the Tasmanian economy and what courses are in demand and where teachers become available.

CHAIR - The time for screening has expired. The next portfolio to appear before the committee is the Minister for Housing and Planning.

The Committee suspended from 1.16 p.m. to 2 p.m.

DIVISION 9

(Housing and Planning)

CHAIR - The scrutiny of the Housing and Planning portfolio will now begin. I welcome the minister and other witnesses to the committee. I invite the minister to introduce persons at the table, including names and positions, for the benefit of Hansard.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair, and great to be here with you. At the table with me currently, to my right, I've got Ms Eleri Morgan-Thomas, chief executive officer, Homes Tasmania. We've got Ms Jessemy Stone, director, Housing Policy and Programs, and Mr Richard Gilmore, director, Community Infrastructure. To my left on the end, we've got Mr Mathew Healey, acting deputy secretary, Policy and Intergovernmental Relations, and to my immediate left, Dr Anthony Reid, my chief of staff, who won't be taking questions.

PUBLIC

CHAIR - Thank you, minister. The time schedule for the Estimates of the Minister for Housing and Planning is four hours. Would the minister like to make an opening statement?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Chair. Our government recognises that every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head, which is precisely why our 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy and Housing Action Plan 2023-2027 sets out our plan for safe, appropriate and affordable housing for our state. Importantly, we've set clear and ambitious housing supply targets of an increase of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 30 June 2032. We've made substantial gains in the delivery of 10,000 social and affordable homes goal with an increase of 3696 social and affordable homes as at the end of July 2024. We're well on track to deliver our significant commitments. We're at a third of the target in a third of the time.

However, our government recognises that more needs to be done. As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, we've stamped out stamp duty with a 100 per cent discount for houses up to \$750,000 for first home buyers, a saving for first home buyers of \$28,900, making it easier for around 1500 young Tasmanians to get into the property market. We've also cut stamp duty in half for Tasmanians who buy an apartment off the plan or under construction up to the value of \$750,000 for two years.

We are delivering on our commitment of 10,000 more social and affordable homes by 2032, which will further increase our housing supply, drive the Tasmanian economy and activate critical, valuable and rewarding jobs in our construction sector. An important part of our 2030 Strong Plan is to lock in Tasmania's position as the best place to live, work and raise a family in the nation. That means backing more Tasmanians to invest in property and more support for renting families with the cost of living. That is what we're doing through boosting our Private Rental Incentive Scheme with an additional 200 homes. We need more houses, apartments and units for Tasmanians to live in or to rent, and every single one of these measures will turn plans into reality sooner.

It also requires a planning framework that supports sensible and sustainable development through a consistent set of rules, and without local government politics blocking developments that our state needs.

Dr BROAD - In this accompanying document, Tasmanian Budget Overview, if you go to page 11, we'll see that under the More Affordable Rentals headline, it says:

We're building a record number of new houses, with more than 3000 delivered in the last four years.

How can you argue that you've delivered 3000 houses in the last four years?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly, homes would be -

Dr BROAD - I am going very specific to the language that's in your document. It says:

We are building a record number of new houses, with more than 3000 delivered in the last four years.

Mr ELLIS - Yes. Certainly, we're looking to deliver more homes and that's generally the language we use. I'm just checking with Ms Morgan-Thomas in terms of that particular

language. When we talk about the opportunities, it's usually around 'homes' and that makes up a broad range of different things.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - At the end of July 2024, we had 1801 social housing and supported accommodation. They were -

Dr BROAD - That's come from your latest update. I agree with that, but this is the budget document that describes this government delivering 3000 houses. That's very specific language. Why is it that the budget document appears to be very misleading in the language that it's used?

Mr ELLIS - Generally speaking, we use the term 'homes'.

Dr BROAD - I'm not talking about what you generally do. I am talking about this very specific line in your own budget document that is woefully inaccurate. 'New houses', it says.

Mr ELLIS - We'll take some advice and get a clearer picture on it and follow up. Generally speaking, we use the term 'homes', rather than 'houses'. I'm sure people can see why that oversight might have happened. If we need to update, I'm happy to do that as well.

Dr BROAD - The problem that we have is that you're claiming that you've gotten to a third of your target in a third of the time, your target being 10 000 social and affordable homes.

Mr ELLIS - Correct.

Dr BROAD - Your budget document is going even further and saying, '3000 houses', which is not true. We can go over the actual breakdown of what you're counting in your target. You're counting crisis units, you're counting purchases, you're counting so-called affordable residential lots. It seems like they're misleading -

Mr ELLIS - You don't support affordable land supply?

Dr BROAD - You're claiming that you're going to build 10 000 houses. That's how it started.

Mr ELLIS - What do you think goes on an affordable housing a lot?

Dr BROAD - I'll get to the affordable housing lots a bit later, but that's very concerning -

Mr ELLIS - That's what goes on in a home.

Dr BROAD - I'm very concerned and you have to build one in two years.

Mr ELLIS - How does -

Dr BROAD - Well, we can get into that. You're trying to be argumentative.

Mr ELLIS - I'm just saying the fact. That's what happens when you have housing lots. Homes go on them.

Dr BROAD - We can get to that one later. I'm just very concerned about the language that you're using. For example, the one highlight for me in the Budget was Bethlehem House. That's not a line item in your budget but that was very good. How many beds at Bethlehem House from that recently announced funding will you count as part of your 10 000 homes promise?

Mr ELLIS - You're right, it is an important investment. We include crisis accommodation for an important reason: that we need to take action across the whole housing spectrum, so investing in crisis accommodation is important. I would have thought that would be something the opposition would support. It's also it's also a big investment in terms of those beds because they have a lot of wrap-around support. They're not a large number, but they're a significant investment. If we weren't counting crisis and accommodation as part of our KPIs, I would have thought the people would be pretty disappointed that we weren't doing that. I'll pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas in terms of the number of beds and the counting treatment but it is an important investment.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Firstly, can I just clarify whether you're talking about old Bethlehem House or New Bethlehem House?

Dr BROAD - The old Bethlehem House.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The repurposed one?

Dr BROAD - Yes, the repurpose.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I can get the number for you but I believe it is around -

Dr BROAD - It's 36 or something.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Something like that, yes.

Dr BROAD - Have they already been counted towards your target?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Not yet, no.

Dr BROAD - Will they be counted towards your target?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I expect so.

Dr BROAD - Will they then be removed in three years' time when the refurbishment starts? It's only a temporary measure.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, if they come offline, yes.

Dr BROAD - So, then you will actually reduce your target by 36. I think the number's 36, but whatever it is, you'll then reduce your target.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - They wouldn't be counted if they're not able to have people in them.

Mr ELLIS - Because it's 10 000 net, so it fluctuates from time to time.

Dr BROAD - But whatever figure actually ends up being funded, you'll count them in your target temporarily until they're removed.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - As we do when we are - as the minister correctly says, it is a net number, so if we have a public housing property that we can no longer use for public housing and we knock it down and redevelop it, it's the net number that is added to the target, not the gross.

Ms BURNET - I want to just talk about short-stay accommodation. It's clear that short-stay accommodation is driving down vacancy rates across the state and it's making it hard for Tasmanians to afford housing. You promised to introduce a 5 per cent levy on short-stay accommodations. Could you explain to the committee the progress that's been made in introducing this? And is it just about revenue-raising or is it a real approach to try and solve some of the housing issues?

Mr ELLIS - This is a matter for the Minister for Finance, but I can probably provide a broad update for you. We're working to deliver that commitment. It's an important part of our commitment. You talk about the revenue. That's actually really important because the revenue for this is committed towards stamping out stamp duty for first home buyers. We think it delivers on that key process. Ensuring that short-stay accommodation providers are paying their fair share and also providing cost-of-living relief to everyday Tasmanians - young couples, for example - who are looking to buy their first time. That's a saving of about \$28,900 for someone who's purchasing a \$750,000 house, which is part of what you're eligible for.

As I say, broadly speaking, that matter is a matter for the Minister for Finance, but certainly, we have other planning considerations around short stay.

Ms BURNET - There's a chronically low vacancy rate in Hobart - it's 1.1 per cent. In Launceston, it's 1 per cent, and in Burnie, it's 0.7 per cent.

Mr ELLIS - Which doesn't necessarily relate to short stay, but -

Ms BURNET - Yes, but it does have an impact. There are 29 councils, and I have recently done a survey of local government elected representatives. About 50 per cent who responded said that short stay needs to be reined in. That's what they're concerned about. I'm wondering what more your government will do to rein in short-stay accommodation and whole homes?

Mr ELLIS - We're supporters of short stay and the sharing economy. Interestingly enough, Nick McKim in his first speech to the federal parliament was a huge supporter of short stay, but I suppose those things only last for so long as they're convenient for the Greens.

Ms BURNET - It's about whole homes that we're talking about.

PUBLIC

Mr ELLIS - Sure. Tasmania's got one of the clearest planning policies in Australia on short-stay accommodation. We have flexible planning rules that are supported by data collection to inform local policy.

Our approach is fair. It's consistent. It's simple to administer and easier to police than jurisdictions which place a limit, for example, on the number of nights the short-stay accommodation can operate a year. Any council that's got a case to support further limit on short-stay accommodation can apply local restrictions with the approval of the Independent Tasmanian Planning Commission, but in support of our balanced planning -

Ms BURNET - It doesn't work very well, minister. I've been there. It doesn't work very well at all to rein it in.

Mr ELLIS - Perhaps you might like to elaborate in terms of why your council fell short, Ms Burnet.

Ms BURNET - We were told one thing by the minister and when we took it to the commission, it wasn't a matter of falling short at Hobart council, it was a matter of, 'Well, actually, those rules don't apply'.

Mr ELLIS - Without further detail, I can't really comment, but certainly, we support our balanced planning regulations. We'll also seek to incentivise the return of some properties to the longer-term rental market to boost housing supply. Through our 2030 Strong Plan, we're extending land tax exemptions for those that switch from short-stay accommodation to longer-term rental.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, under the first round of the Housing Australia Future Fund, my understanding is that Tasmanian bidders were granted funding for approximately 479 homes, which is great. I understand that government housing bodies and other jurisdictions have done well through this funding as well. Did Homes Tasmania put in bids to access the Housing Australia Future Fund, and, if so, how many of these bids were successful?

Mr ELLIS - We did, and I have to say at the outset, I was pretty disappointed with how we went. We didn't receive funding for very many projects at all, and there was strong success in Tasmania, as you noted - about 500, which is about 3 per cent of the total funds across the country, as opposed to about 2 per cent, which is what Tasmania's population is.

Homes Tasmania supported one of the projects through one of our community housing providers, but we did come up short in a range of different areas or for a range of different projects. That's really disappointing, and certainly we are looking to review why that was. You said that some housing providers did well and that's true. Others didn't. Victoria, I think I'm right in saying, was not successful with any of their applications, but we need to examine that. We need to probably take ownership of it as well, I would say. It would be very easy to say, 'Well, the Commonwealth should have funded us'. I think there's an opportunity for us to say, 'Okay, why did we miss the mark?', particularly if it's quite competitive nationally. Do we need to look at things like delivery in terms of value for money or the scope of projects.

Some of the successful bidders did do really well in Tasmania in terms of cost to deliver. They probably had a different approach to what Homes Tasmania took. I might pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas to provide a further update in terms of how.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - At the current moment we are unable to find out much detail about that. The Commonwealth has put non-disclosure requirements on successful bidders, so we only know about the unsuccessful projects around the country. We do not have very much information. We are scheduled to get feedback in early October and we will be examining that very carefully. As the minister says, we will be going through what worked and what didn't work.

Mr O'BYRNE - When you say you have come up short, how many were successful?

Mr ELLIS - Noting the non-disclosure, what might we be able to provide?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We understand that there are -

Mr O'BYRNE - I am talking about Homes Tasmania's bids.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We had two types of bids. We had one where we were 100 per cent in by ourselves, and we had about the same number where we were partnering with a community housing provider. One of those has been successful across two projects.

Mr O'BYRNE - So, none of the Homes Tasmania bids were successful?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No.

Mr O'BYRNE - How many bids were there?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It was a total of 882 dwellings, which was well over what they were ever going to fund. That included our bids with community housing providers; that wasn't just our bids. Our bids were 483.

Mr O'BYRNE - The fund has been promoted as a ticket to get homes out of the ground and you have not been successful. That's pretty disappointing.

Mr ELLIS - We mentioned the partnership arrangements that we have, noting the non-disclosure agreements and all that sort of stuff. Generally, we put up some pretty good bids. Absolutely, it is disappointing that we weren't more successful in terms of the bids that Homes Tasmania were putting up wholly and solely. This is round one of that and it will be important as far as round two that we're really reviewing what did and didn't work as far as round one and finding the right balance with some of the projects that we're putting up, for example, are we putting up projects that are absolutely shovel ready?

I think that was a high priority for the Commonwealth - they wanted to basically fund things that were virtually ready to go, as opposed to some that are in the development process, but that all depends as well as far as round two. It has been an interesting process as you know in terms of the announcement of this grant round. We are still not quite sure what exactly has been successful around the country, but once we get a clearer steer on that we'll be able to better tailor approach to meet some of the needs that the Commonwealth is trying to deliver. I might just pass to Ms Morgan-Thomas again.

PUBLIC

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In Tasmania we believed there were about 1500 dwellings submitted across the board. Since the announcement to unsuccessful providers, I have discovered there are another couple of hundred we didn't know anything about. Tasmania was very well represented; it was massively oversubscribed.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, what is the state government doing to ensure that the significant social housing portfolio remains well maintained, and that tenants are comfortable and satisfied with our social housing homes?

Mr ELLIS - Our government's committed to ensuring that social housing tenants are provided with quality homes that are well maintained, and to providing the quality property that all Tasmanians expect. Our government inherited a \$90 million backlog of maintenance in 2014 from the former Labor-Greens government when they lost office. Since then, our government has invested more than \$300 million in social housing maintenance from July 2014 to June 2023. As part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, the 2024-25 Budget provides \$20 million over four years for maintenance upgrades of social housing properties in the Homes Tasmania portfolio. That's over and above our government's existing investment on maintenance for social housing properties.

In the previous financial year, Homes Tasmania has expanded a total of \$29.76 million on maintenance. Importantly, this includes Homes Tasmania's maintenance on upgrades of energy efficiency, with the work valued at \$4.13 million. This supports tenant satisfaction surveys that have shown that Homes Tasmania tenant satisfaction rose from 73 per cent in 2021 to 75 per cent in the most recent survey from 2023. Homes Tasmania tenant satisfaction with thermal comfort and energy efficiency were the highest in the nation. Chair, that's a great result, but we aren't being complacent. Homes Tasmania are getting on with further maintenance and upgrades across the portfolio to ensure that our social housing tenants have the quality of housing that we and all Tasmanians expect.

Dr BROAD - What's the most up-to-date number of total social housing dwellings in Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - This is now publicly available in terms of our housing dashboard. This is the July housing dashboard.

Dr BROAD - I have a figure from 30 June 2023, which is 14,605.

Mr ELLIS - Are you talking about the total social housing dwelling numbers? Sorry, I was thinking you meant the 10,000 target. That's cool. Do we have that data available?

Dr BROAD - On your page 16, you have 2023, the same figures that I have, but you haven't got - you don't have a more up to date figure?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - There is a time lag in the report on government services, because we send the data into the Commonwealth, and they return it to us in about January.

Dr BROAD - We can go on the figures you have, then. In the latest dashboard, you claimed that at the end of July 2024 you completed 1801 social housing and supportive accommodation in the last four years, when the actual number has only risen by 793. How is that possible? Those two figures don't equate. Even if you look at your own table on page 16.

In 2020 there are 13,812. In 2023 there are 14,605, and yet you've claimed that you've completed 1801. Those two figures don't equate.

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - There's a few things going on with the report on government services. The way it reports, there are a lot of small organisations that hold properties on our behalf. Some of those don't report. We have a big push at the end of every year to get particularly the smaller community housing providers to put in their data. Some of those are missing data. We have that problem coming through every year. We had a big push on finishing a number of properties that were delivered, the 1500 that we had a target for the 30 June 2023. A large number of those properties got delivered in the first three months of the financial year, so, they wouldn't have been counted. So, those numbers are correct. We have lost a couple where we've redeveloped some properties, but it's pretty small. It's a relative, like I said, it's on and off. So, there's a number small number of properties that we've removed from the count because we've redeveloped them.

Dr BROAD - The other problem is that we're not seeing a reduction in the wait list. So, both the wait list isn't dropping and the time on the wait list isn't dropping and yet you're claiming that you've done 1800 and there's no drop.

Mr ELLIS - Probably the important thing to note there is it's not necessarily a wait list. It's actually a register of people that are eligible. So, that can include -

Dr BROAD - Semantics.

Mr ELLIS - Well, it's not, because anyone can go on the list if they're eligible and, for example, that includes people that are already in secure housing. There's a range of different factors that affect the number of people that are on the housing register. But the important thing there as well is that we do need to continue to invest, because there are people that are seeking more long-term housing support. And so that's exactly why there's half a billion dollars in the budget for building more homes.

That's why we have a target of 10,000 and it's part of the reason why, as well, we take action across the housing spectrum, because not everybody on that list will ultimately go into a social house. They may find opportunities in terms of the private rental market and things like that. So, if we're able to support people into different housing outcomes that support them despite the fact that they may be eligible to be on the housing register, that's a good result. But look, I'll pass back to the team from Homes Tasmania if there's anything further.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The housing register is going, but what we can see is that the rate of is going up but the rate of growth is slowing, which is a good sign. We also know that our ability to allocate into social housing is a lot of that comes from vacancies of people leaving and going and doing something else. So, we've seen since before COVID fewer and fewer people moving out of social housing.

So, what used to happen, you would have people, the average age length of a tenancy would have been six or seven years. Now, they're much longer, people aren't moving out. That affects our ability to move people in, so there's a few things going on, and there's a lot of people under pressure in the private rental market who we know, if Commonwealth rent assistance was higher, would probably be able to stay there if there were subsidies for the private rental market.

It's not just a social, some people just have an affordability problem. Other people need more support or they're older in age, so they're unlikely to be able to sustain private rental in the long term. We know there's different things that you need across the system.

Dr BROAD - The problem I've got is that you have a government that's patting themselves on the back, saying you've got to a third of the 10,000 homes target. We've got Homes Tasmania saying that 1800 have been delivered. We have a Budget document that says 3000 new houses have been delivered, and yet what we see is we don't see a reduction in homelessness. We don't see a reduction in the social wait list and, in fact, the highest priority wait list has gone up from July 24 to September 24. It's gone from, in your figures, 584 up to 704. I would imagine if you had actually delivered 1801 homes then that number for the highest priority -

Mr ELLIS - Dr Broad, are you saying that those social homes don't exist?

Dr BROAD - Well, I don't know, where are they? Why?

Mr ELLIS - Well, they are in our communities.

Dr BROAD - I mean, why isn't it having an impact? So, because you're asking everything, from blocks of land -

Mr ELLIS - Well, no. Social housing, that's a discrete number in there. That's quite particular, and all of those homes exist and I think it's quite surprising that you would say that there would be some kind of -

Dr BROAD - Well, they don't have people in them. Why aren't they reducing the list?

Mr ELLIS - We've got a very high rate of occupancy. But, Dr Broad, I think I mentioned before around the eligibility matter for the register. The other thing as well is that you know that we're a third of the target and a third of the time - that means that quite clearly we've got two thirds to go and, that two thirds, that's a significant uplift. That's, you know -

Dr BROAD - You can talk about that, but why isn't it having an impact on the wait lists, on homelessness?

Mr ELLIS - Well Ms Morgan-Thomas just mentioned that the rate of growth has slowed. So, I mean, yeah, that's quite clearly - we're starting to have an impact. We need to do more -

Dr BROAD - You said 3000-what?

Mr ELLIS - 3696.

Dr BROAD - Three six nine six and we're only seeing a rate of slowing -

Mr ELLIS - Well, that is why the target is 10,000, not 3696, because we need to continue to invest.

Dr BROAD - Don't you understand that you're not actually seeing an impact in the raw numbers?

Mr ELLIS - Well, we just talked about there is, because we're seeing a slowing rate of growth. We know that there's more that needs to be done and we've begun those significant investments. The Budget clearly lays out future investments that we're looking to make because we want to make an impact in this space, and we recognise that housing affordability is a challenge here in Tasmania and nationally.

That's why Tasmania is actually at the forefront of some of these investments. In 2022-23, Tasmania population was 2 per cent of the nation. We delivered 15 per cent of all social houses in Australia. That rate of increased growth in investment in that space is important. But we can't just leave it there. We can't just stop at 3696. We've got to continue to grow and I'll pass over to the team if there's anything further you want to add, Ms Morgan-Thomas.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, the MacPoint precinct plan has a residential development zone, as we all know, at Regatta Point and the development and the \$240 million from the federal government that's not GST exempt is actually conditional on building affordable homes on the site. The precinct plan is clear on the fact that the housing there would be a mixture of Homes Tasmania and Health department affordable housing for health workers and apartments for release on the market. Can you confirm if any of the \$240 million from the federal money has been set aside to invest in this residential development?

Mr ELLIS - Yeah, look, happy to follow up in terms of the arrangements there in this. Yeah, happy to take that notice and provide further information.

Mr BAYLEY - Well, I mean, it was conditional upon housing, that money was given to your government conditional on housing. If not, and I assume not, because we keep seeing the Premier commit it to the stadium project, how will you -?

Mr ELLIS - I wouldn't make those assumptions.

Mr BAYLEY - Well, that's what all the figures say, minister Ellis. It adds the federal \$240 million contribution into meeting the price tag of the stadium. So, it begs the question.

Mr ELLIS - Well, it is a precinct plan. I think what the Greens don't understand is that, you know, we're looking to take action across the Macquarie Point.

CHAIR - Just to try to avoid interjections. If Mr Bayley asks a question, I'm sure there might be things that the minister disagrees with, so, I will give that opportunity in the end.

Mr BAYLEY - But look, in the absence of the \$240 million - because I think you'll find that it is very clearly allocated towards the stadium - how will the residential development at Regatta Point be funded? Is there anything in this Budget for Homes Tasmania to start to do the planning work and the development work to get it up and running. It's zone 2. I acknowledge it is at stage 2.

Mr ELLIS - As I said, I'm happy to take that on notice. Unless there's anything further from the department to add.

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Mr HEALEY - No, only that the precinct plan has obviously recently been approved and released and, as the Premier said this morning, there's still a lot of work to do to understand the processes for the broader delivery on that precinct plan. It's probably, through you minister, something that could also be taken up with minister Street.

Mr BAYLEY - Well, on that, minister, you probably won't be able to answer this question. I was going to ask what will the mix of health work accommodation versus private apartments be. But what would you like to see the mix be? What would you advocate the mix of health accommodation, health worker accommodation versus private apartments be?

Mr ELLIS - Yeah, look, I've got an open mind. I've got to say that it is good that the Greens do support key worker accommodation. It's actually an important part of us taking action across the spectrum and we delivered the Fountainside facility so that we can secure the long-term future of that for healthcare workers in Tasmania. We also secured the old Aberdeen, I think the hotel used to be called, but we called the Punch Bowl facility, which is 24 new units for healthcare workers in the north as well. So, I've got an open mind. We'll address the needs as they arise. Certainly, securing Fountainside has made a material difference to our ability to provide long-term accommodation for key workers in the Hobart CBD. We'll continue to work with Homes Tasmania and the Health department on what exactly the right mix is.

Mr BAYLEY - Will you commit to retaining equity in that development at Regatta Point?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work through that, and happy to provide an update -

Mr BAYLEY - There's just the precinct plan and there's no detail behind it.

Mr ELLIS - The plan has only just been released, but I'm happy to continue to work around the specifics of it.

Mr BAYLEY - You have been working on this for a very long time.

Mr ELLIS - As I'm happy to continue to work with the Health department and Homes Tasmania around the exact mix.

Mr BAYLEY - Would you rule out gifting this prime waterfront land to a private developer just to do this development? Would you gift the land to them, or would you rule out gifting the land to a developer?

Mr ELLIS - I don't really have any specifics there, Mr Bayley. We are going to continue to work to deliver our commitment. I've said I'm happy to take on notice some of these matters, and we'll work through your specifics of your question.

Mrs PENTLAND - Before I ask my question, can I just get some clarity with the 10,000? How many of those are going to be just lots? Are we talking 2000, or -

Mr ELLIS - It all depends. In our dashboard you can see that we've got 3696, and as part of that we've delivered 411. That's about 10 per cent, but it will depend as well on the opportunities as they present. For example, if a large opportunity like Huntingfield presents itself in the future, that'll assist us to deliver some more homes through that. I've mentioned

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before that we've delivered 1417 of the 3696 social houses, 740 affordable rentals and 631 affordable home ownership as well. We'll continue to take action across the spectrum.

Affordable land sales are actually really important because a lot of Tasmanians want to be able to build their own home, and if they can access affordable land, that increases the housing supply for our state. The government's got a key role to play, particularly as a large holder of lands, Crown land for example. Mr Garland and I spoke about this the other day in parliament. If there are opportunities for us to unlock that for Tasmanian families, then we should take that. That is really good thing too, because it helps to continue to drive the investments that we can make for Homes Tasmania. Land typically has a reasonable return, and that helps us unlock further funding for us to invest in things like social housing.

Mrs PENTLAND - That was going to be my question. With the \$1.5 billion that you've allocated for the 10 years, obviously those lots of lands would be delivering revenue. Are you still committed to spending \$1.5 billion over the 10 years in housing? Where are you at now with that budget and what are you planning to spend in 2024 towards new homes?

Mr ELLIS - Yes, we're committed to that target. There are elements of action that we take across the spectrum that actually drive an income. You're right, land is one; another one is affordable home ownership, whereby we partner with first home buyers in the MyHome program. The equity that the government holds in those homes likely increases over time, and when those are sold or bought out by the homeowner, that then enables Homes Tasmania to derive an income, which drives further investment in other parts of our plan and similarly, affordable housing in general.

There are also opportunities that are not in the targets, for example, our commercial arrangement that we have with the Health department on key worker accommodation, but that's separate to the 10,000, and that's important to note. That action across the spectrum provides us further capital to inject. As part of the budget, we're delivering about \$500 million over the forward Estimates for housing through Homes Tasmania. I'll pass over to the team. Is it this current financial year that you're after the data for?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - How much will we spend this year on -

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes, and where would that see you as to the total of 1.5 billion?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So the total we are assuming is the investment - it doesn't count the land, is my understanding.

Mrs PENTLAND - That's correct.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - That is additional, but that's part of the way that we leverage the government investment to bring in other investment, whether it's shared home ownership or whether it's our ability to reinvest -

Mrs PENTLAND - I understand. We just had that conversation, that obviously the land's a revenue stream. Are you still committing to the \$1.5 billion?

Mr ELLIS - That's probably more a question for government, but absolutely. In terms of the data - Ms Morgan-Thomas?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - As of 30 June 2024, we borrowed \$266 million - all that's available to us.

Mrs PENTLAND - Yes, and then this financial year?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - \$210 million over the forward Estimates. There is -

Mr ELLIS - \$454 million to 30 June 2028.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, as you all know, the House of Assembly passed a motion calling on the government to conduct a review into Homes Tasmania. Can you please update the committee on this piece of work?

Mr ELLIS - The *Homes Tasmania Act 2022* requires that the minister initiates an independent review of Homes Tasmania as soon as practicable after the fourth anniversary of the commencement of the act. I'm currently considering the appropriate terms for an early review of the governance reporting and accountability of Homes Tasmania to make sure that it's able to deliver as intended. I note the strong interest from Mr O'Byrne in this space and appreciate the collaborative nature in terms of the design of that work.

We established Home Tasmania to ensure that we brought innovation into the pursuit of social and affordable housing in Tasmania, and establishing Homes Tasmania under an independent board is a key part of that strategy. This also needs to be balanced against the need for transparency in operations of the organisation and strong accountability to the Tasmanian community. That's absolutely vital and something that I believe really strongly in.

The independent reviewer will consider whether we have got this balance right. It will consider reporting arrangements to the minister of the day and for the community regarding strategic decisions and operations of Homes Tasmania, support for the government in terms of ongoing policy advice on social and affordable housing initiatives, and the relationship between Homes Tasmania and the building and construction industry in Tasmania too.

I'm also considering appropriate experts that could lead this review. They need to be independent, but also bring strong expertise in terms of governance and accountability. I'd also prefer that they have experience in the social and affordable housing sector. I expect to be in a position to talk further about the review over the coming weeks and look forward to updating parliament and the community very soon.

Dr BROAD - Did the government instruct Homes Tasmania to buy the Fountainside Hotel?

Mr ELLIS - In terms of an instruction, I'd just have to check in terms of the technical arrangement. Certainly, we're very strong supporters of it. There wasn't a technical instrument of direction, but certainly it was an opportunity that popped up and both the government and Homes Tasmania are very supportive of that opportunity. A big part of it is because it secures the future of Fountainside for healthcare workers.

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If we hadn't have purchased that, for example, it could have been bought by a private player and then the Health department would have to go out and buy those properties on the private rental market. That actually puts more stress on the private rental market.

We work closely with Homes Tasmania to ensure that we can secure the future of it. I'll pass to Ms Morgan-Thomas to maybe talk further about it.

Dr BROAD - Who actually made the decision?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The Homes Tasmania board formally made the decision because it's over my delegation. It was an idea that Homes Tasmania took to government as opposed to the other way around. First, with the Punchbowl property - the Aberdeen Motel that the minister mentioned earlier - that's where we first did some feasibility testing with Health. Would this work for them? Because we'd been working with them over issues in Launceston for a while.

Then when the Fountainside property came on the market, we did further feasibility testing with Health around that and realised the value of doing the thing. It was the other way around.

Dr BROAD - Where in the corporate plan does it talk about purchasing accommodation for medical workers in Hobart?

Mr ELLIS - It's certainly in the second reading speech of the *Homes Tasmania Act*, so it's -

Dr BROAD - No, it talked about regional Tasmania, not Hobart.

Mr ELLIS - No, it talks about key worker accommodation in the second reading, in the speech.

Dr BROAD - Regional Tasmania.

Mr ELLIS - It clearly talks about key worker accommodation. I am surprised that Labor are opposing this now because I would have thought that -

Dr BROAD - Colony 47 was the second buyer. Was the government aware that Colony 47 was also interested in the property?

Mr ELLIS - We were aware that there was some interest. It's about finding the right balance. There's healthcare workers in there currently, and prior to the sale. Working through the right properties in the right location, Fountainside is 50 beds literally right next door to the Royal Hobart Hospital and currently has healthcare workers in it. That's a really good outcome for health care in Tasmania.

Dr BROAD - It's also right next to an area where people are sleeping rough.

Mr ELLIS - There are other opportunities in terms of facilities but Fountainside, you can partly tell because Health was in there prior to the sale. It is the perfect opportunity in terms of housing key healthcare workers. That's why we're strongly supportive in terms of that use.

There are, of course, other facilities we provide support for in Hobart CBD and in other locations around Hobart for crisis accommodation, for example, and continue to work closely with Colony 47 and other community partners so that we can deliver those. But I've got very strong support in the community for the decision to purchase the Fountainside and secure that for key workers. It just makes sense and it's a really important investment in the future of health care in our state. I'll pass to the team from Homes Tas if there's anything further to add.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - When we were going through the purchase price, you never actually know who you're bidding against. We knew that Colony 47 was interested but, looking at their balance sheet, did not think that was likely to be a viable option. Maybe it was. I don't know. We were very concerned that somebody else would come along and purchase it, so in our analysis, who the other buyers might be, some of those included hotel operators or investors who'd hold it for a long period of time but wouldn't necessarily guarantee to, we don't even know whether they would want to continue leasing it to Health.

We were concerned about the impact on the private rental market, noting how tight vacancy rates are and knowing, from our experience in Launceston, where Health had secured a lot of properties on the private rental market, what the likely impact was, and we put in what we thought was a very competitive bid.

Mr ELLIS - Just to add to the answer in terms of the first part of your question, page 7 of the Homes Tasmania Corporate Plan 2023-2026:

Housing is central to Tasmania's ambitions for growth and continued economic prosperity. Providing sufficient housing for our key workers, including those in critical frontline roles, for example, teachers and healthcare professionals and a surge of seasonal workers in areas such as tourism, agriculture and mining, is fundamental to the state's future.

Dr BROAD - Which document are you reading from?

Mr ELLIS - From the corporate plan 2023-26.

Dr BROAD - Is the government also considering purchasing accommodation for other sectors, such as police and teachers, and that being the responsibility of Homes Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - We think we've got a great opportunity there. Other jurisdictions have government housing providers and it enables those departments you mentioned before, Health, Education, DPfEM, to focus on what they do well, which is keeping the community safe, educating our kids, providing health care. And then Homes Tas has a specific and excellent skill set in terms of asset management and providing those kinds of services in a housing sense. We're continuing to work with different partners across government because Homes Tasmania is very experienced in that space, if we can provide further support.

Another example from another jurisdiction is Defence Housing Australia, which operates separate to Defence itself because that's not what Defence does.

Dr BROAD - Defence aren't buying houses for teachers, though.

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Mr ELLIS - Well, they need to buy houses for people that work in defence. So, there is a separate body that provides housing people in our ADF.

We think that there's opportunities to take action across the spectrum and we'll work with our partner agencies.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In the action plan from 2023-27, item 4.13 is:

Explore options to centralise procurement and management of rental accommodation for relevant State Service employees.

That comes from some discussions that we've been having with departmental heads around, in one location you might have Education has some houses, Police have some, Health has some. They might not have the right configuration. We know from managing a large housing portfolio that it's all very well waiting for a property that's a two-bedroom house when all you have is three-bedroom houses, that sometimes they need to be able to move things around. There's some efficiencies in bringing that together.

My view is you do those things slowly and build up expertise as you go, but there's the opportunity to do some of those things more efficiently, particularly in a decentralised state like Tasmania. But that was in the action plan.

Mr BAYLEY - I want to go back to debt. Last year's annual report showed that there was borrowings with TASCORP of a bit over \$60 million. The budget papers have got it rising to \$230 million and in just a few years it's going to be a pretty staggering \$720 million. That will cost Homes Tas \$40 million just to service interest payments when we go out there. You mentioned earlier the Homes Tas borrowing limit of \$266 million. Has that been raised?

Mr ELLIS - I suppose the first thing to note is that we're borrowing for good assets. Everyday Tasmanians would understand -

Mr BAYLEY - Because you're not funding them?

Mr ELLIS - What are you talking about?

Mr BAYLEY - You could always fund them from consolidated revenue and put more money into -

Mr ELLIS - Or we could unlock a new model that enables us to leverage additional funding above and beyond that, and that's exactly why we set up the Homes Tasmania model because it enables us to borrow for good debt. I think Tasmanians out there with a mortgage would understand that is a worthwhile investment because real property grows in value over time.

For example, our MyHome program enables us to take an equity stake so that we can unlock a first home-buyer's dream with only a 2 per cent deposit. That means that we're able to continue to grow that person's opportunity, but we're also able to continue to grow equity in the share we've purchased. Unlocking that kind of opportunity is actually a really key part of why we've delivered the Homes Tasmania model, where they're able to borrow. We've spoken already about this Budget allocating, or allowing for the borrowings of up to \$454 million by

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30 June 2028, on top of the \$266 million in borrowing. All of those are a good thing because it goes for intergenerational -

Mr BAYLEY - That means the limit has been lifted?

Mr ELLIS - We need to work through like a technical process in terms of lifting those limits with the Treasurer. That is standard administrative thing when it comes to TASCORP. I'll pass over to the team to give you a bit of a sense of what that administration looks like.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The debt is not secured against the asset. I think that's a really key point. The debt is secured by a Treasurer's Guarantee. In order for us to raise additional funds through TASCORP, we need the agreement of the Treasurer. We also need the Treasurer to agree to guarantee it, and then we have a to-and-fro with TASCORP because TASCORP has to be satisfied with the deal as well. You've really got a tripartite arrangement there, including the minister, of making a joint decision.

Mr BAYLEY - So, it's factored in, it is in the Budget, but it's not yet agreed with the Treasurer. Is that how it works?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's agreed in the budget level but then each time you do a transaction, it's like a mini mortgage-type arrangement.

Mr BAYLEY - Everyone else, given your analogy, minister, ultimately seeks to pay down their debt and end up with none. Has Homes Tas got a strategy to pay down the debt? Is that a goal you are seeking to achieve?

Mr ELLIS - We spoke before about those revenue opportunities that come in, whether it's the sale of land that we borrow to develop, the sale of an affordable home that's purchased through the MyHome program that then, say, if there's capital gains that realised through that, that then returns to Homes Tasmania as well. So, there's a range of different opportunities in terms of bringing more revenue into Homes Tasmania.

Mr BAYLEY - But it's not reducing the debt, not in the forward Estimates anyway.

Mr ELLIS - Look, the forward Estimates were expected to grow and that's the thing, when you're say, newly into the housing market or you're newly into establishing a statutory authority that has greater powers to borrow. We want to actually unlock the opportunities to build more homes because we recognise acute supply at the moment, so if we're going to reach our target of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032, our state needs to act and that's important.

CHAIR - Last one and then we'll go to Ms Johnston.

Mr BAYLEY - The federal debt of \$158 million, which was relieved in 2019, was seen as debilitating, that's why it was relieved, ultimately.

Mr ELLIS - Because it was under the old model.

Mr BAYLEY - Sure. You're compelled to report, it's a \$15 million saving as I understand it, and the agreement was that you report on how that \$15 million is spent in the Budget.

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I couldn't see it in the Budget this year. Is there is there a report in this year's Budget as to how that \$15 million is being spent?

Mr ELLIS - I suppose first, importantly, that's under the old model and part of the reason why we've established this new model is to actually unlock some of those borrowings. Now, if people want to retire your debt, if people want to pay for your mortgage for you, then we'll gratefully receive that, but we also need to ensure that we're actually building the capability for the organisation to borrow. As for the specifics, I'm not sure if we have something to hand on that, but I am happy to take it on notice.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thank you. We do know - so the Budget includes 13.6 million to be redirected from the CSHA debt and for that we - that's earmarked for 20 new social housing and 30 new affordable housing to be completed in 2024-25.

Mr BAYLEY - Forgive me, is that in the Budget?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's in the Budget -

Mr BAYLEY - Could you table an explanation?

Mr ELLIS - Page 131, footnote 3:

The item includes funding made available under the former Commonwealth state housing agreement debt waiver agreement, which will be primarily used in support of capital projects including the Community Housing Growth program.

Mr BAYLEY - Are you able to table specifically what that will be invested in, those projects you just mentioned?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Do you mean the addresses of those -

Mr BAYLEY - The number of units and the type of units.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's what I just said, 20 new social housing and 13 new affordable housing.

CHAIR - Ms Johnston.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, Chair. As of July 2024, there are currently 4,744 households in what you call the housing register, which I think most of the community call the housing waiting list. What proportion of households on the housing register include children? How many are families with one child, how many are families with two children, how many families are with three children, and how many families are with four or more children?

Mr ELLIS - To the team, let's find that information.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In the register, 3,380 have no children, 634 have one child, 426 have two children, 192 have three children, and 113 have four children.

Mr ELLIS - It'll be four and above on that statistical.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yeah.

Ms JOHNSTON - That's from July 2024?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes.

Ms JOHNSTON - Yep, thank you. Whilst I'm on the housing dashboard, there has been a cut in the level of data that's previously available under the old housing dashboard on the average wait time for priority applicants in the housing register to be housed. Why is this?

Mr ELLIS - Broadly speaking, we're actually including quite a lot more data in terms of the housing dashboard in the new reporting arrangements, the first of which was July 2024. We're always looking for opportunities to include more information there, too, so people can understand what the challenges are and also what the opportunities are. Regarding that particular statistical information -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - They're still reporting the average wait time for priority applicants to be housed as a rolling 12-month average. We're still keeping that under there, but with no intention to hide anything, we were trying to make a readable report, really, but -

Ms JOHNSTON - We used to have monthly figures rather than a rolling 12-month average.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - If that's useful information we could -

Ms JOHNSTON - Something that I know my constituents eagerly -

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Can I hand over to Ms Stone?

Ms STONE - Through you, minister, there wasn't an intention to hide the monthly information on a rolling average. It was only like a less than 1 per cent change, so we thought that the information provided was on a month without showing every month for that year wasn't meaningful information.

Ms JOHNSTON - I know it's something that my constituents look at because they're very keen. Can we add it back into the dashboard please?

Mr ELLIS - Always open and taking advice on that and we'll have a look. Speaking more broadly, as well, if we can present data to people in a more meaningful way, then we're open to that. Because, at one end, it's people like, say your constituents, who use it to apply in the register, but it's also helpful data for our business community, when they're thinking about the kind of investments that they might need to-

Ms JOHNSTON - That's a yes then? You can provide that?

Mr ELLIS - We'll take advice, but yes, our posture is if we can provide more understandable information, we're always open to it.

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Mr FAIRS - Minister, housing land supplies is obviously a key feature of the state government's Tasmanian Housing strategy. Can you please update the Committee as to the states of these important housing land supply orders projects please including the subdivision of Huntingfield.

Mr ELLIS - Thank you Mr Fairs. Our government's *Housing Land Supply Act* provides a direct and efficient process for the rezoning of suitable government land for residential development and facilitates the provision of social and affordable housing. To date, our government has made 13 housing land supply orders across all three regions of our state. This means that more than 70 hectares of land has been rezoned for residential development and creating the potential for up to 1000 new homes. It's important to be clear that these orders speed up the rezoning and transfer of land to Homes Tasmania, which reduces the lead time to prepare the lots for detailed development applications and construction. Subdivision and housing construction is currently underway in Rokeby. Construction of 15 new dwellings will shortly commence at West Moonah. Youth housing is under construction at Newnham. An 11-lot housing subdivision is proceeding in Devonport. Subdivision works have commenced at Huntingfield, and planning is well underway for housing at Romaine and Warrane.

In recent weeks the Kings Meadows Housing Land Supply Order in the beautiful electorate of Bass has been made thanks to this parliament and I'm currently in the process of lodging two new orders for land on smaller parcels in Brighton and Penguin. We've also adopted a strategic approach to the identification of housing opportunities, enabling Homes Tasmania to complement rather than compete with the private sector in the residential land market. Homes Tasmania is currently undertaking feasibility studies across a number of sites in all three regions, totalling an area of about 80 hectares. Where appropriate, these will be brought forward for rezoning through the Housing Land Supply Order process which is just one of the levers that we will continue to pull as part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future.

Dr BROAD - What's the debt-to-equity ratio of Homes Tasmania?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The equity is about \$4.5 billion, but the debt is not secured against the asset, it's secured against the Treasurer's Guarantee. It's all equity, no debt against that equity.

Mr ELLIS - I suppose you'd be asking for kind of a stand-in even though it's not technically -

Dr BROAD - It's not technically, but it does give an idea of the amount of debt that it's carrying.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I can give - don't ask me to do maths on the spot, but I can get that for you.

Dr BROAD - What about a debt service cover ratio then?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yep, we can do that.

Dr BROAD - You'll take that on notice?

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Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yup.

Mr ELLIS - We're pretty good though, I've got to say, because we got \$3.5 billion worth of assets, and a couple hundred \$100 million worth of borrowing.

Dr BROAD - Is Homes Tasmania solvency reliant on government equity injections.

Mr ELLIS - I think we've spoken about this already in terms of the debt, it's actually a Treasurer's Guarantee as part of the way that tab is structured.

Dr BROAD - It still needs to be serviced.

Mr ELLIS - Yeah. And part of the government's approach to Homes Tasmania would cover the borrowing costs as part of that, so that Homes Tasmania can focus on leveraging more funds to build more homes. And our balance sheet is very strong. We have \$3.5 billion worth of assets that are relatively fungible too. If you compare it to building a bridge, a home is obviously a quite a different kind of asset. I'll pass over to the team, however, if there's anything to add to that.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No.

Dr BROAD - You said - I can find the appropriate part of the Budget - You said that the government covers the interest repayments, the debt servicing, and not Homes Tasmania, but it sits on your books. There's an interest, there's a line, saying - detailing service cost, borrowing costs of 11 - I searched in a hurry, but your borrowing costs were \$11 million and now this current financial year they are set to be almost \$25 million, going up to \$28 million, \$35 million and \$40 million. Why is that sitting there on -

Mr ELLIS - Additional debt service funds of \$71.3 million have been provided to Homes Tasmania over the forward Estimates to support these borrowings, and total funds -

Dr BROAD - Where's that in the budget?

Mr ELLIS - Let me have a look.

Dr BROAD - That comes from Premier and Cabinet, does it?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It comes from Treasury, so the grants line in the revenue and other income, you will see that goes up over time and you will see the note under there that it -

Dr BROAD - Which page of the Budget are you on?

MS MORGAN-THOMAS - Page 131. The payment comes to us from Treasury as part of the appropriation. We count that on the grant side, and then we also count it as the money to support borrowings, because it comes through Homes Tasmania to TASCORP. It doesn't go straight from Treasury to TASCORP. So, it's sitting in both the revenue and the expense lines, basically.

Dr BROAD - How is it accounted by Treasury then? Is it accounted as an equity injection, or is it accounted as servicing borrowings?

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to look to Mr Healey, if there's anything you want -

Mr HEALEY - No, it's probably a question for Treasury. We can find that out.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to follow up with Treasury.

Mr BAYLEY - I want to talk about specialist disability accommodation. In Tasmania we have a high proportion of people living with a disability: 26.8 versus 17 per cent elsewhere. There's significant demand, and I note that your dashboard says that 2735 Homes Tasmania tenants are living with a disability. The Housing Strategy Action Plan reports that as of April last year, 38 per cent of all applications on the housing register involve a person living with a disability, so we acknowledge that there's a significant need. The action plan identifies a specific action around addressing the housing needs of people with a disability, and it should have been delivered by 30 June this year. The action reads:

Develop a plan for the future of the Homes Tasmania specialist disability accommodation portfolio for people with extreme functional impairment or very high needs.

Has this plan been completed?

Mr ELLIS - The Tasmanian Housing Strategy 2023-2043 and associated action plan sets out the government's plan to address the housing needs of all Tasmanians, including people living with a disability. From 1 October 2024, all newly built properties from Homes Tasmania will be required to meet the National Construction Code's liveable design provisions. That will mean that they'll be accessible and adaptable for people living with disability. That's really important because, as you mentioned, we have quite a high rate of people with disability applying for our homes.

Homes Tasmania is the owner of a small number of properties that are designed for people with extreme functional impairment or very high support needs, and these homes have been built with robust features and living areas for the provision of 24/7 support from specialist disability support services that provide on-site care to those residents under the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Teams of NDIS-funded staff provide support to those residents. Homes Tasmania is working closely with support services and remains committed to working together to develop solutions to improve the quality of life for residents, and a significant part of the design of these properties is to assist those living with disability and staff.

I'll pass over to Homes Tasmania.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Many of the specialist disability accommodation - as you know there's a small number of those, so a couple of hundred. We've been in discussion with the sector about what's the best way to manage those properties. Some other state housing authorities have completely divested the disability portfolio, and that was one of the options available to us. There wasn't a lot of support for that in the sector. It's a difficult sector because nobody can control who's in or out except if your clients are getting NDIS funding.

PUBLIC

We're not able to access specialist disability accommodation available through the NDIS. We've been doing some work with the non-government sector and advocacy bodies around what's the best thing to do with that portfolio. There was very strong support in the industry sounding we did last year for us to become an SDA provider as well, because regardless of whether we continue to own all of our properties, we know that we will be the provider of last resort for some of our clients with very challenging behaviours. We're about to go and release a tender to get some advice on how we become an SDA provider, so we will do that. Once we become an SDA provider, some of our SDA clients have packages from the NDIS that go for the accommodation bit of around \$50,000 a year, which we would invest in the disability portfolio over time. We would reconfigure our group homes because that's actually key -

Mr BAYLEY - So, the Homes Tasmania plan to provide for this that was identified in the strategy to be delivered by 30 June - is there such a thing? Has it been released?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - There is a plan that's gone through our board. It's not a public plan, but it's not a secret plan. There's a plan that's gone through our board to become an SDA provider, and the disability sector would be aware of that. We'll be working with them. To get accredited as a SDA provider is a regulatory process we've got to go through, and I imagine that it takes a -

Mr BAYLEY - And you have made a decision to do that and go through that process?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - The board has made a decision, and I think the tender is going out this month. It's ready to go. We're just -

Mr BAYLEY - So, it made a commitment also to maintain those assets that provide for specialist accommodation?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Maintain and possibly redevelop some of them, because, like a lot of state housing authorities, we have legacy group homes, which for all sorts of reasons don't work for people with disabilities.

Mr BAYLEY - Does the plan include increasing supply in that very niche space?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It may, but in recent months there's been a considerable influx of providers because consumers have choice now. Consumers can go with another provider, and there are a number of providers coming in who are not at the really high-needs end of the market. I forget what the technical term is, but there are a lot of providers coming in buildings wheelchair-accessible properties. I suspect that where we will be is in a niche bit of the market, but it's likely that we will redevelop some of our existing properties.

Mr O'BYRNE - Minister, back to the Housing Australia Future Fund. One of the justifications for shutting down the Housing department and creating Homes Tasmania was to leverage private and commercial expertise and experience to maximise delivery of social and affordable homes. You only get so many bites of the cherry of those kinds of national funds, and they will run out. It's quite disappointing, isn't it, that we've not been able to deliver one home in terms of the bids you put in in the first round?

Mr ELLIS - Sorry if I haven't communicated that correctly to you, Mr O'Byrne. We have been successful in terms of the -

Mr O'BYRNE - But not in a single standalone, which is-

Mr ELLIS - No, on that metric we haven't been. That's part of the reason why we need to be evaluating so that we can get a better understanding of what exactly the Commonwealth is driving for and wants to see. I mentioned before that it seems that rather than funding things to be developed, they wanted things that are effectively already developed and then they can immediately press go on.

We'll be looking at that. There is obviously the Housing Australia Future Fund round two, and that'll be another significant opportunity for us. We'll obviously evaluate and review how we've done on this one. It's disappointing, but the real test will be after round two. If we're in a similar boat and we've missed the mark, again, that'll be extraordinarily disappointing. We want to be, as a learning organisation, really taking ownership of the situation, seeing what what's working and what's not.

If, for example, the process for us being more successful is partnering with more community housing providers so that we can deliver together, then absolutely those are things that we'll be looking for. If, say, bringing in our existing pipeline of work, having the Housing Australia Future Fund fund more of those things that are shovel ready - if that's an opportunity, then we'll be looking to that too. But certainly, we need to make sure that we're doing better next time.

Mr O'BYRNE - If you ask the person in the street around their understanding of the justifications for the creation of Homes Tasmania, 98.9 per cent of the media and the narrative from the government is that we're creating Homes Tasmania to deal with the housing crisis, which has been around for a number of years. I'm not saying it's a new crisis, it's been around for a number of years. When you actually see the activity, on one hand you've got a whole lot of Homes Tasmania activity, purchasing key worker accommodation for other departments, not necessarily for social and affordable housing, and your own Budget papers predict that the housing wait list and wait time essentially are continuing to balloon out. How do you justify all of the noise and all of the money that you're moving around where effectively the situation's getting worse and you're essentially bailing out other departments on key worker accommodation? Are the priorities wrong?

Mr ELLIS - I reject that categorisation but I'll come back to it. The main thing that we need to be doing is delivering more supply. Obviously, we're on track in terms of our targets and they're not headline-grabbing, but the developments that we see around Tasmania in big ways and small, a five-home development here, a 20-home development there, those are the kind of things that add up over time to really shift the dial. Homes Tasmania has been making major strides forward. We've noted before, around 1800 social homes have been built as part of the transition to this new model.

In terms of the federal government support, let's not mistake - we'll be delivering in Tasmania, 500 new social homes. That's, in some points with Homes Tasmania support, in other points it's our community housing providers, all of those for the everyday mum and dad that's out there that maybe is struggling to find secure accommodation and needing a social home. Those are still 500 homes for them. As far as the way that the Commonwealth designates where it should go, that's ultimately something that we need to work through around meeting

their needs so that we can then meet the community's needs. We'll still get on and deliver the projects that we need to and deliver towards the 10,000.

Regarding the key worker accommodation, I know that this is an area that you're quite focused on. I'd say, quite clearly, this is a commercial arrangement with the Health department. We have skills and capability in terms of asset management, so it works well but it doesn't affect our ability to deliver on the 10,000 other than it probably leverages more capability so that we can do that, just like as I was mentioning, the affordable land release or the MyHome program, although that does actually help deliver our target, but it gives us even more capability to perform in other areas too, that you mentioned like social homes in particular. Ms Morgan-Thomas, anything further to - I've got to stop waffling on.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No.

CHAIR - Mr Fairs.

Mr FAIRS - Thanks, Chair. Minister, we know the building/constructing sector is so critical in providing jobs and homes for Tasmania and our future. With Homes Tasmania, what role does that play in supporting the sector?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. Our government's committed to delivering on our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's future and the commitments to provide more housing options for Tasmania, to bring more housing supply online and to allow more Tasmanians to realise their dreams of home ownership.

We'll continue to deliver on our commitment to deliver 10,000 more social and affordable homes by 2032, which will further increase housing supply. It will drive the Tasmanian economy and it will activate the critical, valuable and rewarding jobs in our construction sector. I've already stated the targets, but I can say that 13 per cent of Australia's additional social housing stock in 2022-23 came from Tasmania, that's well above our population share of 2 per cent and demonstrates just how much our government, through Homes Tasmania, is out there building and delivering the housing that Tasmanians need.

Our commitments made during the election were also focused on supporting industry to deliver more housing in our state. That includes cutting stamp duty in half for Tasmanians who buy a new apartment off the plan or are under construction up to the value of \$750,000, that's for two years. Adding a \$10,000 per unit incentive for developers with up to 50 units to get more infill, medium and high-density units, unlocking more residential lots with the increase of the residential land rebate of \$15,000 per lot and providing short-term interest-free loans of up to \$1 million for medium density units and apartments to assist with early headworks charges. Our government through Homes Tasmania has got a strong record of delivery supporting it by our incredible building and construction businesses and tradies right across the state. We are a third of the way to our target in a third of the time and we're on track.

Dr BROAD - How does Homes Tasmania determine the price to sell or offer to the market an affordable lot?

Mr ELLIS - Sure, look. I'll pass to the team from Homes Tasmania about the way that we designate those things.

PUBLIC

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Many of the lots we deliver are smaller, fitting in with medium density and all of those things and you know the price of land continues down the chain as the property gets sold and resold. The size of the land will define the price. So, a lot of what we do is drive it by that and we set it at a price that's the valuation of the property, but typically on a smaller lot.

Dr BROAD - Can you be clear about that? Do you get someone to do a valuation and that's what you sell it for?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Can I ask you to respond to that, Mr Gilmour?

Mr GILMOUR - Through you, minister, we use the office of the Valuer-General. For all of our land supply projects, we get them valued early in the design process so we can work out that the design is considering commercial feasibility and that what we're delivering is going to be right-sized for the market and then we get one slots, once titles are created before they hit the market, we get that valuation reviewed and then that gets reviewed on a monthly basis more or less.

Mr ELLIS - Dr Broad, just an update on another matter, comments from Treasury that I can provide to the committee. The Budget includes appropriation to Department of Premier and Cabinet to provide grant funding to Homes Tasmania to cover its borrowing costs. This is included in the \$147 million identified as grants in Table 28.3 on page 131 of Vol. 2 of budget paper no. 2.

Dr BROAD - There's obviously a development at 37A North Fenton St, Devonport, which was the old bowls club site and minister Ellis put up a post on your Facebook talking about 11 homes for Devonport at the old bowls club. Now, this was a week or so ago you put that post up. The issue for that is that this was actually a land supply order back from I think it was 2018. That's, you know, years old. Have you counted those 11 blocks that are available in your target?

Mr ELLIS - So, we double check around that. Obviously, the first five of those lots, as I mentioned in the post, are currently available for sale through the MyHome Shared Equity program and some of the remaining six lots also show great potential for even multiple units to be built on that site. It's certainly a site that's rich in opportunity as well as in one of the most beautiful places in the world. Eleri, did you want to provide an update there?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, Fenton -

Dr BROAD - North Fenton.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - North Fenton. Can I ask Mr Gilmour to respond?

Mr GILMOUR - Thanks, Eleri. Through you, minister, North Fenton, which is a former Devonport Bowls and Croquet Club. The subdivision's been approved. We will be retaining five lots, one larger lot and then four lots that are contiguous, and that will be for development, a mixture of 20-unit complex that we're proposing would be for older people for social housing and then 18 units for affordable rentals. The balance of those titles are now on the market.

PUBLIC

Dr BROAD - They've been on the market for quite a long time. They've been on the market for more than 12 months and they haven't sold. I've seen them on Domain for it would have to be 12 months. How is selling a 350 square metre block at North Fenton St affordable at \$230,000? So, 350 square metres for \$230,000.

Mr ELLIS - So I think what makes that one affordable is through the MyHome Shared Equity program. So, obviously the affordability comes in through the ability to get in with a 2 per cent deposit if I'm right on that one, there's more than -

Dr BROAD - I think you're missing the substance of my question. That seems quite a lot for 350 square metre blocks in Devonport. When you consider -

Mr ELLIS - I think you are missing the substance of my answer. The affordability is the fact that it's a very low deposit to get into it. For example, at MyHome, that's about people on low incomes and able to access an opportunity to buy land or a home through only a 2 per cent deposit. That's where the affordability piece comes in, in that space.

Dr BROAD - So \$230,000 for a 350 square metre block - that's almost the minimum lot size that's available under the planning scheme - whereas you can get a 700 square metre block at Hawley for the same price. Now, when you're at Hawley on a 700 square metre block you're either putting in very expensive units or a million-dollar house.

Udiminia in Ulverstone has 900 square metre blocks I think for \$165,000. If you wanted a 900 square metre block at Moonbeam in Ulverstone you'd get that for \$215,000, whereas what you've got offered here is a 350 square metre block for \$230,000. That seems like it is the top of the market. If you look at the north-west coast, if you buy a \$230,000 block, you're going to need to put a lot of capital onto that.

You're not going to build a small house, because if you were going to do that, you could buy a block at Udiminia and get something -

Mr ELLIS - You're talking about areas that are outside the CBD of the north-west coast's largest city. That's the thing with this location - it's close to town, as I assume you know. When you look at Udiminia or Hawley, they're not close to the centre of Devonport. I think I've mentioned before that this is around the MyHome program, which is for low-income earners and ensures that they have the ability to buy a block of land or even an existing dwelling for as little as a 2 per cent deposit.

That's very affordable when we think about that 2 per cent deposit, and the government is then a shared equity partner. I'll go back to the team if there's anything further to add on that one.

Dr BROAD - Within 100 metres of that block there have been houses sold - this is houses - on blocks that are twice that size for \$510,000, and then if you go a little bit further north, just one street further north, \$415,000, and another for \$485,000. It seems like the price that you have on this block is not affordable and that's why it hasn't sold.

Mr ELLIS - We obviously always want to try and meet the market, but if there's anything further -

PUBLIC

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We'll have a look at the price on it and go back to the Valuer-General. We have constraints around us about whether we sell below valuation, and one of the difficulties in selling below valuation is that you're providing a windfall for the first purchaser, which may not go to the next one. But you've brought that to my attention and we'll have a look at it.

Dr BROAD - This is the whole rhetoric that you've been putting out. You talked about needing to right size it and it needed to be affordable, and yet it appears that you're at the top of the market, and that would explain why these blocks have been sitting on Domain for almost a year and not selling.

MS MORGAN-THOMAS - We'll have a look at it, and we'll have a look at the zoning, which I believe is in a residential -

Mr GILMOUR - The zoning is unique, it is the first inner-res zoned land in the Cradle Coast region. That's one of the things we were able to achieve through the Housing Land Supply Order. The density that can be achieved on those lots and the height is a higher yield than the gen-res zone, which would be consistent with some of the examples that you've used.

Certainly, we have had the valuation determined by the Valuer-General and they're generally more conservative than the other way. It's around the zone. You get an uplift through the zone - inner-res is deemed to be more valuable than gen-res because of the yield you can deliver.

Mr BAYLEY - I have some questions about Aboriginal housing, particularly on Cape Barren. The Budget holds a one-off payment to help the Cape Barren Island community plan the design, delivery and ongoing maintenance of municipal and essential services and housing. This is welcome and acknowledged, but there's nothing in the forward Estimates to actually deliver on what is planned, noting that housing is a significant constraint on Cape Barren Island in terms of Aboriginal people returning there to work or people wanting to return there with their families.

Funding of \$1 million will help plan and articulate some housing needs, but with construction costs massively inflated on an island like Cape Barren, it's unlikely to fund many or any houses. Will you commit to funding for housing on Cape Barren to deliver on what this plan comes up with?

Mr ELLIS - Providing safe and appropriate housing and homelessness services for Aboriginal Tasmanians is one of the Tasmanian government's top priorities, and it's a key focus of the 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy. Homes Tasmania is committed to delivering a net increase of 10,000 social affordable homes by 2032, and this will include delivering much-needed housing for the Tasmanian Aboriginal community.

The Tasmanian government is committed to growing the capacity and capability of the Tasmanian Aboriginal community in line with the recommendations of the national Closing the Gap agreement and the Tasmanian Closing the Gap implementation plan. Consistent under all of these commitments is the aim for the Closing the Gap peak to lead a statewide Aboriginal housing review and the development of an Aboriginal housing policy, which is an action under the Housing Strategy Action Plan 2023-27. It's not directly related to a budget or an election commitment.

I'll also note that at 31 July 2024, there were 337 Aboriginal housing properties, including 165 Homes Tasmania properties, 172 community housing provider properties and 36 Indigenous community housing properties as at the latest reporting period of 30 June 2023.

I'll pass over to Mr Healey if there's anything further to update from a DPAC perspective.

Mr HEALEY - Only more broadly, you mentioned that we have been supporting Cape Barren Island in terms of providing essential infrastructure services for a number of years now, supported by funding that was a one-off funding provided by the Commonwealth. That funding has now been spent, and as you quite rightly pointed out, there is an allocation in the Budget to allow us to continue to support those services whilst we work with the island and work with appropriate engineers and the Department of State Growth on what the long-term solution needs to be for -

Mr BAYLEY - So, nothing in the forward Estimates to deliver that, though?

Mr HEALEY - We'll need to work with the Commonwealth and we'll need to work with the island on what that solution is. We're not entirely sure what the solution needs to be moving forward.

Mr BAYLEY - On Cape Barren, I understand that of the Homes Tasmania - or what used to be Homes Tasmania - properties, they were all transferred to the Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association on request so that they can fulfil their role as self-determination and allocation, noting that they are houses built on designated Aboriginal land. I understand that a couple of the more recent properties - I think there are about six, are still in Homes Tasmania's ownership, and yet had been agreed for transfer to the Cape Barren Island Aboriginal Association. Can you commit to delivering on that transfer so that the association on Cape Barren has ownership and full self-determination over those houses?

Mr HEALEY - That issue has come up in the discussions around the essential infrastructure, and certainly we are really keen to work collaboratively with the Cape Barren Island Association to find solutions for all of these and to make sure that we're working with the island in a manner that's entirely consistent with our obligations under Closing the Gap. No commitment has been made, but certainly there's been really constructive discussions around the future of the island and the services on the island.

Mr BAYLEY - The association is determined to maintain its role as the entity that sets the amount of rent and also allocates the tenancy. Can you commit to that being an ongoing right of the Cape Barren Island Association to manage those houses in that way, making all of the decisions in terms of rent-setting and allocation?

Mr ELLIS - Is this in regard to the six?

Mr BAYLEY - This is in regard to the six, yes.

Mr HEALEY - I think a very similar answer, in that the discussions are how we set the island up well and how we set them up sustainably, and how we work with them, as I said, in a way that is entirely consistent with our principles under Closing the Gap, so empowering that community to own their future.

Mr BAYLEY - Just to be clear, which agencies are having those discussions?

Mr HEALEY - The Department of Premier and Cabinet is supporting the relationship with the Cape Barren Island Association, and the Department of State Growth is currently leading the review of the essential infrastructure in terms of the ongoing solutions. Of course, we're working with Homes Tasmania as well on the issues associated with the houses on the island.

Mr GARLAND - How many short-stay properties do we have in each region of the state - the north, the north west and the south - and how many of those short-stay properties have a permit?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Garland. Consumer Building and Occupational Services (CBOS) have the data available on that. Let me just see if we are able to find that information now or whether we provide it on notice to you, Mr Garland. Okay, so to hand, I've got a brief that says the Tasmanian Government's collected data relating to short-stay accommodation since 2019. For quarter three, 2023, the total number of applicable properties listed for short-stay accommodation was 6845. That's an increase of 291 properties from the previous quarter. Of the total properties, 3431 were reported as also being a primary residence. You asked about regions. We have data here, 2864 premises listed in the greater Hobart area, but we'll break that down by further in terms of north, south and north west with 1882 listed as a primary residence. But look, I'm happy to take that on notice and follow up for you.

Mr GARLAND - Cheers.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, Housing Connect for people who are experiencing homelessness or in housing need, Housing Connect's the entry point, as you know. Can you update the committee on status of the reforms for Housing Connect?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs, and yes, this is a very important area when it comes to our customer service for people who are doing it tough. Housing Connect 2.0 commenced on 1 July this year, following a significant reform project to improve services for Tasmanians seeking housing assistance. A key change to the Housing Connect service model was the introduction of a statewide front door with connections coaches who provide integrated support for people with low to moderate support needs. Service improvements to the Housing Connect front door include comprehensive assessments for people seeking assistance and targeted intervention to connect people to resources and community networks to help them find and keep a home.

The new Housing Connect service model provides personalised support tailored to people's individual circumstances and life stages, with specialist support for young people, single people, couples and families and older people. Key development coaches provide intensive support to help people with complex problems that can impact their capability to find and maintain long term, safe, affordable and appropriate housing. Training modules have been developed to support the Housing Connect workforce and the delivery of the new service model. Homes Tasmania is continuing to deliver improvements to Housing Connect, including a new website that will provide access to information and services, support self-direction and enable Tasmanians to apply for housing assistance online.

Young people in housing have been a key focus of how of the housing system improvements in Tasmania, including Housing Connect and young people will now receive Housing Connect personalised service from a specialist youth provider and will also benefit from improvements to the service system, including a service level agreement between Homes Tasmania and the Department of Education, Children and Young People, a youth housing support services community practice which meets regularly with key stakeholders and more tailored housing options for young people such as the Youth to Independence Homes and facilities that are doing such amazing things in our community. I know how passionate she is about this project, so I might look to Ms Stone if there's anything further that you wanted to add.

Ms STONE - I'm not sure, minister, you've covered a lot of things, but it has been a major reform and I think it's been really good how we've worked together to get to the point that we're at the moment and I'm looking forward to seeing good things come out of it.

CHAIR - Now, the rotation did have independents each time around, asking two questions and Mr Garland's asked a question and then left. So, before we start the thing again, did any independent want to take that second question?

Ms JOHNSTON - I'm happy to take the question, Chair, thank you very much. As part of the Tasmanian Housing Strategy Action Plan 2023-27, a commitment was made to establishing a Lived Experience Advisory Group to inform the Tasmanian Government-developed Housing Policy by 30 June 2024. Has the Lived Experience Advisory group been formed? How many members are part of this group, how many times has this group met and what are the terms of reference and could they be tabled please?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you Ms Johnston. I'll pass to Homes Tasmania to provide an update on where we're at currently.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thank you. The advisory group hasn't yet been established, although we've done a lot of work about the development of a model and we're in the process of doing that. We've researched several evidence-based models for lived experience engagement because what you don't want is a really broad group where you're asking quite specific things. If you have a very broad group that involves social housing tenants and you're asking them about youth housing, for instance, they're not going to be engaged. We've looked at various models about what is the best model that will be applied to the sorts of things that we'll be working on in Homes Tasmania over the next couple of years.

We've been researching that. We want it to be trauma-informed and fit-for-purpose. You don't want to re-traumatise people either when you're in the process of getting them to share their lived experience. The models that we're looking at vary in their size, meeting frequency and structure, so it'll depend on what we're doing at the point in time rather than have a group that is static for a long period of time and then come in and ask them random questions about young people and then about the housing register and then about design of houses. We're working through that at the moment.

Ms JOHNSTON - Do you have a timeline for when that would be established and the group would be functioning? A revised one?

PUBLIC

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Not right at this moment. A work in progress. We're very committed to it, though, I do want to say that. We are very committed but I have been anxious about setting up a group that has a young person, a public housing tenant, a community housing tenant, somebody with a disability and looking for something about something that's token. I actually want something that really tells us how to design significant reforms that we're doing at the point in time.

Mr ELLIS - Chair, unfortunately Mr Garland's not here, but I'll table for the report if that's okay. The report on data collection from CBOS for the *Short Stay Accommodation Act 2019* that's got the most recent data, it's better than regional level, it's at an LGA level which is good. Do you want to table that to the committee secretary?

Dr BROAD - How many newly constructed homes were purchased by Homes Tasmania for each month of the 2023-24 financial year?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Newly constructed homes that were purchased?

Dr BROAD - Yeah.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Do you mean turnkey or do you mean purchased at what point?

Dr BROAD - Yeah, turnkey.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - So, already could have been purchased by somebody else at the point they're ready to be. I think we would have to take that on notice. It was -

Ms STONE - We will for the whole question, but I'm just trying to find the number -

Dr BROAD - Could you also say how many existing homes on the private market were purchased as well.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In?

Dr BROAD - Each month, for the last financial year.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We'd have to take that on notice.

Mr ELLIS - We would have maybe data that's at a longer time period. So, if it's quarterly or something like that, is that okay?

Dr BROAD - Well, give us as much as you can. I'd also like to know, because if you haven't got the data at hand, you won't be able to tell me the breakdown by region, the average price. If you could take all that on notice please. What is the highest price paid for any new home and in what suburb was it located, for the last financial year?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, we can do. We can take that on notice.

Dr BROAD - That one on notice as well?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - My impression is we didn't buy very much in the last financial year, so, I mean, it's not a hard thing, I just don't have it on the top of my head.

Mr ELLIS - We do from time to time look to secure different properties as they pop up, particularly if they're strategic. It's part of the reason why as well we have our private rental incentive scheme. It's obviously not only purchase space, but we enter into an agreement with landlords so that we can secure a home for the private rental market for people who are on the affordable housing register and that's particularly operational while we're at this very low vacancy rate in our economy and our rental market currently where we're able to secure those properties for the medium to long term for people that are doing it tough then that's often a really good outcome and particularly if it's in locations that have not been well supported by past builds in Homes Tasmania or community housing providers, noting that they are often clustered in certain areas.

Dr BROAD - Can you advise how many new properties have been signed up to the expanded Private Rental Incentive program and that have been confirmed to have been delivered in the first 100 days of government?

Mr ELLIS - Let me see, I'll look to the team from Homes Tasmania.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We were oversubscribed at the beginning of the year. Whatever the number was, we had additional. We've had an expression of interest out and we're collecting expressions of interest at the moment.

Mr ELLIS - And because currently in our data dashboard, if I'm not mistaken, Ms Morgan-Thomas, we've got Private Rental Incentive Scheme at 224 as at July this year.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes.

Mr BAYLEY - Noting the conversation earlier about young people, Mission Australia's Youth Homelessness survey revealed that 10 per cent of people aged 15 to 19 experienced homelessness in the last year. That's 39 per cent of the homeless population in this state. Young people are making up a significant percentage of people sleeping rough and couch surfing and struggling to find a home. Organisations and civil society groups have been calling for a youth homelessness strategy and yet we haven't had a commitment from this government to do so. Will you commit to developing a youth homelessness strategy so that we can fully understand the scope and the scale of this problem and clearly see the steps that you intend to take to address it?

Mr ELLIS - The ABS collects some quite solid data on this, but I suppose more broadly, providing safe and appropriate housing and homelessness services for children and young people is one of the top priorities for the Tasmanian Government and a key focus of the 20-year Tasmanian housing strategy. We're looking to take action across the housing spectrum as part of these strategies and the vast majority of children who are homeless are accompanied by a parent. Young people can access 10 of the 20 homelessness shelters in Tasmania unaccompanied by an adult, and eight shelters and additional dispersed homelessness properties when accompanied by their parent or guardian.

The Tasmanian Government's election commitments for 2024 included an additional \$1.2 million over two years for Jireh House and McCombe House, which are shelters for

women and their children, and an additional \$1.5 million over two years to contribute towards 100 more rapid rehousing homes from women and children escaping family violence. That's an increase of 50 existing so it's more than tripling the total number. Homes Tasmania oversees a number of housing and homelessness services for children and young people including crisis and transitional accommodation, alone or accompanied, brokered emergency accommodation which is accompanied. The Youth2Independence Supported Accommodation program, which is alone and quite an extraordinary program I have to say -

Mr BAYLEY - I acknowledge that there are services and there are good services. I'm happy to acknowledge that. The question is whether your government will develop a youth homelessness strategy, a particular document, a specific strategy to address youth homelessness in the state. You can obviously pick up on all these services you're pointing to, but to package it in a strategy that clearly shows you take this seriously and you have a plan to deal with it because these are vulnerable people. They are an important part of our future and we have a serious obligation to ensure that they are safe and housed.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I think we're on a unity ticket as far as just how important this approach is, so as I was outlining before, I have an open mind on it. We have a strategy that delivers across the spectrum and across age groups and part of the reason for that is that people will often utilise different parts of that service throughout their life or their different situation they'll often do that with other people too.

So, a strategy that takes action on homelessness for young people also needs to perhaps consider the parent and guardian that they might be fleeing family violence with. So, the youth homelessness is enshrined within our strategy as a key part of what we're looking to do. If there was value in pulling all of that out and putting in a separate document -

Mr BAYLEY - Stakeholders believe there is, minister.

Mr ELLIS - It's something I've got an open mind to, but the key focus is we need to make sure that youth homelessness is absolutely integrated in the broader strategy because those young people have loved ones often in a similar circumstance or in the same circumstance. They also will not be youth forever, so as they grow we need to make sure that we have a joined-up system that's able to accommodate their changing needs as they as they go through. They might also be, for example, in some of our other categories of need, such as a young person with disability. They are captured as part of our broad strategy both in terms of their youth and in terms of their disability and that gives us the ability to look strategically which is what a strategy is all about. As I say, I've got an open mind in terms of this. We want to take action across the housing spectrum and across need and we'll continue to work -

Mr BAYLEY - I urge you to use that open mind to actually push the 'go' button on this because stakeholders are clearly calling for it, experts are calling for it, and it's clear we have a responsibility to these young people.

Mr ELLIS - Look, I certainly agree on the responsibility that we've got for them. Ms Morgan-Thomas is there anything further that you wanted to update? No, thank you.

Mrs PENTLAND - Can the minister outline the specific process Homes Tasmania follows to go to market for tender for housing developments? What criteria is being used to

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ensure competitive bidding and how does the government ensure that these larger projects are delivered efficiently while engaging local contractors?

Mr ELLIS - Obviously, we've got requirements of the *Financial Management Act*, but I'll pass over to the team from Homes Tasmania and maybe outline what those tenders look like.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I'll just give a bit of an introduction and then I'll hand over to Mr Gilmore. So, we're bound by the Treasurer's instructions about how we have to procure and there are dollar limits in that and then typically we would go out to an open procurement for those things.

Mrs PENTLAND - Sorry, with the dollar limits, dollars per metre squared?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No, it's a total dollar amount and it's actually less than the cost of the house. Normally, we are doing multi-unit developments, so we need to go out to tender. What we have been doing and talking to industry about is how can we streamline that because if you have to do an open procurement every time you spend a long time in procurement. Is there a way to streamline that so that we can ensure that we are sort of doing the first step of a procurement in a way where you only have to do that once so that contractors don't have to tell us every single time the same thing? I might hand over to Mr Gilmore to explain the process that we're about to go through.

Mr GILMOUR - Through the minister, as Eleri has indicated, we're bound by the *Financial Management Act*, which means that we must comply with the Treasurer's instructions. A lot of our procurements occur in the building and construction space. In terms of other residential or institutional construction, though they're done through either open market design or construct tenders. That's where the contracting party will bring the design and the construction component to the table as part of the service. Others would be through where we've already got a design, so we've gone out to an architectural service, designed a development for a particular parcel of land and then we go out to open tender pre-qualified builders to do that, that construction piece. And again, as Eleri has indicated, that's on a documented design. Each tendering party through that tender would be submitting their price to deliver the project as it's documented.

The other type of procurements that we do are real property. They effectively use the Valuer-General to determine if we buy a development off the plan or a unit off the plan, does that reflect market value in terms of is its acceptable value for us in terms of, since we are going to go and buy it so we are not paying above what market would reasonably dictate is acceptable. So, that's the other means by which we secure sites where we might have a private developer or a vendor of land who can say, 'Look, I can deliver a unit development here' and you know, we do that from time to time, but not too much.

Mrs PENTLAND - Just a second question. Additionally, could the minister provide a breakdown of the contracts awarded in the last financial year, including who won these jobs?

Mr ELLIS - I'll just take advice on what we can make available.

Mr GILMOUR - That's the 2023-24 financial year.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to take that on notice.

Mr FAIRS - Thank you, Chair, the Tasmanian Housing Strategy provides a number of key actions for measuring the successful implementation of the strategy. Can you advise the committee on the progress of this important work, please minister?

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. Thank you, Mr Fairs, the government's record investment to deliver social and affordable housing is continuing to provide safe, secure and affordable homes for Tasmanians in need. Under Tasmania's first 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy, our government has committed to delivering more quality homes faster. Every Tasmanian deserves a roof over their head, and our plan to deliver more homes faster is critical to achieving our vision to address homelessness in Tasmania and deliver a well-functioning housing system that provides safe, appropriate and affordable housing for all Tasmanians.

There are three key actions associated with measuring the success of the housing strategy outlined in the Action Plan 2023-27: establishing the governance for the plan, delivering a new housing dashboard to support analysis and transparency of data, and delivering an outcomes framework to support monitoring the strategy's vision and outcomes. The governance for the implementation of the strategy and action plan have been agreed, with coordination being overseen by the Department of Premier and Cabinet through the Deputy Secretary's policy and intergovernmental subcommittee.

Responsibility for overseeing the delivery of the strategy and the action plan will, however, transition to the Department of State Growth (DSG) in November 2024, and DPAC will continue to chair the Deputy Secretary's Commission and be heavily involved in supporting DSG to coordinate the delivery of the action plan.

A new user-friendly housing dashboard was released in the first week of September 2024, and obviously we have referred to it extensively here today. The updated dashboard features a new format with additional information, including detailed reporting on completed homes, land packages, funding models and the success of the pipeline projects. The Department of Premier and Cabinet is currently developing the draft outcomes framework, which is on track for finalising by December 2024 as outlined in the current action plan.

Dr BROAD - How many of the Homes Tasmania board are Tasmanian residents?

Mr ELLIS - Two.

Dr BROAD - How many FTEs does Homes Tasmania have?

Mr ELLIS - Correct me if I'm wrong, but at 30 June 2024, Homes Tasmania had a total of 186 full-time equivalent staff, of which 167 are permanent, 16 are fixed-term, 2 are state executive service and one is the CEO.

Dr BROAD - How many staff have left the organisation since its inception in December 2022?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I might have to take that on notice.

Dr BROAD - Is there a high turnover?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No.

Dr BROAD - You will take that on notice. My understanding is that it is a reasonably high turnover. What measures -

Mr ELLIS - Based on what evidence, Dr Broad?

Dr BROAD - Based on the question that I'm asking. What strategic initiatives and improvements to Homes Tasmania has the board implemented?

Mr ELLIS - Are we talking in terms of staffing retention?

Dr BROAD - Onto the board. The organisation itself.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of staffing retention, or?

Dr BROAD - In terms of what strategic initiatives and improvements to Homes Tasmania has the board implemented?

Mr ELLIS - We just talked about the housing strategy and the range of different opportunities there, but I'm not sure if you want to provide anything else?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Obviously the board has worked a lot on the strategy for the organisation and is very concerned about whether staff understand the strategy and are they on board. What I saw out of the Tasmanian state service survey that was done earlier this year is that we have positively increased on most of those metrics.

The board is keen on doing those sorts of initiatives of making sure that we're supported with the tools we need to be able to do the job. Sorry, it's a very broad question. I am not entirely sure what you're asking me.

Dr BROAD - I mean the organisation trying to improve itself. It has been there since 2022. I can move on if you like.

Can you confirm that in the process for Housing Connect 2.0, the organisations were directly appointed and there wasn't a tender required?

Mr ELLIS - Housing Connect commenced on July 1 2024, and it follows a significant reform project to improve services for Tasmanians seeking housing assistance. We've already provided some information in this space, but a key change to the Housing Connect service model was the introduction of a statewide front door with connection coaches who provide integrated support for people with low to moderate support needs. Service improvements to the Housing Connect front door includes comprehensive assessments for people seeking assistance and targeted intervention to connect people to resources and community networks to help them find and keep a home.

In terms of the approach to market, I've got some information here and I'm happy for the team to add to my answer in a tick. The new Housing Connect services were procured through a closed request for grant proposal process in August 2023. The five existing Housing Connect

service providers, Anglicare, CatholicCare, Colony 47, Hobart City Mission and the Salvation Army were invited to tender for a statewide front door service and regional personalised support service. Winteringham continues to provide support to older people in the south and has also commenced supporting older people in the north-west.

Anglicare was successful in their submission to provide a statewide front door. The contracts for personalised support were awarded to CatholicCare for young people statewide, single adults north and north-west, and couples and families state-wide. Hobart City Mission were also given a contract for single adults in the south. Wyndarra continues to provide housing connect services for people in the Circular Head Area in our neck of the woods, but I'll look to the Homes Tasmania team if there's anything further to provide.

Ms STONE - That's correct, minister. It was a closed tender process; it was a co-design process. We were working with the organisations who delivered Housing Connect 1.0 to deliver Housing Connect 2.0, but under a restructure.

Dr BROAD - Does that direct appointment align with the government tendering guidelines?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Yes, we're very confident about that. We received procurement advice before doing it, and it was a competitive process. Under the market sounding, and prior to that a market analysis, there were no other providers who were likely to come in and provide that service, so we did a closed tender in line with the procurement process.

Dr BROAD - So, can you advise the total sum inclusive of capital costs spent and allocated to Winteringham, and confirm that they didn't need a tender either - they were part of that closed process?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I don't think we have the funding amounts here for Winteringham specifically, no.

Mr ELLIS - Happy to take advice and take that on notice.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, you're very good at articulating the fact that we're a third of the way through our time period to 2032 and we're a third of the way to meeting our 10,000 home target. But when it comes to social housing, the most recent dashboard shows that 370 new social homes have been built so far. That's 19 per cent of the 2000 social homes target, which is to be reached by mid-2027.

Mr ELLIS - When you say the dashboard, are we talking about the same data? Unless I'm confusing the data dashboard, on page 8 it says social housing completed 1417, with a pipeline of 443.

Mr BAYLEY - No, I think it's 370 from Homes Tasmania.

Mr ELLIS - As in specifically broken down by providers?

Mr BAYLEY - That's right. The 2000 social homes are across all providers, not just Homes Tasmania. Is that why Homes Tasmania is only at 19 per cent of the 2000 target?

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Mr ELLIS - We're continuing to make significant investments in this space, and we're going to have to continue to work with, for example, the Commonwealth. We've had some discussions here around the Housing Australia Future Fund and the decisions that the Commonwealth have made, and the various different counting treatments that we have for those particular homes.

The main goal is 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032. We have a range of different sub-targets as part of that, and we're continuing to get an understanding of what the federal government process will now mean for us in terms of what we'll need to be doing in the future with social homes.

Mr BAYLEY - If the federal government doesn't come to the party to, you know, build the capacity to meet that need, will your government step up and invest more to make sure that we meet it?

Mr ELLIS - We'll always try and get an understanding of what this means for Tasmania. We've been really clear we want to deliver on our main target of 10,000 social affordable homes by 2032, and of course we look to other sub-targets as well around what opportunities are available there.

Mr BAYLEY - Just going back to the detailed budget statements, we're talking about debt and paying debt and the grants you get to pay for debt and so forth. I want to make the observation, as was made earlier, that borrowing costs according to the Budget escalate significantly over the forward Estimates from a bit over \$11 million up to almost \$40 million.

Mr ELLIS - That is because we are building more homes, Mr Bayley.

Mr BAYLEY - That's great. You say that you get grants to pay for that from the Tasmanian government, which is great, but that grants income significantly reduces across that same period. It peaks at \$147 million and then it drops down to \$120 million in the forward Estimates at 2027-2028, so there's ultimately a net loss there for Homes Tasmania, because you are getting less grant money. I don't understand. Could you talk me through how this works?

Mr ELLIS - I think you've misunderstood there. The grant money is not all borrowing cost servicing grants. There's a range of different grants that are available that the government provides to Homes Tasmania for different services. In terms of the debt service funds provided, there's \$71.3 million total over the forward Estimates to support borrowings, and the total funds provided are as follows: 2024-25 is 24.923 million; 2025-26 is \$28.675 million, 2026-27 is \$31.145 million; and 2027-28 is \$39.974 million.

Mr BAYLEY - I can see that in the Budget. I'm assuming that's reflected in the grants line item at the very start with those escalating costs, and yet that grant figure comes down to \$120 million. That clearly means that Homes Tasmania is getting less grant money overall from the Tasmanian government in the forward Estimates back out to 2027-28.

Mr ELLIS - Footnote 1 says that the variation in grants primarily reflects a profile of funding for the 2024 election commitments and funding from the Australian Government for the Social Housing Accelerator and Housing Support Program. Of course, we'll continue to work with the federal government and future federal governments around what opportunities

might be available there. Certainly, Tasmania was successful through Homes Tasmania for the housing accelerator program.

Ms Morgan-Thomas and I spent a very windy afternoon at a beautiful property in Chigwell where we're looking to deliver 15 new properties in partnership with the federal government. We'll continue to work with the federal government. As we noted in a previous Estimates, we can't count grant money from the feds that hasn't yet been delivered and that we'll need to work through a competitive process for, but certainly we'll continue to work together on ensuring that those opportunities are available.

We want to make sure that we're putting our best foot forward when it comes to leveraging federal Commonwealth funding. I know that nationally the Commonwealth are quite exercised because they are yet to deliver a single home despite making a \$10-billion commitment nationally, so we know that they want to do more and work with the states, who have a track record.

Mr BAYLEY - Up to which point are our federal government contributions reflected in these Budget figures in the forward Estimates? Is it just 2024-25, the \$147 million figure?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I can speak to some of that. The way the accelerator funding that the minister was talking about, which was a \$50-million grant, comes to us - Commonwealth payments are made to Treasury, not to statutory authorities. They can't just deal straight with us. That's coming in over a couple of years. We also are partnering with the Commonwealth Government on the Social Housing Energy Efficiency Program. That also comes in over three years, so those funds are coming into the revenue line.

Mr BAYLEY - How far forward?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We're delivering that over three years.

Mr BAYLEY - So, up to 2026-27?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Some of those things finish and some of the election commitments also finish.

Mr BAYLEY - I guess I still see the figures here speaking for themselves in that Homes Tasmania is getting less in grant revenue and ending up needing to pay more in borrowing costs. More of that grant revenue is being soaked up by borrowing costs.

Mr ELLIS - No. The grant revenue we get from the Commonwealth has nothing to do with the grants that are provided for servicing borrowing costs at the state level. As far as I know, they don't take that into account. I would be pretty disappointed if they do. We'll continue to work with the Commonwealth Government into the future, particularly in those out years. There are some big opportunities, I think, if state and Commonwealth governments are working together in terms of the housing challenge. Certainly, a lot of Australia's housing affordability challenge is driven by federal government policy settings that are driving up interest rates and things like that. We welcome the federal government's interest in investing in more housing around our country and we'd be looking to grow that engagement in the out years.

We mentioned as well that we made some election commitments that this Budget delivers on. Matters for those future budgets will be addressed at the time.

Ms JOHNSTON - My constituents have been experiencing significant issues when getting social housing providers to do basic maintenance, let alone emergency and urgent repairs. How does your government ensure that social housing providers meet their maintenance obligations?

Mr ELLIS - This is a really important area and one that I've been quite exercised in, that we want to make sure that we're providing better housing maintenance for people and providing comfortable homes. Homes Tasmania provides maintenance for about 6846 assets. The 2023-24 budget commits \$24.57 million for the provision of maintenance services for Homes Tasmania and property maintenance provided statewide through two regional head contractors. Homes Tasmania is currently considering future contracting models for the property and procurement services.

We think there's also an important role for us to play in terms of community housing providers. I'm not sure whether you're referring to Homes Tasmania or community housing?

Ms JOHNSTON - Community.

Mr ELLIS - In Tasmania, we have tier 1 community housing providers Centacare Evolve, Mission Australia, Housing Tasmania, Community Housing Tasmania Ltd and Housing Choices Tasmania. They manage half of Tasmania's social housing stock under the Community Housing Growth Program. These providers deliver tenancy and property management within their resource allocations. They manage both responsive and plan maintenance, prioritising upgrades based on need and available resources. Their 2024-25 asset management plans focus on maximising planned maintenance opportunities. That enables them to get ahead of the game.

We've just recently had some quite encouraging data from community housing providers on their satisfaction rates in terms of maintenance from their tenants - a big increase, which is encouraging because community housing providers are implementing strategies that extend property lifespan and reduce maintenance costs long term, while maintaining quality and service. The renewal and modification opportunities throughout the property's life cycle, particularly between tenancies, is important to increasing housing diversity as well.

I might pass over to the team from Homes Tasmania with regards CHP maintenance provision and some of the work that's been done there.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Maintenance is always a rub point where people want things and want it now. We know, as a provider of maintenance to the portfolio we manage, that lining up some of that can be difficult. All of us have faced issues over the last couple of years with supply of trades and being able to coordinate trades, some of them turning up on time and all of those sorts of things. We're all battling with that but I appreciate it's difficult for people. Community housing providers are tier 1 providers, there is a registrar of community housing and they are required to report to them on a lot of their metrics and turnarounds. My understanding is all of them are currently at or above their requirements for maintenance and other client service.

Mr ELLIS - Some of those metrics I mentioned before are quite encouraging. If you look at our performance metrics that have been provided recently, there's been a significant increase in tenant and maintenance satisfaction from 2022-23 to 2023-24, and a movement in Tasmanian CHP performance from being below all the other CHPs, so the national category average in 2022-23, to being above the average in 2023-24. In terms of tenant satisfaction, we've increased our sector performance for the financial year we've just had to 85.6 per cent. That's above the national average of 83.2 per cent and it's also above the sector performance in Tasmania from the year before, which was 79.5 per cent, which, as I said when I came in, was quite concerned about we clearly had some opportunities to do things better.

In terms of maintenance satisfaction for Tasmanian CHPS this last financial year, sector performance satisfaction is now at 80.3 per cent. That's above the national average of 75.9 per cent and it's significantly above our performance in 2022-23, which was 75.7 per cent.

We recognise that there's more that needs to be done. We need to continue to invest in these assets. That's part of the reason why, from a Homes Tasmania perspective, we committed to an additional \$20 million for additional maintenance services as part of our election commitments over and above what we currently spend. We recognise that when you're able to get on top of maintenance and start being proactive, it enables you to provide a better service and save money in the long run.

Ms JOHNSTON - Whilst I welcome the 'meanwhile' use of the old Bethlehem House, and recognise the government's contribution there, has the government started to make plans for the replacement of those 36-plus, or thereabouts, accommodation places for women when the site will be used for its permanent purpose in approximately three years. Rather than waiting until we get to the three years, are you starting to make plans now?

Mr ELLIS - We need to continue to invest. And you're right, it is a 'meanwhile' use. That's important, it means that we're able to address that service need over coming years, but we need to continue to grow our services to replace that. The 2024-25 Tasmanian Budget commits an additional \$2.7 million over two years to expand critical housing and homelessness services for women, including \$1.5 million over the next two years to contribute towards an additional 100 rapid rehousing properties. That's up from 50, trebling the number. And more support for women and children experiencing family violence who are at risk of homelessness. There's \$150 000 per annum over two years to provide additional support workers and crisis accommodation services at Jireh House following the addition of three units under the Commonwealth-funded Safe Places program. I thank them for that contribution,. There is \$450,000 per annum over two-year payment to provide additional support workers and crisis accommodation services at McCombe House following the addition of six units under the Commonwealth-funded Safe Spaces program.

Providing safe and appropriate housing and homelessness services for women and children is one of the top priorities for the Tasmanian government's housing strategy across 20 years. In addition to the social housing and private rental assistance, women can access 14 of the 20 homelessness shelters in Tasmania. There's brokerage services which provide access to alternative accommodation when shelters are at capacity, and 50 homes currently secured under the Rapid Family Violence Rapid Rehousing program.

Some of the recently completed projects as well for women: 15 additional units at Launceston at the women's shelter, which doubles their capacity; there's 25 additional units at the Hobart women's shelter, in your electorate, eight additional units at the CatholicCare women's shelter in the south; and two additional units at Jirah House. I might look to the team from Homes Tasmania in terms of any further work we're doing around future provision of service.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - A key part of that is also delivering more housing that women can live in permanently, rather than have temporary accommodation. We know in most of our women's services that you can get the equivalent of bed block because there is nowhere to go, so it's really important to focus on where women can go afterwards. Women are a higher proportion of the people who are housed in social housing.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, I know we've touched on this already, but I'd still like to find out more about it because I know it's got plenty of interest. That's around the Fountainside hotel for key worker accommodation. Can you let us know what the proposed use of that is going to be and how it fits within the government's housing priorities?

Mr ELLIS - I think it's important that we put some more information on the record regarding this important property purchase and part of our strategy. Our government, through Homes Tasmania, is progressing a key worker accommodation model to support Tasmanians working in key sectors including health care and tourism, and across critical industries. A 50-unit Fountainside hotel is just one example, and will house key healthcare workers from the Royal Hobart Hospital, supporting our frontline services with housing options that would otherwise need to be sourced from the private rental market.

Securing Fountainside comes just months after our government, through Homes Tasmania, secured a new 24-unit complex at Punchbowl to house essential staff for the Launceston General Hospital in the beautiful electorate of Bass. Providing accommodation for key workers will relieve pressure on the private rental market and assist government departments and other businesses to attract and retain essential staff for the operation of their services.

We make no secrets about this being part of our full-spectrum approach to housing in Tasmania. Key workers are listed as a priority within both the Tasmanian Housing Strategy and the Action Plan. In taking the Homes Tasmania bill through parliament, the then minister named up key worker accommodation on the first page of his second reading speech. Our government's 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future shows that we are committed to delivering more key worker accommodation to grow Tasmanian frontline services and developing innovative housing solutions to deliver more housing across the full spectrum in our state.

Dr BROAD - How many properties has Homes Tasmania purchased that have existing tenants?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - In what timeframe?

Dr BROAD - What timeframe can you provide? The other question is how many of these tenants are at risk of homelessness or rental stress if they are evicted?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly, in knowing some of the properties that Homes Tasmania has purchased, they're often quite fit for purpose and have been providing that secure long-term accommodation for Tasmanians doing it tough already. They've often been supported to be delivered by governments in the past, and this locks that in in terms of long-term security for those homes and those tenants who might otherwise have been eligible but haven't put themselves on the register. By being able to secure those homes, we can secure their tenancy in their future. I'll pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We're just looking for the numbers, but the properties that we bought with sitting tenants were largely properties that were exiting the national rental affordability scheme, so the subsidy had ended. Those tenants had started off on what the Commonwealth calls an affordable rent - 74.9 per cent of market with an income cap. When we did a review of those properties, we discovered that all of those people bar two were eligible for social housing, so we shifted them into social housing leases. They went through the process and did it.

One person didn't want to live in social housing and wouldn't give us any details and chose to leave. Another family had two high-end cars - can't remember the model - and owned a couple of restaurants and were away above our eligibility limit. Everybody else was secured and put onto a social housing lease, so actually provided with more security of tenure. A lot of those people were old. When we were approached to buy those properties, we were approached by vendors who knew what the outcome would be for people in those properties. We decided prevention was better than cure and decided to purchase those properties. Have we got the data?

Ms STONE -. We have the data. In 2022-23, we have the information that is more than Tom described. There are 81 in total for that year, and 70 of them were through the NRAS scheme.

Dr BROAD - You don't have figures for 2023-24?

Ms STONE - Not here.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We can look, but I don't recall buying any. We can double check that.

Dr BROAD - What is the strategy for repaying Homes Tasmania's housing debt?

Mr ELLIS - I'm not sure you've been listening for the last couple of hours, Dr Broad, but we've quite clearly said that there are some opportunities to develop additional revenue. Things like the sale of affordable land, the growth in the government's equity as part of the MyHome shared equity program and other opportunities when it comes to affordable housing in Tasmania. There are also opportunities too in terms of key worker accommodations. We provide those services on a commercial lease, but with the security that comes with Homes Tasmania.

We're looking at all of those options, and obviously the Tasmanian government contributes to ensure that the debt servicing costs are also taken care of. I'll pass to Ms Morgan-Thomas to provide an update on affordable home ownership.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We know that people who purchase in the shared home ownership products that we've had over a number of years - at the moment about \$4 million to \$5 million is what we predict will come back in this year where people choose to sell the property, in which case they buy and pay our share out at the time or they refinance.

The rate of refinancing has slowed down a little bit, probably because of interest rates. That will pick up over time, and if you look at KPI 6, the growth in housing, I think around about 5 or 6 years is when people start to think, 'Can I refinance?', or something like that. That's a fairly standard time for people turning over properties that will pick up over time. Most shared equity programs - once they're not in a growth phase and when they're in a stasis phase - actually pay for themselves.

It'll be a while before we get to that because it's going through considerable growth at the moment, but we know that when we do that my board has a policy setting that if you bring in capital or something like that, then you seek to retire debt with it or you spend it on more capital, but you don't use it for operational expenses. They're very clear on the difference between CapEx and OpEx.

Dr BROAD - Has the minister provided Homes Tasmania with any direction regarding an appropriate capital structure and debt level as per Homes Tasmania's Ministerial Statement of Expectations?

Mr ELLIS - Revising the Ministerial Statement of Expectations - there hasn't been one provided currently and we haven't finalised that ministerial statement of expectations yet, but we'll be working through those matters.

Dr BROAD - Are you saying you don't have a view on the appropriate capital structure and debt levels?

Mr ELLIS - We mentioned before we've got a commitment of around \$1.5 billion to deliver our target of 10,000 social and affordable homes by 2032. Broadly speaking, those are the parameters that we work to, and then there are opportunities within that for Homes Tasmania to be delivering their own-source revenue through the sale of affordable land, through the MyHome shared equity program and other affordable housing options. We're working through that process.

That \$1.5 billion for our 10,000 homes target is a longstanding commitment, and that's, broadly speaking, the framework that we operate in.

Mr BAYLEY - On that, minister, I'm sure Dr Broad was listening, it's just that your answers aren't particularly convincing in terms of paying down that debt, and it's writ large in the Budget - \$720 million by the end of the forward Estimates. Am I hearing in your answer that you're willing for Homes Tasmania to go \$1.5 billion into debt in order to deliver services?

Mr ELLIS - Didn't you want to deliver a billion dollars over the forward Estimates as part of your alternative budget?

Mr BAYLEY - The question is for you, minister. Is that what you are telling us?

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Mr ELLIS - Our plan is around half-a-billion dollars over the forward Estimates. Your plan is for a billion. I'm not sure you should be complaining about the debt that we might be taking on when you want to double it, so -

Mr BAYLEY - Are you going to limit the debt to \$1.5 billion?

CHAIR - Order. If we can get the question without an interjection and the answer without an interjection as well, that will make things a lot easier, and then we will go to a break after that.

Mr BAYLEY - I don't think we're going to get any answers in that space anyway and I'm not sure that you really necessarily know. When it comes to homelessness, obviously the Housing First model is incredibly important - wrap-around services and having that integrated in the social housing that we provide to people.

The strategy states that Homes Tasmania will develop a housing-first approach to homelessness by the end of the year. How is progress going on that strategy? When can we expect to see it and what can we expect to see in it?

Mr ELLIS - Sure. The Tasmanian Budget commits considerable funding to support homelessness services of about \$45 million, and within that an additional \$2.1 million over two years to expand critical homelessness services, including \$150,000 per annum over two years to provide additional support workers at Jireh House, which I mentioned before; \$450,000 from McCombe, \$450,000 per annum over two years to provide key development coaches at each safe space site across Tasmania, which will provide intensive support to those people sleeping rough who access safe spaces and, indeed, our goal is to see homelessness reach functional zero, where homelessness is virtually non-existent and any instances are rare, brief and non-recurring.

The key priorities and actions in the 20-year Tasmanian Housing Strategy and Action Plan are focused on achieving that vision, and preventing early intervention will be crucial, together with our strong support for the homelessness service sector and the workforce.

New supply of social and affordable homes is also critical as part of that work and in addition to the substantial investment of more than \$45 million annually is provided to Homes Tasmania to support specialist homelessness services, and there are 20 homelessness shelters, and I'll pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas to add to my remarks there.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thank you, minister. Housing First has a worldwide evidence base around it. It's a very hard thing to deliver when you've got a lot of people on the housing register, because it requires you to have a house first and then provide the services around it. It requires a significant reorganisation of the service system. So, it's not a thing you can do overnight, but we know that we want to start working towards how we can do that, and are considering at the moment whether we will do a pilot and what that would look like and where it would be. Because, when you have a lot of large institutional type settings, where you have shelters and things like that, you can't just suddenly decommission those and say, 'No everybody's in a house and we'll just wrap the supports around it.'

But we know in our own portfolio of social housing that actually keeping people in tenancies is a really important thing. We have four positions now who are dedicated to working

with tenants to keep them in their tenancies. That's the first thing that we can do. Some of our tenants have a hoarding problem, particularly in our older and disability client groups. So, we work with people so they can keep their tenancies, so that they don't become homeless. That's a key part of Housing First as well.

Mr BAYLEY - In terms of the action plan and the Housing First approach being developed by the end of the year, what can we expect to see in relation to that? Do you envisage publishing something articulates your approach to Housing First and homelessness when it comes to this? Or were you just going to start to see it being integrated into the services you provide?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I'm not expecting we'll have a glossy document. I'm expecting that it's actually the intellectual work about how we do it and how we could start moving towards it that we are working on in Homes Tasmania.

Mr BAYLEY - And do you envisage measuring reporting against that and setting yourselves targets and reporting on it in the dashboard?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I don't know whether we'd be reporting in the dashboard. I'll take that one on notice. But I do know that we need to pilot it. You can't just go broad scale with something like this. I've been involved in Housing First pilots before, about doing it in a small area, small group of people and knowing what works.

It's actually very intensive work, particularly when you're working with people who have chronic homelessness. Some of it will be about picking the client group that you start with. But we want it to succeed. We don't want it to fail. So, I think it's important that we spend a big time on it.

Mr BAYLEY - I appreciate that it's challenging -

Mr ELLIS - Probably some of our expanded data that we've got on our dashboard is helpful in terms of that as well, so that we can get a sense of, for example, there's a living situation that's now outlined which only has slightly under 500 people in the homeless category when they're on the register, then with others in temporary and secure accommodation. We're already starting to report on some of the data that might help to better inform the community about the challenge.

CHAIR - All right, your time being 4.35 p.m., we'll take a short break. As time taken for breaks must be made up, I'll encourage members to be as quick as they can. There'll be no more than 10 minutes. We'll finish off. Thank you.

The Committee suspended from 4.34 p.m. to 4.46 p.m.

CHAIR - We are back on. We'll start off with Mrs Pentland, thank you.

Mrs PENTLAND - Minister, I refer to the building and construction industry forecast for Tasmania, September 2024, released by the Master Builders Australia. Given the alarming 23.3 per cent decline in new home starts over the past year, how does the government plan to boost housing development to meet the growing demand and address the housing shortfall in Tasmania?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mrs Pentland. Certainly this is a key concern for Tasmania and other jurisdictions where we're seeing a slowdown in the building and construction industry, particularly with persistently high interest rates and, and federal government policy settings that are driving that. We're very committed to taking action in Tasmania so that we can address that and ensure we continue to bolster the housing and construction industry.

We're looking to bring more housing options to Tasmanians, more supply online and allow more Tasmanians to realise their dreams of home ownership. We've mentioned a lot today, obviously, delivering on the commitment for 10 000 more social and affordable homes by 2032 and that's increasing supply for the construction market and driving the Tasmanian economy. We also need to continue to work with the private sector and obviously homes, we've been able to deliver a large number of dwellings. In 2022-23 for example, there was a record high number of social housing dwellings being constructed. That's 769 and that's approximately 25 per cent of the new housing developed in all of Tasmania in that year.

You mentioned before, that in the year to June 2024, there's about 2574 residential dwellings approved. That's the 16 per cent decrease in the number of approvals to the year June 2023. It's a national trend, but we need to act here to stimulate development and so some of the things that I talked about earlier, things like having the stamp duty for new apartments, that's important in driving construction in that medium density or higher density market. We have expanded the residential land rebate which is another one of the areas that we committed to at the election, offering density incentive grants and also providing short-term interest-free loans for medium density projects. So that combination of incentives that meet private demand as well as acting directly to increase the number of social affordable homes provided by Homes Tasmania is a key part of the strategy.

Mrs PENTLAND - Thanks for that. You may have answered this, but with a 56.1 per cent drop in higher density housing developments, how does the government intend to remove barriers and incentivise the construction of more affordable, well-located homes in urban areas?

Mr ELLIS - I mentioned a few there and the higher density construction market can be quite lumpy, particularly in a small state like Tasmania where you know we get a development that comes through and it's completed and that all counts to a particular month or quarter and then it's a little while and then we see another big increase in other projects comes on. I spoke about the halving stamp duty for new apartments that's in that space, residential land rebates are probably going to be more focused on the, you know, the broader lower density area, the density incentive grants are going to be important and the providing short-term interest-free loans for medium density projects. Those are in the incentive space. The other area that we need to look strongly at is around planning and we'll be talking planning later as part of this committee or I'm happy to discuss now.

A key part of what we're looking to do as a government is take the politics out of planning. We've seen, for example, an important medium density development in Hobart in Argyle St was going to be delivered that would provide unit accommodation for over-55 women at risk of homelessness. Despite the Hobart City Council supporting that proposal in that planning level, their elected councillors voted against it. That has set that project back significantly and they're working through the appeals process to continue to deliver it.

What we're looking to bring into parliament is legislation with development assessment panels that take that local politics out. We noted that the local council planning department proposed that it be accepted. As far as a development assessment panel, it would be much more certain in terms of the outcome. The rules would be clearer because it's based on actual objective facts as opposed to the vagaries of local politics. So, expect to see that legislation coming into parliament in coming weeks and months.

It's a really exciting area and it's one that I know the construction industry is very strongly supportive of because, sadly, Mr Bayley and his NIMBY friends have been blocking construction projects around Tasmania and this will take some of the politics out of planning.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, there's much interest in the government's MyHome shared equity scheme. Can you explain to the committee the success of it please?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. Our government's MyHome shared equity program supports more Tasmanians to realise their dream of home ownership. MyHome provides not only housing security for program participants but reduces pressure on the broader housing system.

As at 30 August 2024, 501 MyHome mortgages have been entered into and that's now assisting over 1300 Tasmanians into home ownership since the program's expansion/inception on 1 July 2022. These figures far exceed the ambitious initial targets of 150 per financial year, with 270 of these taken up in the last financial year. This demonstrates strong growth and support for the program. Our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, importantly, raises the government's shared equity contribution from \$200,000 to \$300,000 or 40 per cent, whichever is the lesser amount for the purchase price of the new home.

It's further supported by an increase to income limits for purchases. This equity contribution is interest free for the life of the mortgage and repayable when the property is sold or the mortgage is refinanced by the owner.

In summary, more support for more Tasmanians, and, aligning with the changes to stamp duty caps, the purchase price caps for existing homes through MyHome has increased to \$750 000. Importantly, MyHome supports our building and construction industry by assisting Tasmanians to contract for the construction of over 140 new homes since 1 July 2021, and our MyHome shared equity program is a significant success story and can't wait to assist even more Tasmanians to realise their dream of home ownership.

Dr BROAD - Thank you. Looking at the criteria for selection for tenders for Homes Tasmania's apartment development purchase program and they seem quite restrictive. I think the minimum criteria is 25 apartments, with Homes Tasmania purchasing 10 per cent, which at the minimum is three apartments, leaving the developer with 22 apartments to sell at great financial risk to this construction company. Why has this program been developed in this restrictive way?

Mr ELLIS - You know that the alternative would then be selling 100 per cent rather than 90 per cent. Well, this it's supposed to be risky. They wouldn't go into apartment development at all.

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Dr BROAD - Well, they aren't, that's the problem. The industry is saying that at the moment they can't make things stack up with apartments simply because the cost of a new apartment is more than the market can bear.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, Dr Broad, obviously we're talking about apartment developers. That's what they do. They develop apartments and we're looking for opportunities to provide additional support for them, whether that's private incentives to increase demand or that's, say, being potentially a key anchor tenet for them with the 10 per cent commitment. We think that that's a good incentive that will help some of those developers with the marginal utility in terms of that decision to invest in those properties and help get some more projects over the line.

I might pass to the team from Homes Tasmania in terms of what that opportunity represents for those developers.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's currently under procurement and we're in the middle of a procurement.

Dr BROAD - So, there's nobody successfully gotten through the other end yet?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - No, because we haven't completed the procurement process yet.

Dr BROAD - So, there's no successful tenderers at the moment. How many have you got in the pipeline?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - We're still in a procurement process, so I don't really want to talk about that, but there was a commitment for three, ideally one in each region, but we're in the process of reviewing the applications.

Dr BROAD - Reviewing the actual applications? How many applications have you received?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - I'm uncomfortable talking about a procurement that's currently underway -

Dr BROAD - Not even the number?

Ms MORGAN-WICKS - No.

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to provide further information when we come closer to the end of that process. It's a live procurement process at the moment. It's important to respect that process.

Dr BROAD - To what programs have the housing debt waiver funds - the \$157 million, I think - been allocated?

Mr ELLIS - I will refer you to our previous answer on that, Dr Broad.

Mr BAYLEY - I've got some planning questions, specifically about Chambroad and Kangaroo Bay. Chambroad's hotel development proposal in Kangaroo Bay is still before the

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Supreme Court over a land ownership dispute. The minister, Michael Ferguson, ruled out a major project status for this project because he believed it didn't have the grounds. Given that the legal matter is still not yet resolved, do you agree any move towards an assessment as a major project is inappropriate?

Mr ELLIS - There's a statutory process underway as well as a legal process underway. I'll provide some information that I can. On 9 August 2024, Chambroad lodged a revised proposal for the Kangaroo Bay Hotel development to be declared as a major project. This follows an early request made in 2023 that my predecessor determined did not meet the relevant criteria for declaring a major project. It was determined that the earlier proposal did not have at least two of the three eligibility attributes for it to be declared a major project. Specifically, the proposal did not demonstrate that:

The project will have a significant impact on or make a significant contribution to a region's economy, environment or social fabric.

The project was considered to lack strategic importance to the region and was not of significant scale and complexity. This decision in no way reflects the merits of the proposal. This was about protecting the intent of the major projects assessment pathway, which is specifically designed to assess large, regionally significant, and complex projects. Consultation on the revised declaration request is currently occurring with neighbouring owners and occupiers, state agencies and regulators. I can advise Mr Bayley that a decision on declaration is due in October 2024.

Mr BAYLEY - What would have changed, then, if minister Ferguson ruled it out and said there weren't grounds? Is it a different proposal or have they just rewritten it to try to meet those eligibility criteria?

Mr ELLIS - Mr Bayley, out of respect for the statutory process which is underway, I think I've outlined the information that's available. We're obviously working through that process. A decision on declaration is due in October 2024.

Mr BAYLEY - Is there a public consultation process, or are you just selecting neighbours and key stakeholders? Surely this is of significance and community concern? You've got the council that is deeply concerned and want their land back. You've got the community that doesn't support this proposal. Surely there needs to be a public process if we're going to go through this all again.

Mr ELLIS - I will introduce to the table Mr Sean McPhail, acting director at the State Planning Office, to provide some information around major projects, assessments, and the consultation process that's held within that statutory process.

Mr McPHAIL - I will be general around the process. This is the declaration phase part of the process in which there's a consultation process with neighbouring owners and occupiers, and also relevant state agencies and regulators. That's the process which is legislated for. The public consultation process actually happens when there is a declaration made and that gets into the assessment process. There are various stages in which there are assessment criteria created, in which that is publicly consulted on.

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Mr BAYLEY - Is there no option in this declaration phase for it to go out to public consultation? This is an issue of significant public concern. We've been around this merry-go-round once already. The council wants its land back. Are there mechanisms within the major projects declaration to go out to wider public consultation? Is there anything that precludes that?

Mr McPHAIL - There's nothing that precludes that. We're just following the legislative requirements of the major projects.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, would you make a commitment to go out to public consultation over the declaration of this as a major project? You've got the capacity clearly, as we heard from the officer.

Mr ELLIS - The decision around declaration is only the beginning of a process.

Mr BAYLEY - Sure, but it's a process that removes -

Mr ELLIS - If we choose to begin the process, hypothetically - or let's speak in general. If we begin any process in terms of major projects by declaring that, as Mr McFarlane's clearly outlined, that's then when you start the consultation process. An assessment for major projects is potentially a 12-month process. You're asking whether we should have consultation to begin a process to start consulting. There are processes that we'll work through.

Mr BAYLEY - The public has an interest in this, because the major projects process doesn't have a third-party merits-based reviews to it. There is no capacity for the community to appeal an assessment or an approval that's done under a major project declaration. The community have an important stake here in that. If this major projects declaration is accepted, they are having a significant piece of their third-party rights of appeal taken away from them. I would have thought it would be entirely reasonable for the community to be consulted about whether or not this project should go into a major project assessment. They'll lose rights. Have you met with the developer this year?

Mr ELLIS - I have.

Mr BAYLEY - When did you meet them?

Mr ELLIS - We met before we received any application. We regularly meet with people that are looking to invest in Tasmania in general. That doesn't necessarily reflect on the project. As I mentioned before, there is a statutory process that's outlined in legislation around consultation. If a project is declared a major project, then that's when consultation happens.

Mr BAYLEY - How many times have you met with them? When did you meet with them?

Mr ELLIS - I met once. As I mentioned, it was before receiving the information, and not long prior to that information being provided. I'm happy to follow up in terms of an exact date. It's part of our regular routine disclosure of our ministerial schedules.

Ms BESWICK - I thought Kristie was going.

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Ms JOHNSTON - I'm happy to, if that's okay. Thank you, Chair.

Mr ELLIS - This is very polite.

Ms JOHNSTON - It's collaboration between the independents. We're very polite.

Minister, you mentioned before in a Dorothy Dixier from Mr Fairs about the MyHome equity program. Questions have been raised in parliament about the delays in processing applications. I've also been made aware of delays in processing applications for the stamp duty concession. Do you accept that this has meant that many first home buyers had their offers rejected, because vendors are refusing to accept offers from anyone who has to go through this process, because of this lengthy delays?

Mr ELLIS - I'm happy to refer the question in regards to stamp duty perhaps to the Minister for Finance, that would be the appropriate place. In terms of the MyHome shared equity program, it is supporting more Tasmanians to realise their dream of home ownership. As I mentioned before, as at 30 August 2024, 501 MyHome mortgages had been entered into. That's assisting over 1,300 Tasmanians into a home since the program's conception.

Ms JOHNSTON - You deny that there are any delays in processing the application?

Mr ELLIS - There are different things that we need to consider. Because we've expanded the scheme to take into account purchases of existing properties, we then need to ensure that we're undergoing due diligence as far as the property's condition. That's an important consumer protection for those people. New homes are obviously required to be built to a certain standard, whereas existing properties not necessarily so. Inspections need to take place. That's an important consumer protection.

The growth in the MyHome shared equity program clearly demonstrates that it's a strong program. Where there are opportunities for us to continue to improve it, we always look to those. An example that occurred recently was around the parameters for insurance providers. Homes Tasmania worked with the Bank of us as the provider to ensure that there was good access to more options and choices for providing home insurance. We think that's improved the opportunities that are available to people.

There are, of course, opportunities for us to improve in terms of time frames, noting that we wouldn't want to throw the baby out with the bath water for important consumer protections. These are often lower income Tasmanians and buying a home with a lower deposit, so, it is important that responsible lending is a key part of what we look to do. I will pass over to Ms Morgan-Thomas and the team to outline some of that work that is underway.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - Thanks, minister. We will show that graph again where in in less than two years we have gone from 200 to 600. That's massive growth in any program. We met with Bank of Us in the first diverse areas of quarterly meetings. Looking at now, we are in establishment phase where we do have some growth pains, where are the things that we can trim down, and there are three parties in this and with a fourth off to the side. So, there is a tripartite agreement between ourselves, the Bank of Us and the co-purchaser in order to do it.

Co-purchasers typically have not bought something before so they are very keen to get things done, but do not always follow the right path. There are a number of people who have

entered into contracts without having got pre-approval first. Some of those things can be harder for us to fix. We can certainly fix things like times in our processing and the Bank of Us processing. So, we have made a commitment to do that and look at how we can bring those things down.

As the minister said, we did have a requirement in the clause around a particular type of domestic worker insurance. We have removed that requirement and are in the process of writing to existing co-purchasers to say if you want out of this you can. One of the effects of having that requirement in there was that not all home and contents insurers will insure for that. So, that reduced the pool of insurers that they could go to, but we have removed that because we heard the customer feedback.

I was really interested last week to meet a mortgage broker firm that has done 20 per cent to 25 per cent of the mortgages through My Home - they really like it. I just happened to run into them at a function and I was saying, 'What do you think of My Home?' and they said, 'We love this program'. And, yes, it takes a bit longer, but we work with our co-purchasers to manage them through the process, explain to them that they are having their consumer protections enforced by us because we know how to do this and we are also protecting the value of our assets.

So, we make sure it's valued properly, we make sure there's a property inspection and, importantly, we also check the title information because, when you are buying an existing house, you need to know that that extension on the back that you really like has actually got a certificate in place.

Some of the delays come through getting the certificates from councils. Some of those things we can't control, but we know that there are things that we can streamline and some that we can overlap, so, we are working through those. It is hugely successful and these are growing pains of a very successful program.

Mr ELLIS - In terms of some of those protections, we have been made aware that there have been several that have been rejected because of major structural issues, maintenance issues or council permit issues. Ms Morgan-Thomas outlined, say, that with extensions or have been accepted conditional on maintenance work being completed by the vendor before settlement. So, there are always opportunities to do things better, but these protections exist for very good reason, as part of the nature of the transaction that we are now undertaking as part of this expanded program, and I am sure, as a member of parliament, you would be very supportive of those protections too.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you, minister. My constituents in Glenorchy continue to be frustrated that the development at Nagle Place in Glenorchy, which I believe was under construction by Multi-Res on behalf of, I am not sure if it was Homes Tasmania or another social housing provider - has not continued to work on that particular site. There are brick walls in the ground and not much else, some foundation work. Can you give an update on that housing development and when can we expect there to be a resolution to that particular issue when Multi-Res collapsed?

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I can tell you that this morning I signed a contract to complete that development.

Ms JOHNSTON - Excellent. Is there more that you wanted to add to that?

Mr GILMOUR - Through you, minister. Effectively, with the collapse of the previous contractor, we've had to go and redocument the projects so that we were comfortable with the design documents and we held all of the insurance and liability from the architects perspective. We went through a retendering process and it's one of our first construction tenders under the new format tender. We've been in negotiation with the successful tendering party through that process and it's just about to be announced effectively now that the contract has been agreed.

Ms JOHNSTON - When do we expect those homes to be ready? A number of people are waiting for them.

Mr GILMOUR - Probably looking at about 12 months.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - It's been incredibly frustrating for us.

Ms JOHNSTON - And our residents too.

Ms MORGAN-THOMAS - I get that the government is a model contractor, so we can't just go, 'oh, you've collapsed, forget it and just go and do something else'. We have to go through a very lengthy legal process, which we did in good faith. So I'm confident very few builders want to take over something that's half done because they have to warrant it.

Ms JOHNSTON - Thank you.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, going on from Ms Pentland's question about medium density developments, I know the government has made commitments on planning framework that supports greater density housing across Tasmania. What are we doing to advance this work?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Fairs. Our government continues to provide a planning framework that supports growth, investment and more housing for our state. This includes a greater focus on appropriate densification in areas of our towns and cities to support Tasmanians to have access to housing, including proximity to infrastructure and services within their community. The first five-yearly review of the state planning provisions or SPPs has prioritised a number of projects to respond to the current housing pressures.

The improving residential standards in Tasmania project is one of these projects that will deliver improvements to the planning requirements for housing. With background analysis and technical input, the project is providing recommendations for improvements to the urban residential zones in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, ensuring that we can provide a greater range of quality housing types including medium density housing departments, developments like apartments in well-located areas.

The project is also considering improvements to the subdivision requirements for residential areas, focusing on layout and liveability for new neighbourhoods and promoting greater uptake of zones that can deliver more density and housing diversity. Draft recommendations were recently made available for public comment. These suggest a set of new parameters for assessing housing development, including improved requirements for assessing apartments in the business and mixed-use zones, and several options for the implementation in the Tasmanian Planning Scheme. I'm aware that the State Planning Office

has undertaken several briefings with stakeholders on the draft recommendations including a broad online presentation and question and answer session.

Feedback from those who work closely with the planning scheme in council's community and industry will help shape the final recommendations for the project. Recommendations from the project will be used to prepare amendments to the SPPs. We're getting on with this important work to provide a framework that supports greater densification for housing from all Tasmanians.

Dr BROAD - Minister, what do you think is a reasonable time frame for you to respond to housing correspondence from members of parliament?

Mr ELLIS - It would depend on the query. Sometimes, they're simple matters, sometimes they're more complex. It is not a one-size-fits-all. In my office, we like to work around a four to six-week process. We like to work closely with the housing providers, whether that's Homes Tasmania or community housing providers before I write a letter back so that we can do all of our due diligence. I'm providing correspondence that provides someone with a meaningful update rather than simply 'thank you for contacting me'.

We like to work closely with those housing providers in that process, for example, have maintenance issues resolved or someone provided with a transfer and then write back confirming that. The letter is the formal part of the process but the work is much more involved in an interpersonal level between my staff, between Homes Tasmania staff, Housing Connect staff and the community housing providers as well.

Dr BROAD - The reason I'm asking is because my colleagues and I have noted that there's been a lengthening of time in receiving correspondence from you as minister compared to previous ministers. I think we've got about a dozen issues that are outstanding, some from July. I have some that are quite urgent that have been waiting.

I'll give you an example, one from 9 August. I won't identify the constituent, but this constituent has obtained a Housing Choices property and is waiting for modifications to be completed before they are able to move in. The modifications have been approved by her occupational therapist and funded by the NDIS. However, this constituent is waiting for the go-ahead from Housing Choices and is currently paying two rents, the current property and the Housing Choices property. Obviously paying two rents is a significant burden. I was seeking your assistance in rectifying the situation as soon as possible. We haven't received a response that was sent 9 August.

Mr ELLIS - We are happy to follow up about that individual matter. Again, we prefer to look to these matters in-depth and sometimes that can take time. But it's important I think that we're actually taking action rather than providing the quickest response that's not necessarily delivering an outcome. So, we look to work with constituents of yours. Maybe you don't receive the response back, but we're actively working with them with Housing Connect and Homes Tasmania and the housing providers. That's, generally speaking, the way that I prefer to do correspondence with members of parliament, that we be proactive around the issue and work towards making progress and then provide correspondence back. But that's -

Dr BROAD - I'd imagine that particular issue is one that's quite urgent. This constituent has been paying rent in two properties for six weeks, so there should be some level of urgency

in getting a response, especially if it's as simple as Housing Choices needing to give permission for modifications to take place.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, and as I said, I'm happy to look into that matter with depth and obviously, sometimes that can take time, but very happy to follow up in terms of where we're at with that current one.

Dr BROAD - But I mean - I can go through each of the instances or I'm just seeking a commitment that you'll actually respond as soon as possible. We've got constituents with -

Mr ELLIS - We always look to respond as soon as possible, and as I say -

Dr BROAD - Well, in some instances you haven't. One from July, for example. What I'm saying is we're putting you on notice in effect because we're not getting timely responses and some of these cases are particularly urgent.

Mr ELLIS - What I'm saying is that we actually prefer to work directly with the tenant, with Housing Choices - sorry, I should say Housing Connect, community housing providers or Homes Tasmania. We're actually engaging with people on the depth of their inquiry. That kind of in-depth tailored approach to all those constituent inquiries that come across my desk is the approach that we prefer to take, that we work closely with those people so that we're getting the highest possible chance of a meaningful result.

Sometimes people don't get the response that they're looking for. For example, they're allocated a house immediately but certainly, I'm noticing that as a minister's office and myself, we take now a high degree of ownership of that process that helps to drive better outcomes.

CHAIR - Last question, then we'll go to Mr Bayley.

Dr BROAD - For example, and this is one that Ms Johnston would be familiar with too. A 70-year-old female pensioner placed in units in the northern suburbs which Centacare acknowledges they know has consistent antisocial and criminal behaviour. She does not have family visit as they are fearful from previous incidents occurring there. She has also been advised that Centacare staff cannot visit due to safety concerns. The resident has reported prostitution, drug use, violence, and stealing occurring frequently in the units. The resident is a priority status for placement and has listed seven suburbs. Her application has been ongoing for 12 months. She's merely told that there's nothing available; to report incidents to police and so on. She's even provided a doctor's certificate outlining her anxiety, fear and post-traumatic stress. We've sent a letter - Ms Haddad in this case - on 16 July, 6 August and 9 September, and still you have not bothered to respond.

Mr ELLIS - Yes, I'm aware of the particular case and it's important where we've got that cross-over with housing and police, that we're taking meaningful action on both because, obviously, we want to make sure there are safe neighbourhoods. There's the transfer process, but that doesn't help that broader community as well, so we need to be taking action with local police on those matters.

That is one of the good benefits of being Housing and Police minister, that we can actually expect a response from both agencies in terms of what they're doing to address both those matters. Are we talking along the road? Is that the particular matter?

Dr BROAD - I don't want to go into any more details, but the letter's sitting on your desk, so you could refer to that.

Mr ELLIS - There are obviously strategies. Rather than going into detail, I know that there are certain matters that you probably referred to where Homes Tasmania is currently working with CHPs around that process. That engagement is where we look to deliver outcomes for constituents. Obviously, the letter that I provide back at the end of that process is an important signpost along that way, but we really want to be engaging with people on an individual level and in the most meaningful, in-depth way possible, rather than providing a response back that doesn't necessarily deliver better outcomes for those people.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, on the State of the Environment report, obviously it was well over a decade late and your government missed two statutory reporting cycles before getting this one going and tabled. The Planning Commission asked for an extra two months to finish the State of the Environment report from June to the end of August. What was the reason for the delay and does it point to the fact that the Planning Commission needs additional funding for staff to continue its role reporting on the State of the Environment report functions and requirements into the future?

Mr ELLIS - Thank you, Mr Bayley. Yes, we delivered the State of the Environment report and that was tabled in parliament on 17 September. Part of our obligations is to deliver one in five years' time. The Tasmanian Planning Commission was originally allocated \$400,000 in the 2023-24 state Budget to complete the 2024 State of the Environment report, and as the project scope was developed, additional resources were drawn upon. We continue to work with the Tasmanian Planning Commission and other parts of government that were required to provide their part for it.

In terms of the extension that was requested by the Tasmanian Planning Commission, that request was made in June 2024 and I consented to a short extension of time for the submission of the report until 30 August 2024.

Mr BAYLEY - Was that a resource issue? What was the reason?

Mr ELLIS - The extension was to allow the Planning Commission sufficient time to finalise the 2024 State of the Environment report, including completion of its quality processes. There is significant data aggregation that needs to be done, and it is important to streamline the process for all that different data that's held by different agencies and bodies into one readable and digestible format. I was happy to provide that extension so that they could work through that and, obviously, we've delivered the report now.

Mr BAYLEY - Can you give a commitment to commission and adequately fund the August 2029 version of the State of the Environment report? Is it your intention to meet the next statutory deadline and fund it adequately?

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely. I am very much looking forward to being in government in 2029, Mr Bayley -

Mr BAYLEY - You have to get it going well before then.

Mr ELLIS - We'll be very keen to deliver that report. It's an extensive report. Quite clearly, the Tasmanian Planning Commission has done significant work - more than 600 pages as part of that report and consulting broadly across government, the university sector and other organisations in our community and in our economy -

Mr BAYLEY - It is extensive and we've put on record our thanks to those people involved, but it also had a number of holes in it. There were a number of indicators where the State of the Environment report couldn't report because it didn't have enough data to determine their status. These are things like water, wetlands, rice grass and land use intensification. What will be done between now and commissioning the next State of the Environment report to ensure that there's enough data to understand those environmental trends?

Mr ELLIS - We have Claire Hynes, the Acting Commissioner of the Tasmanian Planning Commission. We are talking about the data that wasn't available on certain key indicators that were provided.

Mr BAYLEY - The question is - was that a resourcing issue? The question was really to the minister about a commitment to provide the commission with adequate resources to start the data collection now so that those indicators can be formed into the next State of the Environment report. That is something you have control over as minister.

Mr ELLIS - As I said, Mr Bayley, it's not a resourcing matter, but where there's a lack of data extant in different agencies, that's something for us to look at. I'll look to Ms Hynes to see whether there's a further update that you can provide about the particular indicators that didn't have much data.

Ms HYNES - As you can appreciate, it was a very complex project, led by a great team and a great steering committee within the commission. We worked very hard to make sure we could complete that within the timeframe provided by the direction of the minister.

The report speaks to itself and the comprehensive nature of the report. Volume 1 and volume 2 with the technical findings are all backed up by all the technical reports in volume 2. It's a result of extensive consultation that the team undertook with government departments; we utilised all relevant data that was available not just within government but outside. All that data went through a rigorous process of checking and making sure that where there wasn't data available, that was simply stated as fact.

Mr BAYLEY - Have you made a request to government, or have you had any indication to government about those data holes and the need to fill them for future reports?

Ms HYNES - Yes. Certainly, our focus was getting the report done. As you spoke about before, we sought that two-month extension and that was to go through our quality assurance processes, and we absolutely needed that time to complete that. Moving forward, we're already undertaking a further audit review process looking at what we did, what we did well, what we could have done to improve, and moving towards how we are going to produce the next report within the five-year time frame.

Mr BAYLEY - Do you make recommendations around those holes in data?

CHAIR - That is the last question, Mr Bayley, and we will move on.

Ms HYNES - I believe it would be premature for me to discuss that at this point in time because that work is still ongoing. We're working through the finding and what it looks like from here on.

Mr ELLIS - I might make a point as well around these point-in-time snapshot reports. For example, I have experience in terms of delivering the State of the Forests report as well last year. They're interesting reports, but it does beg the question in the modern age in which we live, are there opportunities to, a bit like we do with our dashboards, provide a regular update. It would be a little bit like providing the State of the Housing report every five years where I randomly dump a whole bunch of data together.

It's actually more useful being able to provide information in a continuous disclosure space so that you have not necessarily real-time reporting, but more contemporaneous reporting. That helps to provide an ongoing picture of what our forests or our environment more broadly look like.

There are some challenges because in the State of the Environment report we deal with a lot of external agencies around their data. Some of that data provision might be a little bit more complicated, but certainly I know that it's an area in which we're going to have some big opportunities available to us over the next five years to better deliver those data so that we're not waiting for a one in every five-year kind of comet to fly past us. Instead -

Mr BAYLEY - More regular reporting would be very welcome, provided it was credible and authentic.

Mr ELLIS - On recommendation 3, to develop an environmental data strategy, we have some information here that the Australian Government's allocated \$1.5 million over three years to each state and territory through the Digital Environmental Assessment Program initiative to enhance the capability of the Tasmanian Natural Values Atlas to exchange biodiversity data with a national biodiversity data repository that's being developed.

The Natural Values Atlas is a web-based platform managed by NRE Tasmania that holds and delivers high-quality Tasmanian natural values information relied on for the development, assessment and approvals process. This enhancement will support better environmental assessment and decision-making. Through the interjurisdictional environment data and information oversight committee we're also engaging with the Australian Government on the establishment of Environment Information Australia and the development of a national environmental standard on data and information standards. We also collect reserve estate data feeding into the national Collaborative Australian Protected Areas Database.

There are some big opportunities coming up in the next five years and some of that technology-facilitated data provision will be a really exciting space for those of us nerdy enough to be interested in it.

Mr ELLIS - Ms Beswick, I know you're nerdy enough to be interested in this as well.

Ms BESWICK - Thanks. I'm very interested in strategic planning and how we are making sure that we're forward-thinking. Recently on the northwest coast, we've had the Homemaker Centre project knocked back, apparently due to the fact that the regional planning

document has not been updated and apparently we're in a declining population plan. Given that we've reached our population expectations about 10 years ago, 10 years early two years ago, why has that not triggered an update of that document? What is it that triggers updates of things like that where we're planning and in how we're thinking ahead and making our strategies?

Mr ELLIS - Ms Beswick, I hope I answer the question as best I can; just let me know if we're on the mark or not. We're committed to ensuring the Tasmanian planning system remains contemporary and fit for purpose. It's a system that backs in appropriate development and attracts investment and sustainable growth across the state.

The government is currently in the process of significant work to review all the regional land use strategies across Tasmania, including the Cradle Coast Regional Land Use Strategy in the northwest to ensure that these strategies and subordinate documents drafted and managed by our local councils support economic growth, support the supply of much-needed housing stock and incentivise development within our state.

In the 2021-22 budget, the government allocated \$3.45 million over three years to undertake comprehensive reviews of each of the regional strategies. The reviews are now well advanced with significant background work to prepare and inform the reviews completed in the last 12 months, including comprehensive residential demand and supply analysis in each region and a statewide industrial land strategy.

Importantly, the 2024-25 Budget provides an additional \$300,000, part of which will be used to support the oversight of the regional strategy reviews. I hope that answers your question.

Ms BESWICK - Obviously we're looking at this in a historical sense, going 'Oh, crap, we need to do that, why are we always in on the back foot?' Why are we not forward?

Mr ELLIS - Certainly, we need to take action in this space. What we've done strategically is, when we came to government there was no statewide planning scheme. Tasmania was a basket case; our regional planning was a labyrinth of inconsistencies. The foundation work that needed to be done was the statewide planning scheme.

Now that's coming to fruition, most of the councils in our electorate in the northwest are on line and we are working with the remaining five councils to complete that work. Broadly speaking, we have been able to make significant progress with all the other 24 councils in Tasmania. It is disappointing, I have to say, that we still have some of our largest councils that have not yet delivered their part for the statewide planning scheme, but we expect those to be coming on line very soon.

Now that we have, broadly speaking, completed that work around the statewide planning scheme, the next steps in the strategy are to provide an updated fit-for-purpose regional land use strategy for each region and then, beyond that, the Tasmanian planning policies as well that will sit as a kind of overarching strategy document above those documents.

We've completed significant work and now the next steps are to put that strategic piece together so that we can have that more integrated approach with regulation, policy and strategy.

Ms BESWICK - If you are saying the councils are holding that back, what have you incentivised? How have you supported them in that?

Mr ELLIS - Some are great. For example, Burnie has been in on the statewide planning scheme for four years. I don't blame small councils. For example, King Island is one of the later ones to come on line. It's a tiny council and with maybe 1200 ratepayers.

Sadly though, some of them have no excuse. Hobart, Derwent Valley and Kingborough, not to name names, but there is a very direct correlation with electing a Labor or Greens mayor with regard to finalising those processes, but we are continuing to work with them. We don't think that there is much of an excuse for delay. Certainly, Burnie was delivered four years ago but -

Ms BUTLER - You're not really into being a stately, are you, minister?

Mr ELLIS - We like to encourage people to step up because it is important that if some councils can do it, including quite small councils, then some of our largest councils need to get on board. There is a process that we are working through and we are looking to resolve that reasonably soon.

Where we are working really closely with councils on delivering those regional land use strategies, that process has been good. It has had its challenges at times because we are talking about regional documents and there can be a bit of inter-council competition as far as where we want to see investment and where we want to see homes built and all that sort of stuff, but, in general, councils have been pretty collegial. I appreciate the opportunity to work with them.

We expect next year those will have new strategies and that will help provide a clearer framework for people looking to build houses or commercial-industrial opportunities in our state as well.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can you update the committee on the status of the rollout of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme?

Mr ELLIS - It is a great question, Mr Fairs. I refer to part of my last answer. We are fully committed to ensuring that Tasmania has the most effective, strategically well-informed and efficient land use planning system in the country. It is a great contrast to the basket case that our government inherited with a state full of disparate schemes and that created confusion for business and investors across Tasmania.

Our consistent statewide planning scheme is well progressed, with 24 of the 29 councils now operating under a single planning scheme, the Tasmanian Planning Scheme, including some of our smallest like the beautiful West Coast, Flinders, Central Coast and Tasman. Some councils like Burnie, Devonport too, Ms Beswick, have been operating under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme for around four years, and Central Coast.

As we have clearly demonstrated, there are no really good excuses for the councils that are lagging behind. They are being outdone by their partner councils or competitive councils potentially and I know that developers that are looking to do business in some of those remaining areas really want to see their council getting into gear because they typically invest based on - they want some certainty.

The uniformity is helpful as well. The remaining five councils will be operating under the Tasmanian Planning Scheme in 2025 once their local provision schedules are approved by the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission. All remaining draft local provision schedules are now with the commission. That's an important update as part of the statutory assessment process, which involved public consultation and public hearings. It has taken our government longer than we'd hoped, but this incredible improvement will provide benefits for Tasmanians for many years to come.

Dr BROAD - If we look at the State Planning Office, the budget allocation is dropping significantly over the forward Estimates. Is the government actually planning for planning reform? It looks like that it's dropping off significantly at the moment. It's more than halving over the forward Estimates.

Mr ELLIS - Interestingly enough, there was no State Planning Office when we came to government -

Dr BROAD - That's not the question.

Mr ELLIS - because Labor didn't fund it. We have introduced it because we think that there are big opportunities for Tasmania as we continue to work to fix the basketcase that we inherited from your predecessors, Dr Broad.

Our government values the significant work of the State Planning Office, and it undertakes in relation to both statutory planning and strategic planning reform. In 2024-25, the Budget continues the evolution of the government's role in land use planning, from reforming and building a fit-for-purpose planning system to operating it and maintaining its relevance going forward. The Budget provides the ongoing core funding for the State Planning Office in supporting the planning system and working with key stakeholders, especially local government.

Included in the core funding is \$385,000 in 2024-25 and 2025-26 for planning systems reforms which were originally announced in the 2021-22 state Budget. It provides a rollover of \$180,000 to continue support for the regional land use strategy work that we mentioned before, and processing major project applications. The Budget also provides an additional \$300,000 as far as supporting major projects and strategic regional development.

Full implementation of the Tasmanian planning scheme, which is establishing a consistent set of planning requirements statewide, is now nearing completion, as I've mentioned. The State Planning Office, as a result, has shifted to maintaining the currency of these reforms through the statutory review of the state planning provisions - the planning scheme rules originally approved in 2017, which were completed in 2023.

The work program for the SPP review is both comprehensive and it's inclusive. The high level of engagement with the local government sector is being very well received. The review of the SPPs identified various projects that are now being progressed to improve the planning rules. This includes the improving residential standards in Tasmania project, to implement improvements for delivering Tasmania's housing needs. The government has also taken a large stake in the planning system through the SPPs. It's vital that these are kept up to date and relevant to the changing issues that we need to address.

We're also working to finalise Tasmania's first suite of bespoke planning policies, which I mentioned before in the Tasmanian planning policies. This will be a significant achievement for Tasmania, and fill a long-standing gap in the planning system. Our government's also taking time to ensure that the TPPs are suitable to guide the comprehensive reviews of the regional land use strategy and the future direction of Tasmania. The SPO and -

Dr BROAD - Sorry, the question was about why the budget allocation is dropping by more than half over the forward Estimates. Last year it was it \$3.6 million. It's dropping to \$1.489 million in 2026-27. That doesn't sound like there is much room there for new programs. It seems like all the programs are dropping off.

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned before, we've completed a big range of project work. That's now work that's moving from standing up a new process entirely to maintenance. We can attribute the decrease to the completion of the 2021-22 budget initiative of regional land use strategies, which had \$1.5 million allocated, and a decrease of \$200,000 for funding allocated to the planning system reforms, which provides \$385,000 in 2024-25. There is new funding for new areas that are being stood up in terms of the critical major projects and the strategic regional development. I mentioned the rollover of \$108,000 for the State Planning Office subdivision review.

Broadly speaking, the work that the StatePlanning Office is doing had significant project focus as we were developing an entirely new statewide planning scheme. Those projects are coming off and we are moving to a different set of smaller projects as well as maintaining it. Your government did not even have a state planning office and we have still -

Dr BROAD - Don't get into that, seriously. You are wasting our time. Chair, you have to be relevant to the question. What happened to iPlan? I went to have a look at it today and it hasn't been online for about 12 months and there's no replacement. What's going on?

Mr ELLIS - I will look to - Ross, sorry, what's your current position?

Mr SMITH - Deputy Secretary, Regulation and Service Delivery.

Mr ELLIS - Alright, iPlan, I assume you heard the question?

CHAIR - For the benefit of Hansard, can we have names of the people?

Mr ELLIS - Ross, what is your last name again?

Mr SMITH - Smith.

Mr ELLIS - That's what I was forgetting it. Ross Smith, Deputy Secretary in the Department of Justice, which is where the commission sits. So, iPlan?

Dr BROAD - Yes. What happened to it?

Mr SMITH - Claire, do you want to cover from -

Ms HYNES - I can. In short, iPlan - the shortest description I can give is, the software became outdated and it was no longer supported by the - there's lots of technical explanations. We've moved on.

The government has a project called PlanBuild, and Ross will be able to speak through you, minister, about that more. At the moment, all the planning schemes are provided through the commission's website in a PDF form, and that includes archived planning schemes as well as the current versions. That's the remaining interim planning schemes, also the state planning provisions and all the local provision schedules of those that already have the Tasmanian planning scheme approved in those municipalities.

Very soon, the commission's website will link live to the PlanBuild, like a mechanism to their website, and there's a new software platform where these planning schemes will be available. So it's essentially a replacement of what iPlan did offer.

Dr BROAD - I have an issue around a zoning problem. It relates to the rural and agricultural zones. In the rural zone, community and entertainment are a permitted use, yet in the agricultural zone, they are not a permitted use. To give you an example, The Berry Patch is in the rural zone and they can hold events. They can have a band or put on some community event and it's permitted use. Whereas if it was across the road in the agricultural zone, they can't. We know there has been a lot of confusion, like with Mount Gnomon Farm, for example, having a big battle with council about what they're permitted to do.

This is a significant issue. It means that if there's a vineyard, for example, that establishes in the agricultural zone, they won't be able to hold any events - major events, like getting a band or a singer to help promote their brand. It seems like a bit of an oversight and I'm just after -

Mr ELLIS - Ms Hynes?

Ms HYNES - Might be best coming from Mr McPhail.

Mr McPHAIL - Sure. Through you, minister, this reflects the difference between the two zones. The rural zone is land which is probably lesser quality agricultural land, where the agriculture zone is more about the higher quality agriculture land. So there is a difference between the requirements. In terms of the state planning provisions review, we have identified some improvements that we can make, particularly around the types of agritourism and things that can occur across both of those zones. Obviously, that's an element which has been raised with us through the SPP review. Obviously, there are different requirements and different needs in terms of compliance with the state policy on protection of agricultural land. So we'd need to adhere to those requirements and any changes to the planning regulations on that.

The other key point, too, is there are some exemptions for infrequent or irregular events as well. That allows for irregular and infrequent events to occur on properties like that. Obviously, when they become more entrenched, then they would need to apply for a particular use. The difference between the two zones is, they're very different in the way they operate and they have different roles and responsibilities under the planning scheme.

Dr BROAD - Yes, but that creates the problem, along with the exemption for irregular events. The definition of what is an 'irregular event' can lead to, in the case of Mount Gnomon,

having to go to the Planning Commission to sort it out. It is a significant problem, and holding an entertainment event on prime agricultural land in the agricultural zone does not necessarily fetter it. It seems like it's a bit of an oversight because what it actually does is restrict what you can do as a business. We're not talking about converting a property in the agricultural zone permanently to an entertainment venue. It seems like there's a bit more to it than just you can grow potatoes on this one and you can't on that one.

Mr McPHAIL - Through you, minister, yes, I think there are improvements that could be made across the state planning provisions in how it deals with the variety of things. What we have to remember is, the state planning provisions are a combination of what was there in a lot of planning schemes before and, obviously, every five years we get an opportunity to review that. This is a huge improvement on the system that was there before because there was no obligation to review every five years. This time, we have a review and this item has been identified as part of that scope.

Dr BROAD - I see. Also, in the previous planning scheme, it was permitted. It was a discretionary use. Now it's not permitted.

Mr McPHAIL - That may have been under some planning schemes, yes.

Dr BROAD - That's the actual issue. We have ones like the beautiful vineyards in Braddon can hold concerts, but if they were to apply now, they wouldn't be permitted. Ghost Rock, for example, it's agricultural zone. They would not be able to hold community events, and the only reason they can is because of existing use.

Mr ELLIS - Well, infrequent, as Mr McPhail mentioned.

Mr McPHAIL - That's correct, and it really depends on the type of use and its scale, and how it fits in with the agriculture use as well. That's, I guess, the key - things can be ancillary to a use as well and still take on that same use class as well.

It really depends on the scale and the nature of it. There are a few different ways that something could be approved or even meet the exemption. I think that's a key part of it. It's not just because it's an event, it fits a particular category. It needs to be looked at in terms of its scale and the nature of it and how it fits in with the primary use on the site which, in this case, is agriculture or it might be resource processing, so a vineyard in itself.

Mr BAYLEY - Minister, I have a couple of questions about your attempt to move planning out of council processes into so-called development assessment panels. I know you have a healthy slogan for this, and the example you gave recently I don't think was a very good one. It was a development that was opposed, I think, or voted against by the council members, not because it's a development, because they were all pro-development councillors that voted against it. I think they voted against it because of the type of development.

Putting that aside, is it true that under this process, minister, the Minister for Planning, so yourself, can take a development assessment away from councils midway through their development assessment process if the developer doesn't like the way it's heading? Do you think that's fair? Obviously, councils will expend a significant amount of resources, only for an application to be stripped away from them, and would you rule something like this out?

Mr ELLIS - Mr Bayley, I absolutely reject your characterisation of the Argyle Street development not being a good example of it. I would have thought that's exactly the kind of example that's important. Opposing something because of the kind of development that it is, when that kind of development is providing houses for women at risk of homelessness, clearly demonstrates that we need to take the politics out of planning. I thought that would be something we would agree on, but nevertheless we're working to finalise the legislation that we will put out for consultation on the development assessment panels and then we will bring it into parliament and we will all have an opportunity to debate the ins and outs.

I would say absolutely that this will mean that development applications will be assessed on their merits without interference from matters of local government politics, because all too often we have seen proposals that meet the requirements of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and recommended by expert planners being rejected by local government politicians. It's something that's holding back our state.

Mr BAYLEY - The question was whether the proposal for you as minister is to be able to strip an assessment out of a council process if a developer requests it because they're not satisfied with that process?

Mr ELLIS - As I just said, we're working to finalise the legislation and will put it out for consultation and then this House can have the debate on it, but certainly we think that matters that meet the requirements of the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and are recommended by expert planners should be the kind of things that get approved rather than being rejected by petty local government politics.

The proposed DAP framework will provide an objective independent assessment of development proposals against the Tasmanian Planning Scheme criteria by a panel appointed by the independent Tasmanian Planning Commission. The process will still include critical community consultation as exists in the current processes, but with the panel appointed by the Tasmanian Planning Commission making the final decision, not the council. The DAP model is strongly supported by industry backing developers and economic activity, despite potential localised NIMBYism who don't want to see our state progress. I look forward to providing the bill for consultation at the earliest opportunity.

Mr BAYLEY - In the example you've given around the North Hobart property, obviously the proponent had the right to appeal and that's currently going through the appeal process at the moment. It's true, isn't it, that this proposal will take away third-party rights of appeal, merit-based rights of appeal, as currently proposed?

Mr ELLIS - We're working through the legislation, Mr Bayley.

Mr BAYLEY - That's the proposal, though.

Mr ELLIS - As I mentioned, we're working through the legislation. Obviously that process was one that was driven by local politics. It was recommended for approval by the expert planners as it related to the Tasmanian Planning Scheme and that has delayed that work on that project significantly, so we think that having a Development Assessment Panel process will provide clearer, simpler and more predictable outcomes for people looking to get things done in our state, including building homes for vulnerable Tasmanian women.

PUBLIC

Ms JOHNSTON - Clearly the assessment of the Macquarie Point stadium through the Project of State Significance process is going to take significant resources from the TPC. What will it cost the TPC and has the additional funding been provided, or is it expected to do it within its existing budget?

Mr ELLIS - I will pass over to Ms Hynes to provide an update on the funding side of things.

Ms HYNES - Under the *State Policies and Projects Act*, which the stadium is being assessed under as a project of state significance, the fees payable by the proponent will pay for the commission staff to assess the proposal, so that's built in within that legislation.

Ms JOHNSTON - What are those costs expected to be?

Ms HYNES - I haven't got that.

Mr ELLIS - It's a complex process.

Ms JOHNSTON - Surely the proponents have an indication of the likely costs - it's not just a blank cheque.

Mr ELLIS - It is probably best to ask the proponents as far as that is concerned. In terms of the Planning Commission, they're able to receive the fees payable for proponent costs and we do something similar when it comes to major projects, for example, but in terms of the complexity of it, it's also the first time it has been used since the pulp mill. There wouldn't have been too many other examples of projects of state significance in that time. There was also Lauderdale Quays.

Ms JOHNSTON - So the TPC haven't provided indicative costs to the Macquarie Point Development Corporation? Are we talking hundreds of thousands, millions? What's the scale?

Ms HYNES - I haven't got that.

Mr SMITH - I would also note that the commission's only just received the submission, so it needs to work through it to work out the extent of work it needs to do to be able to assess that application.

Mr FAIRS - Minister, can you advise the committee on the use of modular housing as part of the government's plan to provide more housing?

Mr ELLIS - Absolutely; thank you, Mr Fairs. Modular housing has been integrated as a key element of Homes Tasmania's delivery program for new social and affordable homes. Homes Tasmania has delivered more than 200 modular homes, with a further 200 in the pipeline. Modular housing provides a flexible and responsive way to increase housing supply and get Tasmanians into homes that meet their needs sooner. Modular housing complements the traditional on-site builds to give a greater range of product options that can be tailored to suit individual projects. Modular construction has numerous efficiencies over traditional on-site building methods, as the units are built in a factory, allowing different trades to work simultaneously and greatly reducing weather-related delays in construction time.

PUBLIC

Homes Tasmania uses modular housing in a range of situations, from standalone dwellings to bespoke disability accommodation, emergency accommodation and ancillary dwellings. Through the development of the ModHomes modular housing program, an integrated training component will see 12 young people complete nationally recognised construction certificates in partnership with TasTAFE. This is an innovative and responsive program that integrates modular construction in the delivery of new housing, allowing Homes Tasmania to build more homes faster and get Tasmanians into homes sooner.

Dr BROAD - In the Budget the Tasmanian Planning Commission's funding is flat across the forward Estimates. It's come down a little bit since the State of the Environment report was published and as the member for Clark, Ms Johnston, pointed out, the TPC has some work to do with the Macquarie Point stadium. The State Planning Office also sees a significant reduction in funding across the forward Estimates as programs are ending. Does that mean there will be fewer staff in the State Planning Office? I don't believe you can reduce the funding from \$3.6 million to \$1.5 million without any impact on staff.

Mr ELLIS - Dr Broad, I'm trying to be helpful but we literally just said to Ms Johnston that proponents pay for their development assessments as part of projects of state significance.

Dr BROAD - I'm talking about the State Planning Office, I just referenced that.

Mr ELLIS - You asked me where the money is coming from. It comes from the proponents like we've talked about. I don't understand why we keep having questions like this, Dr Broad.

Dr BROAD - I'm talking about the State Planning Office.

Mr ELLIS - The State Planning Office has nothing to do with the project of state significance assessment.

Dr BROAD - Can I restate the question? I referenced that the TPC has flat funding but the actual question was around the State Planning Office. The State Planning Office has a reduction in the Budget from \$3.6 million last year to \$1.5 million in 2026-27. Does that mean that the number of staff allocated in the State Planning Office will be reduced?

Mr ELLIS - We mentioned that there was significant project work as part of the funding that was provided to the State Planning Office, with budget initiatives like regional land use strategies, which had \$1.5 million allocated in 2023-24, decreasing \$200,000 for funding allocated planning systems reform, which provides \$385,000 in 2024-25. There is new funding for critical major projects and strategic regional development and a rollover for the State Planning Office subdivision review. I'll pass to Mr McPhail regarding staffing.

Mr McPHAIL - The Budget reflects a bit of a transition for us, as the minister mentioned, from building the system to more maintenance and implementation. There's also a transition to the Department of State Growth as well, which we will be able to integrate with a number of areas that we work with as well. There are lot of changes that will happen in the future around our staffing and how things will integrate with State Growth as well.

Dr BROAD - I suppose it's pretty hard to argue that there's going to be significant planning reform when the State Planning Officer's budget is declining so rapidly.

Mr ELLIS - I think we've just mentioned that we've done the most significant planning reform and so -

Dr BROAD - So, no more reforms, that is what I'm getting at. It does not look like there is more reform.

Mr ELLIS - No, there will be more reform, for example, development assessment panels, which we've been talking about, the regional land use strategies, the Tasmanian planning policies. Mr McPhail also mentioned the transition to State Growth. We think there's really strong opportunities when it comes to better functional alignment with key parts of government delivery. That's things like infrastructure, planning, housing, skills and population. Being able to bring together all of those elements is really best practice in terms of being able to grow our economy, grow our regions, and grow our population and opportunities. That functional alignment will streamline some of the work the team will be doing there.

We've gone from a system where there's a hodgepodge of different planning schemes to a statewide planning scheme and that's the most significant planning reform that's happened in a generation. As that work comes to a conclusion, we'll look to other opportunities but you only do a statewide planning scheme once.

Dr BROAD - It doesn't seem like there's going to be any sort of major projects then, because the budget allocation is more than halving.

Mr ELLIS - We mentioned before around what those different changes are about and where we see the future opportunities, so development panels, regional land use strategies, Tasmanian planning policies.

Dr BROAD - Where were they funded from?

Mr ELLIS - We'll continue to work through those with the State Planning Office and we think we can deliver that quite well. The statewide planning scheme -

Dr BROAD - Where's the money coming from?

Mr ELLIS - There is money in the Budget, so I think what you're -

Dr BROAD - There's a declining budget. You talk about those -

Mr ELLIS - Yes, because we've had to deliver a statewide planning scheme and now, broadly speaking, that's delivered and we're now in the maintenance phase of it. I'm just not sure for someone that complains about debt on one hand but then complaints that we should have more spending on planning bureaucracies, I just don't quite see the logical consistency emanating from someone who used to think he wanted to be Treasurer.

Mr BAYLEY - Regarding state planning provisions, the Tasmanian Planning Commission announced as recently as 5 August a process to amend the state planning provisions in relation to hazards codes. The draft SPP amendment 1 2024 proposes to clarify the interpretation of an exemption in the landslip hazard code and the relationship between the

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SPPs and the *Building Act 2016*, those parts relevant to the landslip hazard code, the coastal erosion hazard code and the coastal inundation hazard code.

Can you explain the motivation for this assessment, and did your government request it? This seems like a pre-emptive strike, whereas previously you've had to retrospectively change things in relation to the State Coastal Policy. Looking at this information and the fact that it relates to hazard codes and erosion codes, it does smack of trying to get ahead of the curve and change the rules to facilitate development on coastal strips. What's the motivation and did you and your government request it?

Mr ELLIS - The work we do around hazard mapping is an important part of what we do in Tasmania in general. We've got quite a strong process for planning well when it comes to hazards. A lot of other jurisdictions recognise that in Tasmania. We spoke earlier, in the Police Fire and Emergency Management space, around the flood mapping we do here in Tasmania. That's really come along in leaps and bounds. Our bushfire planning and other matters are also really important. Sadly, we've seen from other jurisdictions interstate where they haven't planned communities well. We've seen significant tragedies and some very tough decisions having to be made in those places. Continuing to work proactively around risk-based assessments is really important.

In terms of the State Coastal Policy, it is a matter we pass through parliament. We're strongly supportive of ensuring that development can happen in our state, including renewable energy, and also ensuring we can continue to enjoy the Tasmanian way of life through different recreational facilities that provide access to our water, as well as access to those kinds of coastal areas. I will pass over to -

CHAIR - Before you do that, minister, time for scrutiny has expired.

The Committee adjourned at 6.12 p.m.